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MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK



IFES MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of IFES is to provide technical assistance in the promotion of democracy worldwide and to serve as a clearinghouse for information about democratic development and elections. IFES is dedicated to the success of democracy throughout the world, believing that it is the preferred form of government. At the same time, IFES firmly believes that each nation requesting assistance must take into consideration its unique social, cultural, and environmental influences. The Foundation recognizes that democracy is a dynamic process with no single blueprint. IFES is nonpartisan, multinational, and interdisciplinary in its approach.



MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

**Armenia
FINAL REPORT**

September 21, 1997 – September 30, 2002

**USAID COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
No. EE-A-00-97-00034-00**

Submitted to the

**UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

by the

**INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION
FOR ELECTION SYSTEMS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Building on the experience of providing on-site technical electoral assistance since June 1996, IFES moved into operation under the USAID/IFES Cooperative Agreement beginning 21 September 1997. Work undertaken at a relatively early stage in Armenia's democratic transition had generated support for democratic elections under the new agreement. These earlier democratic initiatives were undertaken during the presidency of Levon Ter-Petrossian, a period significant in Armenian history for its strong nationalist movement. Ter-Petrossian had led the country since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and his pragmatic policies were credited with keeping Armenia from slipping into internal chaos. Politically, analysts noted that while events surrounding the presidential elections of 1996 demonstrated Ter-Petrossian's control of the political apparatus, they also showed that his popular support was fragile. While international criticism remained mild, evidence of government manipulation of his election had a profound impact on the electorate: Armenians were disillusioned and skeptical. The population viewed the government's pledged commitment to democratic transition as being propagated by the select group that retained wealth and power in Armenia.

Beginning in September 1997, IFES initiated its efforts to strengthen Armenia's democratic structures, serving as a neutral and honest broker under the Cooperative Agreement. These efforts benefited from the continued cooperation of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) and the National Assembly, which both provided analysis and advice on election legislation reform. Daily interaction and broad discussions brought together a wide spectrum of legislators, government officials, NGO leaders, political party leaders, public policy advocates, and international election law experts. IFES also brought its experience in assisting and challenging newly emerging Armenian democracy NGOs as they worked to become effectively engaged in the political process and to advance issues specific to electoral and democratic development. In addition, IFES directly educated election officials at all levels through election administration training and the provision of election day manuals.

It was in this milieu of sustained and consistent work that IFES entered into the 1997 Cooperative Agreement. IFES not only greatly improved the electoral process and the level of transparency of the 1996 presidential elections, but also established a positive reputation among Armenians (both opposition and government) and international organizations, which would prove to be a valuable tool for deeper and broader improvements in Armenia under the Cooperative Agreement.

The Cooperative Agreement called for a coordinated program providing legal and election administrative consulting on the development of election legislation, support to the Central Election Commission, support to overall electoral process reform, and support to the conduct of elections. It also called for specific studies on voter and election issues. All work was aligned with USAID strategic objectives in Armenia.

Over the past several years, Armenia has undertaken a tenuous dual transition, striving to develop simultaneously the foundation of a free market economy and the institutional infrastructure of a democracy. Economic and political reforms have begun, but have been fraught with obstacles. Economic stagnation, the impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, and persistent corruption have impeded progress and engendered instability. As a result, reforms have failed to translate into a discernable improvement in the quality of life of most citizens.

The sudden resignation of President Levon Ter-Petrossian in 1998 exemplified the political instability that continues to plague Armenia. Competing political forces seek to dominate their opponents through intimidation and force rather than seeking solutions through compromise. Respect for the country's young institutions of democracy remains inconsistent. Though improved, the electoral process has hampered the public's faith in democracy. For many, the election victory of the Unity Bloc in the 1999 parliamentary elections signaled an attempt to bring order. However, the tragic attack on Parliament in October 1999 decimated parliamentary leadership, resulting in a power shift that may yet have further repercussions.

Programming under the Cooperative Agreement under which IFES provided assistance to the Armenian electoral process concluded on 30 September 2002.¹ No elections are scheduled in Armenia until 2002, when local elections will be held. Current IFES staff and resources are now dedicated to a new civic awareness and participation project in Armenia.

As a neutral and non-partisan organization, IFES was able to gain the trust of local groups working to build democracy while also maintaining an effective working relationship with the government for the life of the Agreement. By July 2000, positive interaction and forward progress with the CEC ceased because of the commission's continued resistance to reform. The CEC spurned cooperative work with IFES staff included under its Memorandum of Understanding. It was clear that present leadership was not interested in serious work leading to reform or institutional development. USAID discontinued its support to the CEC.

IFES made solid contributions to the growth of democracy and electoral institutions over the course of the Cooperative Agreement. The following final report describes those activities and their impact upon Armenia's continuing transition to embracing democratic institutions.

¹ The termination date of 30 September 2000 of the Cooperative Agreement was extended to 30 May 2002 and then to 30 September 2002 in order to allow for the completion of all agreed upon activities throughout the cross-regional span of the Cooperative Agreement.

II. OFFICE AND PERSONNEL

IFES assembled a strong program team for the implementation of the Cooperative Agreement both at its headquarters in Washington and in the field office in Yerevan. Corporate management policy was designed to maximize field expertise in implementing the Cooperative Agreement's annual work plan objectives while providing steady, strong and secure guidance from Washington. IFES' management entrusts field managers with enormous responsibility as program implementers, yet strong and responsive guidance from headquarters by responsible management has been the IFES hallmark. There has always been a strong partnership between the field office and IFES headquarters in both its programmatic and administrative aspects.

In selecting field staff, IFES consistently identified managers for Armenia with experience and skills in democracy and election administration, always with significant field management experience, and usually with extended previous assignments in the NIS. All IFES/Armenia project managers developed interactive and respectful relationships with USAID democracy officers in the field, and this contributed greatly to implementation success.

The implementation and management of the Armenian programs under the Cooperative Agreement were incorporated under IFES' Europe and Eurasia Division (E&E), with direct, daily management included under the Caucasus Regional Programs for Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. The IFES headquarters management team remained consistent throughout the Cooperative Agreement.

To solidify IFES' presence in the regions, IFES signed leases in May 2001 for six satellite offices in the cities of Gyumri, Vanadzor, Echmiadzin, Ashtarak, Abovian, and Sevan.

Through a combination of talented individuals with Armenian experience, similar backgrounds in democracy development program management, and proven track records of achieving measurable results, IFES mobilized a cohesive team to advance Armenian democracy and electoral systems.

III. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

The Cooperative Agreement between USAID and IFES over the years 1997 – 2002 was implemented through a series of work plans updated every six months during 1997 and 1998, then annually in 1999 and 2000. IFES carefully adjusted each work plan for the prescribed upcoming period of time. The plans were developed to address evolving strategic objectives of USAID as they were modified and to keep within the parameters of the original, approved proposal. The funding levels varied from year to year, adjusting according to Congressional funding levels to Armenia, democracy designations, activities targeted by USAID, and expected elections. The following section outlines the extensive activities in which IFES engaged in order to implement the Cooperative Agreement and to achieve its objectives in Armenia:

A. Universal Electoral Code: Election Law Reform

1997

IFES Continues Work Begun Earlier with Universal Electoral Code Drafters

In September newly arrived Project Manager Carlos Guerrero met with both the Committee on State and Legal Issues and the CEC to advise on particular elements within the two drafts of the Universal Electoral Code (UEC) under consideration. The drafts were known as the Yegorian draft (from the National Assembly Committee on State and Legal Issues – Eduard Yegorian, Chair) and the Sahakian draft (from the Special Working Group of the National Assembly – Ara Sahakian, Chair). As described below, further intensive advising took the form of sponsoring a UEC Forum to discuss the legislative drafts and participating in two follow-up forums. This advisory work is described in context below.

1998

IFES Continues Advisory Work with UEC Drafters

IFES Legal Advisor Dan Blessington arrived in early January for two months in order to provide legislation drafting assistance to UEC drafters. He participated in the deliberations of the Committee on State and Legal Issues on their new draft as an observer and studied key issues included in the new State and Legal Issues draft prior to the final translation. In addition, he drafted a law on Domestic Monitoring at the National Assembly's request.

In March presidential elections were held under existing election legislation. Following those elections, the Committee on State and Legal Issues of the National Assembly resumed discussion and consideration of the draft UECs and requested IFES' legal advice on particular issues. Three drafts remained under discussion (Yegorian, Khachatrian, and Badalian). IFES Legal Advisor Antonia Dolar worked with the Committee in May and analyzed the three drafts. In May Project Manager Carlos Guerrero and U.S. Embassy Political Officer Brady Kiesling delivered IFES' analysis to the Committee on State and Legal Issues as it continued hearings on the proposed legislation. As he presented the analysis to the Committee, Kiesling stated that the U.S. Embassy backed the IFES document, asserting that "although the document was done by IFES and it is an IFES document, the U.S. Embassy supports it fully." Arthur Bardasarian, chairman of the Committee, was appreciative of the legal work and requested further information on issues such as military voting and domestic election observers. Copies of the IFES commentary were distributed to

members of Parliament and the UEC drafters. The U.S. Embassy, USAID, and other organizations involved in legal reform in Armenia also received copies.

In September while he was in the country to conduct a voter registration analysis, IFES Election Administration and Voter Registration Specialist Joe Baxter analyzed and suggested changes to the several draft UECs under consideration by the National Assembly. The advisory work included the creation of charts comparing differences between the UEC drafts, as well as the analysis of voting issues surrounding military personnel stationed in different countries. In October, at the request of the UEC drafters, Baxter produced further comments on the three drafts. This work was done at IFES Headquarters in Washington. In response to these efforts, Hrant Khatchatrian, Chief of the Constitutional Rights Union and Executive Secretary of the Political Council, invited Baxter and members of the IFES/Armenia staff for a meeting at the presidential palace. The discussion focused on the political parties that compose the recently created Council and their participation in the development of the UEC. Khatchatrian explained that although not all parties are members of the Council, he was making efforts to include them in Council proceedings.

Following elections held in March and May, Yerkrpah, the parliamentary majority group, made the announcement that it was actively working on a draft of a new UEC. After this announcement, Project Manager Carlos Guerrero held meetings with Yerkrpah leader Smbat Aivazian and provided Yerkrpah legislators with information on the strengths and weaknesses of various election systems. Meanwhile, IFES/Armenia staff met with the CEC to discuss the continued evolution of democratic elections in Armenia and the specific drafts under consideration.

At the request of the National Assembly, IFES/Armenia staff attended all the sessions that addressed the UEC during the fall. In November, after the Yerkrpah draft of the UEC was adopted, IFES participated in a working group that was created under the umbrella of the CEC. The purpose of the working group was to make technical and organizational recommendations aimed at improving the draft. Newly arrived Project Manager Andre Bouchard and Voter Information Assistant Azat Lachinian reviewed the draft article by article and provided commentary and recommendations. In addition to CEC members and IFES, the other participants were representatives of the Constitutional Court, the Yerkrpah faction, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). IFES' active participation in the working group continued through the passage of the UEC in February 1999, when the group dissolved.

1999

Final Recommendations to UEC Made to National Assembly

In early January 1999 continuing the work he had begun earlier as a member of the Armenian Central Election Commission's working group, Project Director Andre Bouchard met with the Constitutional Court and representatives from the National Assembly to proceed with refining the draft of the UEC. In these meetings IFES made recommendations on the UEC draft. The week before the second reading of the UEC in the National Assembly, IFES/Armenia staff met with Victor Dalakian, co-author of the Yerkrpah UEC draft, to present its final recommendations on the proposed legislation.

The UEC draft, commonly known as the Yerkrpah draft, was passed on the second reading. IFES contributed substantially to the legislation. IFES recommendations focused on:

- Composition of the CEC and the Regional Electoral Commissions (RECs)
- Observation of the electoral process
- Tear-off coupon system
- Removing commission members by parties or governmental appointment
- Electoral funds for National Assembly elections
- Penalties against publication of public poll results

2000

Refinements to UEC Begin

At the 13 March meeting with the Committee on State and Legal Issues, IFES submitted recommendations coordinated with UNDP and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The comments focused on three amendments proposed by the CEC:

- On the issue concerning voters whose jobs forced them away from their home precinct on election day, such as policemen or poll workers: IFES recommended that the code include advisory language that these workers should be assigned close to home whenever possible.
- On the problem of how to rationalize the participation of the election committees and various courts in the appeals process: IFES proposed that the entire issue of electoral appeals should be consolidated into a new section of the code rather than fine-tuning the chaotic system of current law.
- On the question of whether the right to appeal decisions of electoral committees should be left in the hands of domestic observers, the media, and proxies: This right, contained in the current code, would be removed under a CEC recommendation. The IFES recommendation countered that this right should be maintained, but with language reiterating that observers cannot interfere with the work of electoral commissions.

The Committee's response was positive on all three principles, and it requested further comments on the rest of the 35 amendments submitted by the CEC and on the amendments to be submitted by the Council of Judges. Final action on code amendments was not expected until the end of the year.

National Assembly Begins Amendment Process to UEC: IFES Submits Comments

On 19 June new Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg met with Victor Dalakian, Chairman of the National Assembly Committee on State and Local Issues. Dalakian indicated that parliament would consider amendments to the Universal Election Code in September and complete them in November 2000. He asked for assistance from IFES, requesting recommendations on four major issues. In conjunction with OSCE and UNDP, IFES submitted written comments on the issues, which included:

- The ratio of proportional versus majoritarian seats
- The principle of the formation of electoral committees
- Voter lists
- Military voting

IFES Submits Comments on UEC to Committee on State and Legal Issues

Together with OSCE and UNDP, IFES prepared comments on a number of issues to be addressed in amendments to the electoral code. In late July the comments were submitted to Victor Dalakian, Chairman of the National Assembly Committee on State and Legal Issues. Pressure to amend the election code intensified throughout the year due to Armenia's pending membership in the Council of Europe. A recent report by the Council's Political Affairs Committee "proposes to the Assembly to recommend to the Committee of Ministers to invite Armenia to become a member of the Council of Europe, on the understanding that the country will fulfill the commitments set out in the draft opinion within the stipulated time limits." Among these commitments are:

Section iii-i "to remedy the deficiencies of the new electoral law before the next elections, in particular as regards the procedural aspects of the work of the electoral committees and the authorities responsible for drawing up electoral registers."

Section iii-h "to amend, before the next local elections, the current legislation governing the powers of local authorities so as to give them greater responsibilities and independence."

The recently passed law to allow refugees to vote in local elections had also been suggested by the Council of Europe.

IFES Meets with OSCE on Election Code Amendment

On 15 November IFES met with Branimir Radev of OSCE and two election experts, Joseph Middleton, a London lawyer, and Andrew Bruce, an Office of Democracy and International Human Rights (ODIHR) election advisor. As a result, they prepared recommendations on amendments to the election law. Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg used the meeting to offer advice based on his experience with the IFES elections program. OSCE representatives reported an agreement among the political factions in parliament to submit a package of amendments including the following:

- A new mix of seats in the 131-member parliament of 94 proportional and 37 majoritarian
- A CEC composed of ten members chosen by the factions of parliament and three representatives appointed by the government
- A prohibition against conscript soldiers voting for majoritarian races
- A prohibition against refugees voting in national elections

B. Seminars and Roundtables**1997****IFES Forum: Universal Electoral Code**

Building upon two previous IFES-sponsored international forums held earlier in 1997, IFES/Armenia organized and led the third in an ongoing series of forums to discuss the drafts of the UEC on Saturday, 29 November. Project Manager Carlos Guerrero organized the forum in cooperation with the National Assembly Committee on State and Legal Issues and the CEC. The daylong seminar included formal presentations of the two drafts, the Yegorian draft and the Sahakian draft. Key issues discussed included:

- Formation of electoral commissions

- Electoral campaigning
- Transparency of the electoral process
- Method of summarizing electoral results
- Registration of voters

Two international consultants, Igor Botsan of IFES/Moldova, chief advisor to the Moldovan Parliament's committee drafting their Universal Electoral Code, and Vladimir Lysenko, CEC member and legal advisor from the Russian Federation, provided direct election law drafting advice to the conferees. The day's discussions included presentations and debate by representatives of parliamentary committees, political parties, and non-governmental organizations, many of whom had previously never had the opportunity to interact.

To build on the momentum created during the forum, IFES participated in discussions coordinated by two other organizations. First, Yerevan State University organized a series of roundtables with participants from both public and private sectors, including representatives of the government, the political opposition, local NGOs, and the university. These roundtables continued into 1998 and focused on transparency issues surrounding the UEC. The major issue, however, was that of the formula for forming electoral commissions. IFES Legal Advisor Dan Blessington attended the roundtables in January. Second, IFES also participated in a follow-up conference organized by the Union of Lawyers and Political Scientists that focused on strengthening the skills of the legislation drafters.

1998

IIE Forum with IFES Participation and Support

In February Project Manager Carlos Guerrero and IFES' Dan Blessington participated in a training seminar on electoral codes for the Armenian National Assembly. The seminar was sponsored by the International Institute for Democracy (IID) under the Tacis Democracy Programme of the European Union. The seminar reviewed the four drafts but concentrated on four elements: the composition of the various electoral commissions, registration of voters and candidates, access to media and financing, and methods for scrutiny, appeal, and adjudication. Other international participants included the Venice Commission, OSCE, and the International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance (IDEA). IFES participated in the conference and assisted the IIE in its coordination efforts.

UNDP Forum with IFES Participation and Support

The UNDP in Armenia held a human rights conference in June in which over 30 international and local organizations, including many NGOs, participated. As a key presenter, Project Manager Carlos Guerrero addressed the group on the universal right of participation in the electoral process. IFES also provided organizational assistance to the conference.

Winrock Women's Seminar with IFES Participation

In June IFES Sr. Advisor/Caucasus Phyllis Greenfield addressed twenty Armenian managers in Washington as they participated in a two-week Women's Leadership training course administered by Winrock International, in cooperation with USAID's Women in Development Office. She focused on increasing women's participation in the electoral process through IFES activities in Armenia.

IFES/CEC Forum on UEC

In October 1998 IFES and the CEC organized an Electoral Forum to discuss the critical issues of the three UEC drafts. The IFES/CEC Electoral Forum, with between 80 and 100

people in attendance, was an opportunity to improve the dialogue among the political parties, NGOs, and members of Parliament. For this event, the Chairmen of the RECs were also invited. The following issues were discussed:

- The voting process
- Military voting
- Electoral monitoring
- Adjudication of complaints
- Voter registration

As a result of the forum, the Constitutional Court contacted IFES to discuss support and assistance. IFES translated the three UEC drafts and distributed copies among international organizations, NGOs, USAID, embassies, and political parties.

Constitutional Court Seminars Conducted with IFES Participation

In October 1998 the Constitutional Court and the Venice Commission organized two international seminars to discuss the issues of separation of powers and electoral disputes. This high-level gathering included Khosorov Haroutunian, the Chairman of the National Assembly; Armen Haroutunian, Advisor the Constitutional Court; Arthur Bardasarian, Chairman of the Committee on State and Legal Issues; Payrur Hairikian, Chairman of the Constitutional Reform Commission; Gagik Harutunian, Chairman of the Constitutional Court; and other members of parliament and press. IFES played an active role in the seminars, as did other international organizations such as the American Bar Association (ABA) and AMEX International (AMEX).

1999

IFES Briefing at U.S. State Department

In June Phylis Greenfield and Program Officer/Caucasus Michael Svetlik conducted a briefing at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center outside Washington DC. They presented an overview of IFES election support activities in the Caucasus, including an in-depth presentation on the technical assistance IFES rendered in support of the 30 May Armenian Parliamentary elections. Their primary audience was a group of Foreign Service Officers who were departing for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia over the summer.

IFES Presentation at Women's Republican Council School

In July at the invitation of the Women's Republican Council of Yerevan, Project Manager Andre Bouchard delivered a presentation entitled "Democracy and Women" to a group of 80 young women ranging in age from 15 to 16. These young leaders, recognized by the Council as "Leaders of the 21st Century," were engaged in a one-year course on the participation of women in public life. The IFES presentation covered such topics as democracy, democratic development, and the participation of women in elections and parliaments.

2000

IFES Participation at Caucasus Links Conference

In February Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg addressed the NGO Caucasus Links conference, "Democracy in Armenia: Crisis or Renewal." At the conference, IFES organized a four-person panel on "Lessons Learned from the 1999 Parliamentary Elections." The panel featured Alexander Iskandarian of the Caucasus Study Center, former CEC

Chairman Khachatur Bezerjian, and party leaders Payrur Hairkian of the Self Determination Union (SDU) and Vigen Khachatryan of the Liberal Democratic Party. Swedberg's presentation focused on the role IFES has played in Armenia since 1995, with an emphasis on its efforts to improve the election code. He also suggested the need for further adjustments to the code, citing continuing problems such as the presence of unauthorized personnel inside and outside polling stations, the partisan practice of removing precinct committee members, and the convoluted and confusing appeals procedures.

IFES Attends Government Working Group on Civil Registry Issues

Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg attended the OSCE/Armenian Government working group tasked with designing a civil registration system. Core members of the working group present at the 3 April meeting were representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Internal Affairs, the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Passport Office. The group devised a plan to produce a report on a potential civil registry and possibly to draft legislative language necessary to implement it by the end of the year. IFES also attended a 5 April meeting to discuss with OSCE representatives the issue of integrating voter registration into such a system.

IFES Delivers Classroom Lectures on Democratic Elections

During the month of August, as part of IFES' ongoing effort to promote greater understanding of democratic elections among young people, Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg delivered two lectures on democracy and democratic elections:

- **Women's Republican Council School: School of the 21st Century:** The talk compared the electoral systems of the U.S. with those of Armenia and emphasized the importance of civil society development for the progress of democracy.
- **Yerevan State University: International Summer School of Political Science:** The presentation, "Elections in Armenia and Other States of the Post-Communist World," focused on both the successes and shortcomings of elections and electoral related activities in the region over the past decade.

Swedberg Gives Presentation on Human Rights and Electoral Law

On 9 October Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg traveled to the northern city of Vanadzor to give a speech entitled, "Human Rights and the Electoral Law." This 90-minute presentation was part of a two-week "Human Rights Teaching Course" sponsored by the Armenian Constitutional Right Protective Center located in Lori.

2001

IFES Participates at OSCE Forum on Election Code Amendments

On 9 February Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg represented IFES at a daylong forum on the election code sponsored by OSCE. Deputy OSCE Director Branamir Radev chaired the roundtable meeting, held at the National Academy of Sciences. Also in attendance were Central Election Commission Chairman Artak Sahradian and three other CEC members, State and Legal Issues Chairman Viktor Dallakian, Constitutional Court Member Felix Tokhian, Women's Republican Council Chairwoman Nora Hakopian, Its Your Choice legal specialist Khachik Voskanian, and members of various minor political parties and NGOs.

Amendments to the electoral code, especially with regard to voter lists, are among the conditions imposed upon Armenia by the Council of Europe. In 2000 the National Assembly

passed two amendments: The first provided the right of refugees to vote in local elections; the second provided for the eventual change in the current ratio of 75 majoritarian and 56 proportional seats to 94 proportional seats and 37 single mandate seats.

The forum highlighted two recent reports on the election code, one prepared by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and another by OSCE's ODIHR. The Venice Commission Report, written by Bernard Owen and Maria Rodriguez on 12 December 2000, was presented at the forum by Mr. Owen. The 10 January 2001 ODIHR report was written by Andrew Bruce and Joseph Middleton. Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg had an opportunity to brief this group in Autumn 2000 during their fact-finding trip to Yerevan.

IFES Attends Election Code Roundtable

On 7 and 8 June Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg represented IFES at roundtables organized by the Armenia office of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) on amending the election code. Forty members of parliament, including Speaker Armen Khachatrian, attended the first roundtable. Although the parliamentary factions did not present recommendations in any formal way, Orinats Yerkir, Dashnaksutun, Stability and National Deputy factions had their written recommendations included in the program packet. On the second day, Regional Electoral Committee (REC) members attended. State and Legal Issues Committee Chairman Victor Dallakian said a draft package would be ready for consideration by mid- September.

C. Technical Support of Elections

1997

Parliamentary By-Election Support, 26 October

In support of the October parliamentary by-elections, Project Manager Carlos Guerrero provided the CEC and the Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) with election administration training in Hrazdan district. IFES and the CEC formed a working group and jointly wrote an operations manual for PEC members. Together with the CEC, IFES held a precinct training session for the poll workers prior to the election. IFES provided 250 copies of the election law and 250 copies of the training manual for election officials and domestic observers. The attendance rate for the training session reached 60 percent.

1998

Presidential Election Support, 16 and 30 March

When Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrossian resigned suddenly on 3 February 1998, new presidential elections were scheduled 40 days later. Working closely with the CEC, IFES moved quickly to provide specific and targeted support for the elections. The IFES team in place in Armenia included:

Carlos Guerrero, IFES/Armenia Project Manager
Dan Blessington, Legal Advisor
Michael Yard, Election Technology Assessment Expert
Charles Lasham, British Election Administrator and Training Expert
Diana Cepeda, Voter Education and Information Consultant
Gregor Niessen, Election Trainer and Accreditation Expert
Phylis Greenfield, Senior Advisor/Caucasus

Azat Lachinian, IFES/Armenia Public Information Assistant
Alice Alaverdian, IFES/Armenia Secretary
Hovhannes Sarajyan, Translator

IFES' support for the elections included:

- **Local Observer Language:** At the request of the CEC, IFES drafted sample language for the inclusion of domestic observers during the election process. But since the National Assembly did not pass the local observer legislation, local observers were not permitted during the elections.
- **Adjudicating Complaints:** Dan Blessington developed a clarified system for adjudicating election complaints at the request of the CEC.
- **Protocol Data Entry:** Based upon an in-country assessment, Michael Yard suggested improvements to increase the security of protocol data entry at the regional level. As a result, a second computer was installed at each REC with the assistance of Armentel, the private Armenian telecommunications company. Each protocol was entered twice at the RECs in order to introduce a greater degree of protocol security and to ensure greater transparency at each step of the vote-counting process.
- **Military:** In preparation for the second round of elections, IFES held two seminars with the CEC on voting processes for military members. At the request of the Ministry of Defense, IFES then distributed 10,000 brochures clarifying the voting process to members of the military.
- **Voter Education Campaign:** In cooperation with the CEC, Diana Cepeda produced nine informational TV spots for both rounds of the election to improve public awareness. The focus was on citizen rights, the importance of voting, correct ballot marking, and the secrecy of the ballot. Six radio spots were also produced and aired throughout the country. Print materials included a get-out-the-vote brochure, information on marking the ballot, as well as posters depicting the ballot and all the candidates. Television and radio spots reached 98 percent of the country; other voter education material, such as printed materials, reached an estimated 55 percent of the general population and 75 percent of voters. This campaign maximized transparency and public awareness of population on voting and counting procedures.
- **Election Official and International Observer Training:** During the week before 16 March Project Manager Carlos Guerrero, Charles Lasham, Gregor Niessen, and Phyllis Greenfield trained election officials on behalf of the RECs through four training forums in Vandazor, Gumri, Etchmiadzin, and Yerevan. These sessions, directed at REC and PEC members, clarified election procedural issues such as voter identification and the adjudication of complaints.
- **Manual Development:** In cooperation with the CEC, IFES also produced a Pollworker Training Manual and handbook describing the process of voting and ballot-counting on election day. In addition, the manual outlined the rights and obligations of the participants in electoral process, such as proxies, media representatives, and foreign observers. More than 35,000 copies of the manual were printed and distributed to all PEC members. IFES also printed and distributed 7,000 copies of the *Law on the*

Election of the President of the Republic of Armenia to every polling station in the country.

- **International Observation Training:** In preparation for both rounds of the elections, the IFES Election Team trained long and short-term OSCE observers. To increase their effectiveness, each international observer was provided with English versions of the pollworker manual and a copy of the electoral law.
- **Election Observation:** The IFES Election Team observed the first round of the elections throughout Armenia. Ambassador Leon Weil, member of the IFES Board of Directors, observed the second round of the elections in Armenia as the guest of Ambassador Peter Tomsen.

IFES' primary involvement in the 16 March presidential election and the 30 March run-off entailed technical assistance to the electoral process. While IFES remained concerned about the reported irregularities during each round, work focused on supporting the election administration process, expanding voter education, and training poll-workers and international observers.

IFES Monitors Adjudication of Election-Related Complaints

During the first and second round of elections, complaints presented to the CEC were referred to the Prosecutor's Office for adjudication. The cases were then referred to the districts in which they occurred for investigation. IFES monitored the status of the cases through correspondence with the Prosecutor's Office and worked with the American Bar Association to obtain legislation governing election complaints. These efforts proceeded with circumspection and caution in order to avoid influencing ongoing judicial action. Neither the Prosecutor's Office nor the CEC were eager to provide information on complaints or to advocate transparency of election complaints.

Parliamentary By-Election Support, 31 May

- **Training Election Officials:** In May IFES/Armenia cooperated with the CEC to hold a training seminar for PEC members preparing to administer parliamentary by-elections on 31 May. Forty-two of 45 PEC members attended. IFES distributed copies of the election procedures manual to participating PEC members. The manual, developed in collaboration with the CEC, detailed the election administration procedures and was especially informative for those in attendance since all PEC members were new to their positions.
- **By-Election Posters Produced and Distributed:** IFES/Armenia and the CEC jointly produced 100 posters that explained to voters how to mark their ballots correctly. The posters were displayed at the entrance of all precincts on election day. Such an informational campaign was necessary to avoid confusion among voters. In the recent presidential election, votes were registered by drawing a cross or a plus or minus sign next to the candidate's name. However, in the by-election, the voters indicated their choice by drawing a line through the name or names of the candidates they did not wish to select.
- **IFES Observes By-Elections:** At the request of the CEC, IFES/Armenia staff members observed by-election voting in Yerevan Electoral District #3 on 31 May. The other observers included proxies of the eight candidates vying for the vacant parliamentary post, as well as local observers from the organization "It's Your Choice".

Parliamentary By-Election Support, 25 October

IFES and the CEC conducted PEC electoral training workshops in the regions of Gyumri, Ararat, and Yerevan. The purpose of the training was to discuss issues related to the voting process and to clarify aspects of the law that were not well defined.

1999**Parliamentary Election Support, February through May**

Working closely with its partner, the CEC, IFES/Armenia moved quickly to provide specific and targeted assistance in support of the May 30 parliamentary elections. The IFES Election Team included:

Andre Bouchard, IFES/Armenia Project Manager
Anthony Reissig, Election Administration Specialist
Judith Davis, Training Specialist
Leanne McDonald, Voter Education Specialist
Michael Svetlik, Program Officer/Caucasus
Lilit Hasratian, IFES/Armenia Office Manager
Azat Lachinian, IFES/Armenia Public Information Assistant
Alice Alaverdian, IFES/Armenia Secretary

IFES' support for the elections included the following initiatives:

- **Technical Support Provided to the CEC:** Beginning in February Tony Reissig provided on-site technical support to the CEC by helping the commission to write procedures according to the new UEC. With his assistance, the CEC developed new procedures for military voting, voting that will take place outside of Armenia, and voting for those detained in institutions. Reissig also worked with the CEC to create forms for new voter lists.
- **Training Materials Developed for Parliamentary Elections:** A reference guide for REC members, developed by Judith Davis in cooperation with the CEC, was first issued at the 29 March seminar and subsequently distributed to all regions of Armenia. This handbook explained REC responsibilities under the new electoral code. IFES/Armenia distributed copies of a Community Heads Guidebook, also developed with the CEC, to community leaders around the country. At the request of the CEC, IFES printed and distributed 1,000 copies of the new UEC to RECs, community heads, and domestic NGOs.

Davis oversaw the production of the materials used in training sessions. These materials – a PEC Procedures Guidebook and a *How to Complete the Protocols* reference guide – provided PEC members with a clear explanation of the differences between past electoral laws and the newly adopted electoral code. It also contained guidelines for polling preparation and management and outlined appropriate election day procedures. The *How to Complete the Protocols* reference guide provided participants with a step-by-step approach to completing the 16 different protocols used to tally election results at the precinct level.

- **Election Officials Receive Training for Parliamentary Elections:** In March with the cooperation of the CEC, IFES/Armenia sponsored a daylong training seminar for current REC members. The seminar familiarized the current REC members with the

requirements of the new UEC, including the responsibilities they would have to fulfill until the end of their terms of office in late April. IFES focused on the administrative implications of the new electoral code, the requirements of the nomination process, the compilation of voter lists, and the rights of domestic observers.

In May the IFES Election Team of Tony Reissig, Judith Davis, Leanne McDonald, and Michael Svetlik trained members of ten of the eleven RECs so that they, in turn, were prepared to train PEC members on the administration of the new law. Over an intensive, five-day series of training sessions in late May, 1,500 PEC members were trained by the RECs.

- **Voter Education Informs Voters of UEC Procedures:** Collaborating on voter education materials, Leanne McDonald and the CEC produced educational television and radio public service announcements to explain critical revisions in the new UEC. Eight TV spots covered verification of voter lists, ballot secrecy, ballot marking, Armenia's electoral systems, and proper voting procedures. IFES also produced four radio spots in Armenian and two in Russian on similar topics. In addition, IFES ran voter information advertisements in Armenia's most popular newspapers. The television spots and newspaper advertisements were estimated to have reached 75 percent of the Armenian population.
- **Election Materials Disseminated:** At the request of USAID and the U.S. Embassy, IFES also disseminated copies of the UEC, sample protocols, and pertinent CEC decisions affecting election day procedures. These materials contained valuable information that PEC officials needed in order to conduct the election according to Armenian law.
- **IFES Conducts Technical Election Observation 30 May:** The IFES Election Team deployed technical observation teams to four regions of the country on 30 May. The teams visited over 30 polling stations, noting the availability and usage of IFES-produced materials to support the administration of the election and to inform voters of election procedures. The consensus among IFES observers was that the election was conducted in an orderly and peaceful manner, with some notable exceptions. The majority of poll workers seemed genuine in their efforts to conduct the election in accordance with the new electoral code, and their work was characterized by both seriousness and dedication to serve the voters of Armenia equitably. IFES-produced materials were observed in use in the overwhelming majority of sites visited.

However, IFES observers noted considerable organizational and procedural shortcomings in the conduct of the election, including:

- Inaccuracies in and omission of some voter names in the voter lists
- Unauthorized persons in the polling stations
- Intimidation and/or agitation by unauthorized persons and party/candidate proxies
- Voting by refugees
- Voting in secrecy booths by more than one person
- Inadequate polling station facilities

IFES Monitors Adjudication of Election-Related Complaints

In the weeks following the 30 May parliamentary elections, IFES monitored the adjudication of election-related complaints in the lower courts. In June Armenian law-enforcement

bodies investigated 40 election-related complaints. Twenty-five of the cases were dismissed due to insufficient evidence of criminal or administrative misconduct. Cases forwarded to the Courts of First Instance for criminal prosecution included those ranging from the assault of candidates and candidate proxies to the fire bombing of a candidate's campaign headquarters.

As part of its monitoring effort, IFES tracked the resolution of complaints related specifically to the final results of the May elections. Complaints regarding decisions taken by RECs or the CEC, as well as those related to the final results of elections, were heard by the Constitutional Court. In June the Constitutional Court adjudicated seven of the eight complaints related to election results in majoritarian races. In three of these seven cases the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, effectively overturning the decisions of the RECs. These rulings marked the first instances in the country's history in which a court of law invalidated decisions made by regional electoral bodies.

Local Election Support, September through 24 October

- **Education Campaign Informs Armenian Voters:** Designed and executed by IFES Voter Education Consultant Steve Telford, the joint IFES/CEC campaign urged voters to check the voter lists prior to election day and informed the public of proper election day procedures.

A total of ten television and radio public service announcements were broadcast on national and regional channels throughout the month of October until election day. The campaign also produced four posters entitled, "Check the Voter Lists," "Corrections and Appeals," "Electoral Offenses," and "Voting Procedures." The RECs distributed two thousand copies of each poster to local officials. Through an agreement with the CEC, these posters were displayed in polling station prior to and on election day.

Public response to the voter education materials was positive. On 18 October Project Manager Andre Bouchard met with USAID Consultant Stan Stanevski to discuss the results of focus groups that Stanevski had organized. They pursued these discussions in order to assess the effectiveness of the IFES voter education campaign methodology. Stanevski reported that the focus groups' response to the IFES public service announcements was very enthusiastic, and he indicated that the IFES approach to conveying election-related information might be adopted for the USAID social reform program.

- **Technical Election Observation Conducted for 24 October Election:** IFES/Armenia deployed two technical observation teams to assess the administrative capacity of poll workers and to monitor the effectiveness of IFES voter education materials. The IFES team visited 20 polling stations across five regions of the country, including Kotayk, Armovir, Lori, Aragotzotn, and Yerevan.

Based on the observations of IFES' teams, the 24 October election was well organized and conducted in an orderly fashion. In the majority of polling stations IFES visited, poll workers followed procedures. Observers, however, noticed the persistent inaccuracy of voter lists in many precincts. For example, in some precincts IFES observed, dozens of voters were added to the voter lists. In accordance with the UEC, voters whose names were missing from voter lists were told to appeal to the courts, obtain a quick decision, and come back to vote. Many voters successfully followed this procedure, and the quick judicial

turnaround was reportedly due to the increase in the number of judges available for registration hearings.

IFES-produced voter education materials, including posters and copies of the UEC, were visible in the vast majority of polling stations visited by IFES and other observer groups. These materials, as well as voting procedure posters from the May 1999 Parliamentary elections, were regularly consulted by both election administrators and voters alike.

IFES Monitors Adjudication of Election-Related Complaints

In November IFES continued to follow the publication of election results and the related adjudication of complaints. There were reports of violations, particularly regarding the interpretation of the electoral code. In many precincts, ballots that were originally considered invalid were later validated in accordance with the UEC. In some cases, RECs had a higher percentage of invalid ballots than registered voters. By-elections were subsequently held in twelve communities.

As a result of the appeals and complaints following the October elections, the Committee on State and Legal Issues of the National Assembly, under the chairmanship of Victor Dalakian, initiated a review of the UEC. Representatives of factions and deputy groups, CEC members, political officials not affiliated with the parliament, and other representatives began an active review of the electoral code. IFES assisted the CEC as it drafted amendments in its further development of an effective and efficient UEC.

2000

IFES Observes Local Election, 12 March

Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg and Information Assistant Hovannes Serajian observed a local election in the Kanaker-Zeitun district (Yerevan) on Sunday, 12 March. Of particular interest was the role of the community head in preparing the voter lists. The community significantly improved the quality of the voter lists as compared to the previous elections; those who had been left off the list during the parliamentary and local elections had appealed to have their names put on amended lists.

Parliamentary By-Election Support, 21 May

Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg and IFES Election Administrator William Eaton designed and conducted both Voter List Seminars and Voter Education Forums with support from IFES local staff.

- **Voter List Seminars Delineate Problems, Offer Solutions:** IFES held four seminars on the problems surrounding the issue of forming, maintaining, and amending voter lists, one of the biggest problems in recent Armenian elections. A seminar was held for each of the four communities holding by-elections for parliamentary seats on 21 May. The first three were held for the Yerevan neighborhoods of Melatia-Sebastia, Arabkir, and Erebuni/Nork Marash. A fourth seminar was held in a large rural district of the Lori region. The purpose of the seminars was to gather information, insight, and recommendations from all interested parties in the voter list process. This input was then to be utilized by the CEC in forming new procedures to assist community leaders in compiling lists.

The participants included election and community leaders, including passport officials. Those in attendance were asked to identify problems with the current voter list system

and to make recommendations that could be implemented both before and after the 21 May elections. The participants raised issues such as:

- Passivity of voters in checking the voter lists
- Insufficient funding in the state budget for updating the voter lists
- Voters living in privatized condominiums and houses were often not registered with the passport office and were therefore not on the draft lists given to community leaders
- Deceased and absent voters often remained on the voter lists

The participants made several positive recommendations, including:

- The institution of a voter education program to remind individuals to check the voter lists
 - The establishment of a system of door-to-door voter list verification to check for non-registered voters living in private houses and condominiums
 - The exchange of information between community leaders and passport offices every 15 days to update registered and unregistered citizens on the voter lists (currently this information is required only twice a year, yet often does not arrive within the required time frame)
 - Regular list-updating sessions among community members in the voter list process. These meetings would include mayors, condominium chairmen, candidate representative, and public block captains. Some participants proposed the creation of a special committee in all communities with the purpose of registering citizens.
- **IFES Holds Voter Education Forums:** On 12 May and 13 May IFES held open-air voter education forums in the Yerevan neighborhoods of Arabkir and Erebuni. The Arabkir event had an audience of approximately 500, and the Erebuni event was attended by over 1,200 people. Voters were encouraged to check the voter lists after arriving at the forums, which were structured as family fun events. The objective of the forums was two-fold:
 - Voters were made aware that there was a by-election on 21 May. They received copies of the IFES voter procedure brochure.
 - Voters received the message that they needed to check the voter lists before 16 May (five days before the election).

Voters could check the lists at the forum rather than at their precinct. The forums featured a raffle to encourage people to check the voter lists and fill out a small survey form. By involving the community leaders' staff instead of the election committees, IFES reinforced the message that amendments to the voter lists must be filed with community leaders.

- **IFES Observes 21 May Elections:** On 21 May IFES monitored the precincts in all four by-elections. The observation confirmed that electoral administration remains problematic, as does voter registration. While inefficiencies and potential fraud took place in one district, the judicial system provided an important source of redress. Most precincts IFES visited in Yerevan and Lori on 21 May displayed voter education brochures and posters distributed by IFES. These materials were displayed in 15 of the 16 precincts the IFES team visited.

IFES Observes Parliamentary and Mayoral Elections, July

On 9 July IFES, collaborating with UNDP, closely followed a revote in a Yerevan parliamentary election district. The new vote was necessary after the results of an earlier election were invalidated by the Constitutional Court. In addition, on 16 July IFES observed a politically-charged mayoral election in Goris, which had been precipitated by the removal of an elected mayor by a non-elected governor.

- **District 5 Revote:** IFES' observation of the District 5 elections highlighted the ongoing problems with ballot security and the inability of PECs to protect and account for both used and unused ballots. Likewise, these disputed elections indicate an increasingly decisive role played by the Constitutional Court in determining election results. Losing candidates will most likely turn to the Constitutional Court regardless of the ruling of the CEC. An additional disappointment highlighted by the election was the quality of the voter lists. The Arabkir First Instance Court issued 165 certificates to voters whose names were not on the lists. During the May 21 election there had only been 60 such claims. While the 9 July list had 1,258 more voters than the first election, the rise in voters on the list problem remains inexplicable.
- **Goris Mayoral Vote:** On 15-17 July IFES and UNDP teamed up to observe and investigate the unusual circumstances surrounding the mayoral election in Goris between Nelson Voskanyan, Samvel Haroutyunian, Massis Vaherian, and Hamlet Mkrtchian. The voting itself seemed to proceed smoothly. There were few complaints from the proxies of the four candidates, who were represented at all visited precincts. There was a high turnout – seemingly well over 50 percent – and the flow of voters was slow but steady.

The IFES observation highlighted continued problems with the voter lists. According to both the governor and the community secretary, the biggest problem with the lists came from people who had married and moved from one house to another. They demanded that all the documents received from the six electoral precincts be opened, claiming that "names of dead people were placed in the electoral lists and their signatures [were] added". A new court date was scheduled for 21 August.

2001**IFES Hosts Candidate Debate**

On 17 May IFES sponsored a debate for the candidates running in the by-election for a parliamentary deputy seat from Vanadzor. All four of the registered candidates were present: Aram Khachatrian (Communist), Zhorab Torrosian (Dashnak), Arsen Darbinian (Ind.) and Samvel Paplanian (Ind). The debate was moderated by Edik Hovsepian, head of public affairs for the Lori Marzpetaran. Svetlana Minassian and Edgar Sargsian of IFES and Hasmik Jhamharian of the Women's Republican Council posed the questions to the candidates. The event was covered prominently by media agencies.

The debate format was based on guidelines published by the U.S.-based League of Women Voters and was approved by all the candidates before the debate. The debate entailed a series of questions asked by a panel member and posed to all four candidates. Each candidate was given a time limit of two minutes per response. Audience members were not allowed to ask questions. Candidates gave closing statements, but opening statements were not permitted. On the whole, the format was designed to minimize any accusation of unfairness or unpredictability.

IFES Conducts Voter Education Meetings

Despite the lack of major elections in Armenia in 2001, IFES used dialogue groups to discuss local elections whenever they occurred. On 6 September IFES in the western region of Armavir conducted three voter education dialogue groups in Parakar village on the eve of the special election for mayor. Candidate profiles and other voter education materials were distributed.

IFES Sponsors Activities for Parliamentary By-Elections

- IFES worked with the Ashtarak Press Club and World Learning to organize a candidate debate in constituency #27. The debate was held on 21 October at the Proshian Museum in Ashtarak. The event included the participation of three journalists, fifteen NGO representatives, and members of the general public. The relatively small size of the audience allowed for a more informal structure than IFES used for an earlier debate in May. The Ashtarak audience was allowed to ask questions to any candidate they wished with minimal involvement of the moderator. For the most part, the proceedings went smoothly and all four of the registered candidates, as well as the questioners, were engaged in the process. Due to the large number of NGOs in the audience, however, IFES and the moderator, Satenik Zorvian of the Ashtarak Press Club, made sure that all candidates were asked their views on the role of NGOs in Armenia.
- To further assist in the electoral process, IFES collected polling station location information, biographic data on the candidates, and information on the judges who will hear voter list appeals in the event of errors in the voter lists. This information was published in 100 brochures and distributed at the constituency #27 debate and through dialogue groups in the region.
- A similar IFES effort to conduct a debate in the Kotayk region was unsuccessful when two of the three registered candidates declined to participate. However, IFES visited the Regional Electoral Commission to collect information on the three candidates and on precinct and court locations. This information was published and disseminated through regional dialogue groups and through newspaper inserts in the Kotayk Press Ltd. subscription network.

2002**Candidate Debate for Mayoral Elections in Zar Village**

On 23 January a IFES and the members of the Regional Election Commission organized a debate among mayoral candidates in Zar village. Six candidates were running for the position of community head of this village of 640 voters. IFES prepared questions for the candidates and facilitated the debate. Questions from the village residents concentrated principally on the allocation of land, drinking water, the land tax, new jobs, and social benefits. IFES distributed voter education materials and candidate profile leaflets to the debate participants.

IFES Organizes First Live Televised Mayoral Debate in City of Armavir

On 3 March IFES organized and conducted candidate debate was aired live in Armavir. Prior to the debate, IFES met individually with all three candidates registered for the mayoral elections to agree on the format of the debates. The local television station ALT TV provided technical facilities and direct phone lines for receiving phone calls from the citizens. Each of the candidates was permitted to bring five supporters. According to the

rules of the debate, which were explained at the beginning of the broadcast, candidates' responses were limited to two minutes. After reviewing the biographical data of the candidates, IFES facilitated the discussions by taking questions from the participants in the studio and from viewers by phone. The program lasted two hours and was broadcasted on the local TV of Armavir on 3 March 2002. The live debate elicited positive feedback from Armavir residents, and the Governor of Armavir Region sent a thank you letter to IFES.

IFES Organizes Live Televised Debate for Candidates for National Assembly By-Elections

On 15 May 2002, at 8:30 p.m., the first televised candidate debate in the region took place in Shirak marz. The program, featuring the four candidates for the National Assembly's by-elections in District No. 67, was broadcasted live on Giumri's "Shant" TV. The debate, prepared and coordinated by IFES and part of a 90-minute broadcast, was seen in Giumri, the marz capital, and in more than twenty towns and villages that comprise the electoral district.

In addition to viewer call-in inquiries, candidates were asked twelve questions by IFES and participants in the studio. These included questions on the merits and skills necessary for a National Assembly member, current legislative initiatives, and each candidate's possible future role and participation in the various commissions of the National Assembly. In spite of general pre-election tensions in the district, the debate was very balanced and generated great interest among the public. The candidates also evaluated the debate as a very effective way to convey their views to the electorate. Overall, the live debate, as first of its kind in Shirak, demonstrated the importance of an interesting and objective approach for such programs.

Live Televised Mayoral Debate Organized by IFES Calms Pre-Election Tensions in Hrazdan City

On 4 June an unprecedented live televised debate was organized by IFES for all five candidates for the mayoral elections in Hrazdan city scheduled for 9 June. The elections were expected to be quite tense due to the severe social-economic conditions and low morale in the community, as well as reminders of recent elections in Hrazdan that were plagued by scandals. There were serious obstacles facing IFES while trying to organize the debate in Hrazdan. However, as a result of persistent negotiations with the REC and the five candidates, IFES managed to reach an agreement with all parties to hold the debates.

All of the candidates participated in the live debate. They were able to answer some of the residents' questions, which were telephoned in before and during the program. The debate was considered a success because an absolutely impartial atmosphere was created and all the candidates had equal conditions and equal time to express their thoughts. The debate not only generated positive responses from the candidates, TV audience, and the public of Hrazdan, but also calmed the pre-electoral tensions in the city. The elections on 9 June occurred in an orderly manner without considerable or serious violations.

IFES Organizes Two Live Televised Debates for Community Head Elections

IFES organized two live televised debates in the month of June. The televised debates – one organized for Community Leader elections for the Nork-Marash community of Yerevan, the other for the Malati-Sebastia community – were partly a response to a wide lack of information among Yerevan residents on some of the candidates. IFES was initially confronted with opposition from some of the candidates regarding a debate. However, after several attempts, IFES was successful in securing participation of all the candidates for both

of the debates. A journalist who has conducted similar events for various Armenian television stations was selected as the moderator for the debates. Two days before the debates, people had an opportunity to call the television station with questions they would like to have answered during the debates.

On 27 June the debate between the two candidates for the Nork Marash elections took place. Five minutes before the debate began, one of the candidates decided to withdraw. Although he asked that the debate be cancelled altogether, it was decided that the event would continue nonetheless with the remaining candidate. Even with only one candidate, there were many calls to the studio and people of the community seemed very active and interested in his views. The debate among candidates for the Malatia-Sebastia community took place the next day, on 28 June. A similar situation occurred, as the incumbent running for re-election informed the organizers that he would not attend. Nevertheless, the debate continued with the remaining two candidates and lasted for eighty minutes. As in the first debate, the candidates had an opportunity to answer many of the questions sent in to the studio by residents of the community.

Both live debates provided an opportunity for the voters to hear the views of the candidates as well as their responses to specific questions. It was a good forum for candidates to address substantive issues with their electorate. In addition, the debates satisfied the need for information by the electorate, who had an opportunity to hear candidates before deciding whom to support and to make a more informed choice on Election Day. Overall, the debates were a big success, and calls from residents of the communities continued to come in to the station even days later.

D. Ongoing Support and Cooperative Development Work

CEC/IFES Memoranda of Understanding Establishes Areas of Cooperation

On 28 November 1998 Khachatour Bezirjian, Chairman of the CEC and Richard W. Soudriette, President of IFES signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing cooperation between the two organizations. Under the agreement, IFES would work with the CEC to improve election administration procedures at national and local levels. This work was accomplished by establishing joint working groups to review election legislation and develop programs for election administration training. This agreement formed the framework guiding IFES' work to support and strengthen the CEC throughout the Cooperative Agreement.

In an effort to strengthen and expand its cooperation with the CEC, IFES signed a new MOU with the CEC on 22 January 1999. Chairman Khachatur Bezirjian signed the agreement on behalf of the Commission while Project Manager Andre Bouchard represented IFES. The MOU renewed the previous agreement in which both organizations pledged to cooperate fully in the areas of election organization and training. The cooperation under the MOU continued to assist the CEC in improving election administration procedures and training over the coming year.

In 2000 the MOU with the CEC was again renewed. Chairman Artak Sahradian signed for the CEC. It became clear in the final months of the Agreement that there were points of contention between IFES and the CEC regarding requests for financial support falling outside the parameters of the MOU, and more specifically, outside the USAID/IFES Cooperative Agreement. Meanwhile, during the winter of 2000, the CEC refused engagement in serious

reform work. It spurned cooperative work with IFES under the MOU. Cooperation under the agreement would have provided day-to-day technical and developmental assistance under a specified action plan. It became clear that the CEC, under Sahradian, was not interested in serious work leading to reform.

Ongoing Support Included Practical Assistance to CEC

Even before the negative tone of the final few months under the MOU, IFES recognized from its earliest days in Armenia that many of the practical elements of establishing, developing, and operating a functional national elections office were not available. IFES, under the USAID Cooperative Agreement, sought to fill some of these needs. In Armenia, this included:

- Engaging the CEC as a practical partner at every opportunity to improve its ability to administer democratic and transparent elections - this included sharing implementation work in the development of the Complaint Adjudication Database following the 1999 Parliamentary elections
- Daily mentoring and practical support concerning every element of election reform
- Monthly internet connection throughout the life of the Cooperative Agreement
- Translation of all useful international documents, including election laws from established and emerging democracies, regulations, practical manuals on election administration, office correspondence with international election organizations, and many other documents in print and non-print format
- Membership dues in the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO): IFES provided the annual dues for the CEC membership to the ACEEEO and facilitated the CEC's attendance at the yearly conference in Eastern Europe

Expansion of Election Administration Work to Armenian RECs

One of the practical problems with the electoral commissions in Armenia was the continued lack of communication, as delineated below. IFES was committed to the engagement of election commissions at central, regional, and precinct levels as it provided technical assistance for the transformation of Armenia's election administration. The lack of communication among the election commissions was later highlighted in the Study of Election Officials conducted in September 1998. Before the study was conducted, however, IFES staff had expanded its technical assistance efforts to the RECs and traveled to every region in Armenia in August 1998. With the aim of establishing a direct line of communication with each REC in order to identify areas of technical assistance needs, IFES expressed to electoral authorities the RECs' importance in the electoral capacity-building process and stressed IFES' eagerness to learn from RECs' experience. These new lines of communication provided means for discussing voter registration, the presidential elections of 1998, voter education, and the upcoming UEC. This work with the RECs was later accentuated when IFES consultants Tony Reissig and Leanne McDonald and Senior Program Officer/Caucasus Michael Svetlik supervised the training of all RECs in Armenia for the May 1999 parliamentary elections.

Review and Evaluation of Voter Registration System

Voter Registration System Assessed

In September 1998 IFES Election Administration and Voter Registration Specialist Joe Baxter conducted an assessment of the voter registration system in Armenia. He met with CEC authorities and the Political Council Executive Secretary and traveled to various regions

to evaluate on-site registration done at the RECs. The experience of past elections demonstrated that lists of voters were substantially inaccurate. Long additional lists of voters created on election day, in some cases containing up to 15 percent of the total amount of a precinct's voters, made it very difficult for authorities to verify voter list accuracy. Information gathered from the REC visits showed that voter lists were especially difficult to maintain in areas previously struck by natural disasters. Nevertheless, some RECs had achieved success maintaining voter lists on computer databases, and REC officials on the whole were receptive to recommendations by IFES for the further reform of voter list maintenance procedures.

IFES Monitors Voter Lists Updates through Exit Polls

During the months of July and August 1999 IFES/Armenia monitored the efforts of local community heads to update voter lists. According to the Universal Electoral Code, local authorities are required to update and maintain the voter lists twice yearly. The timetable of the registration process required that the work be concluded by early August and then submitted to local RECs. Following certification of the lists, RECs were then required to return the lists to the local election officials for posting in voting precincts 40 days prior to the next scheduled election. In this case, IFES monitored the postings for the local elections to be held 24 October.

Voter Registration System Analyzed with Recommendations

In September 1999 Joe Baxter returned to Armenia to conduct an in-depth assessment of the voter registration system of Armenia. As previously reported, the credibility of voter registration officials has not only seriously affected elections, but had also been a major concern of political parties, domestic and international observers, and Armenia's international partners. The assessment was an update of his earlier study, completed in October 1998. The report expanded further upon an OSCE meeting held in August 1999 concerning the possible development of a civil registry.

The final assessment reviews realistic options available for the development of a national voter registration system in Armenia. The report favored the establishment of a civil registry using Department of Visas and Passports data and the development of a completely new stand-alone civil registry as the leading available options. The feasibility and cost-effectiveness of each option were the most significant factors leading to the recommendation. Because the information and most of the infrastructure already existed within the Department of Visas and Passports, IFES recommended that a civil voter registry be established within the Ministry of Interior Department of Visas and Passports, a strategy that would incur significantly lower costs than the establishment of a new civil registry with national ID cards.

Voter Registration, List Verification Emphasized in Parliamentary Election Support

In April 2000 Project Manager Jeffrey Swedberg attended the OSCE follow-up conference to the August 1999 initial assessment and planning work done on a civil registry. In addition, IFES arranged a separate meeting with Armenian governmental officials concerning the integration of a voter registry into such a system. In August 2000 IFES submitted its Proposal on the Community Voter List Initiative and Other Election Support to Debra Berns of USAID. Among other things, the proposal envisions support for door-to-door verification of the voter lists. During the tenure of the Cooperative Agreement, a new or revised voter registration system was not supported or begun by international assistance agencies.

In its work with the CEC over the last months of the Cooperative Agreement, IFES attempted to collaborate on the provision of guidance to the local community heads who were responsible for updating the voter lists. When the CEC did not engage, IFES focused its election support work for the May parliamentary by-elections on checking the voter lists through two dynamic activities within the communities holding the elections. This effort entailed the following initiatives:

- **Voter List Seminars:** Four sessions on the issues of forming, maintaining, and amending voter lists were organized to gather information, insight, and recommendations from all interested parties in the voter list process. This information was then to be utilized by the CEC in formulating new procedures to assist community leaders in compiling lists.
- **Voter Education Forums:** Voters were encouraged to check the lists after arriving at the forums and could check the lists at the forum rather than at their precinct. This new procedure also reinforced the message that amendments to the voter lists must be filed with community leaders.

Voters Polled: Fewer Voter List Discrepancies

On May 21, 2000 IFES commissioned a survey of 375 voters leaving polling stations in three districts in Yerevan on their experience with the voter lists. The results were encouraging. Ninety-eight percent of those interviewed had their names entered correctly on the voter lists. However, only 44 percent actually checked the lists prior to election day. Of those 56 percent who did not check the lists, 83 percent were aware that they could have done so. While there was no similar survey taken in the past to which these results can be compared, the study indicated that voter lists did not seem to be a problem for the vast number of voters in Yerevan during the by-elections.

In a related development, the Armenian government announced that a general census of the population will take place on 10-19 October 2001. IFES learned from the Chief of Staff of the National Statistic Service that the project will cost 1,700 million drams [\$3 million] over four years and will require the hiring of 50 full-time and 100 part-time workers. A test census will be taken in September 2000 in Spitak and Ararat. This effort could signal the beginning of a commitment from Armenia to the enumeration process, which could include a new or revamped voter registry.

Surveys Expand Understanding of Training Needs and Electorate Perceptions

IFES Conducts Survey of Electoral Officials

Under the supervision of Survey Specialist Tom Carson, IFES completed a significant study of electoral officials in Armenia in the fall of 1998. The survey report contained data on the training of election officials down to the PEC level, as well as on their perceptions of political, social, and economic developments in Armenia. The study also included recommendations for developing a training curriculum for election officials as part of the implementation of the new UEC.

The study yielded the following findings:

- Most of the precinct election officials in Armenia return to serve on electoral commissions in each new election.

- While election officials may have indicated extensive electoral experience, many are unaware that a debate was underway on a new electoral code.
- Nearly three-quarters believe that additional training is needed for officials, even though a large percentage believe they have memorized the law and do not need to refer to the law or election manual to carry out elections.

IFES/Armenia held four briefing sessions to discuss the preliminary findings of the report, including meetings with the CEC, RECs, and USAID.

IFES Releases Study on Voter and Election Issues

In September 2000 IFES released a study entitled, "Public Attitudes Toward Political Life: Electoral Experience, Confidence in Leadership, and Civic Participation in Armenia." IFES Survey Specialist Thomas Carson conducted the study with the collaboration of the Armenian Sociological Association, which provided data support and organized focus groups. The report was based on the findings of eight focus groups held across Armenia. These groups elicited citizens' attitudes toward their leaders and institutions, their confidence in the electoral process, and their overall perceptions of the political and economic situation in Armenia today.

The study analyzed comments from the 80 focus group participants interviewed in May. Many participants in the focus groups indicated that the ongoing economic and political instability in Armenia diminished the hopes and aspirations of people of all ages in this fledgling democracy. Alarming, the study also revealed a "devaluation" of democratic values and the notion of democracy in the public consciousness. Among those respondents who did not vote, there was a widespread view that current authorities manipulated elections and election results, often in ways not detected by international observers. The motivation for those who did participate in elections was often a negative reaction to current political life in Armenia. On a brighter note, the participants acknowledged that in recent years the technical administration of elections had improved.

The IFES study indicated that corruption was an accepted part of life in Armenia, and that it touched everyone. Few expected the authorities to address the problem as long as those in power benefited from it. With regard to civil society, study participants acknowledged the existence and good intentions of the many non-governmental organizations that had been established in the past decade, but they seemed unconvinced that the NGO sector would make a difference in improving their lives. IFES distributed the study to USAID and Armenian officials, non-governmental groups, international organizations, and other interested parties.

Complaint Adjudication Database Compiled

After extensive research and review of complaints filed in Armenia's first and second rounds of the 1998 presidential elections, 1999 parliamentary elections, and the 1999 local elections, IFES compiled an extensive database covering the nature of each complaint. The database also included the author of each complaint, the region in which it was filed, the current status of the complaint, and any specific information needed to help describe the particular nature of each issue raised. The database assisted IFES in monitoring the complaint adjudication process in Armenia.

E. NGO Support and Development

In fall 1997 IFES served as mentor to several democracy-building NGOs. With the guidance of IFES Voter Education Specialist Barbara Lynch, organizations including the League of Women Voters, the Sakharov Foundation, the Women's Republican Council of Armenia, and Young Democrats met throughout the fall and gained valuable negotiating and cooperation skills in preparation for a meeting with Vigen Khatcharian, Chairman of the Committee on State and Legal Issues. The NGOs wrote joint letters to both the Committee on State and Legal Issues and the Speaker of the National Assembly, presenting a unified platform on specific issues included in the two UEC drafts. The organizations also actively participated in the IFES-sponsored UEC Forum, held 29 November.

Throughout the Cooperative Agreement, IFES continued to nurture the relationship it had established with strong, evolving democracy-building NGOs in Armenia. IFES included these organizations in forums and individual meetings and solicited the NGOs' views on various drafts of the UEC.

As part of its support to the 1999 parliamentary elections, IFES involved local civic organizations and democracy-building NGOs in its work in the fields of voter education and election administration training. These groups, including the Women's Republican Council, the Armenian League of Women Voters, and the Sakharov Fund for Human Rights, collaborated with IFES on the dissemination of IFES voter education materials and the delivery of PEC training. This collaboration with non-partisan NGOs demonstrated IFES' commitment to build the technical capacity of local civic organizations in the field of elections.

As NGOs developed a greater understanding of their roles and the practical application of their missions, their impact and capacity grew. It was therefore surprising that many focus group participants in the IFES Fall 2000 study seemed unconvinced that the NGO sector would make a difference in improving their lives. Nevertheless, most respondents recognized the usefulness, existence, and good intentions of the many non-governmental organizations that have been established in the past decade.

F. Resource Center Development

Access to IFES/Armenia Resource Center

Opening in 1996 the Regional Resource Center evolved to feature over 500 hard copies of materials on election systems around the world, legal frameworks for legislation change, election management, voter registration, voter education, voting operations, and other resources directly related to CEC capacity-building. The center contributed to the professional development of the CEC in educational outreach and to the provision of educational materials to government agencies, NGOs, and international and local assistance agencies. The facility was also open to interested citizens. In order to respond adequately to requests for information, the center included a representative collection of civil society educational materials and maintained linkages with both local and international NGOs. In addition, the center was updated on a continuing basis and maintained linkages with other IFES resource centers, notably in Moscow, Baku, and Washington, DC.

An integral part of the resource center was the IFES/Armenia website, www.ifes.am and its links to other sources of information. While hardcopies of all IFES-translated laws, regulations and other documents were included in the Resource Center database, they were also included on the website. In addition, acting to fulfill one of the Resource Center's responsibilities, IFES provided direct technical assistance to the CEC in updating and maintaining its website as well.

IFES Produces CD-ROM on Armenian Presidential Election Results

One of the major products ascribed to the Resource Center was the release in July 1998 of a CD-ROM containing information on the recent March 1998 presidential elections. The CD-ROM, a joint effort of the CEC and IFES, contained the elections calendar, a list of candidates, a list of the political parties that participated in the election, and the final results of the election. The disk also contained scanned images of final protocols from every precinct in the country. The CD-ROM was distributed to President Kocharian, the National Assembly, ministries, political parties, foreign embassies, and NGOs concerned with democracy and human rights.

IV. MATERIALS PRODUCED

1997

Support for the Fall 1997 Parliamentary By-Elections

- Election Officials Manual, Armenian parliamentary by-elections
- Voter Education Videotape (25 minutes) for Armenian parliamentary by-elections.
- IFES Website: <http://www.ifes.am>

1998

Draft Law on Domestic Monitoring

Support to the Presidential Elections

- Newspaper Special Edition Comparing Universal Electoral Code Drafts
- Armenia Presidential Election Law (translation)
- Presidential Election Support
- Pollworker Training Manual
- Draft Legislation on Local Observers
- Adjudication Procedures
- Analysis of Technology for Extraordinary Presidential Elections
- CD-ROM: Election results and protocols of precincts for Presidential Elections
- Voter Education Materials
 - Videos: "Ready for Elections," "Your Vote is Secret," "Candidates," "Voting Process," "Counting," "Your Vote Can Change a Decision," "Integrity," "Your Vote is Secured," "Mark Your Ballot" (CEC).
 - Radio tapes: "Voting Process," "Counting Process," "Vote," "Role of proxies and Observers," "Vote Youth," "Your Vote is Secret," "Register to Vote."
 - Print: Brochure on the election process, leaflets on the voting process.
 - Posters (A1): "Marking Your Ballot," "The Voting Process," "Candidates."
 - Newspapers: Special 4-page supplement on candidates and dates for elections.

Comments on UEC Drafts (May 1998)

Operations Manual for Parliamentary Elections in Armenia (developed with the CEC)

Analysis of Military Voting

Voter Registration Analysis

Commentary on Yerkrpah UEC Draft

Commentary on Unified Group's UEC Draft

Translations of three drafts of the Universal Electoral Code (Armenian to English)

1999

Comparative table of IFES' UEC recommendations (English)

Translation of the UEC (English)

Support to the May 1999 parliamentary elections

- Administrative procedures according to UEC (English and Armenian)
- Quick Reference Guides for REC members (English, Armenian)
- Quick Reference Guides for community heads (English, Armenian)
- Copies of Universal Electoral Code for distribution (Armenian)
- Voter Education PSAs (8 television and 4 radio, Armenian and Russian)
- Poster on Voting Procedures (Armenian)
- "How to Mark the Ballot" Poster (Armenian)

- Precinct Electoral Commission Guidebook (English, Armenian)
- Copies of CEC decisions for distribution (Armenian)
- Copies of protocols for distribution (Armenian)

IFES/Armenia website (updated)

Assessment report on the voter registration system of Armenia

Support to the October 1999 local elections

- Voter education posters (2000 "Check the Voter Lists," [Armenian]; 2000 "Corrections and Appeals" [Armenian]; 2000 "Electoral Offenses" [Armenian]; 2000 "Voting Procedures" [Armenian])
- Voter education radio PSAs (5, Armenian and Russian language)
- Voter education TV PSAs (5, Armenian and Russian language)

Complaint adjudication database (English)

2000

Delivery of two computers and one scanner to the CEC to assist in the development of a computer network at the CEC

Translation of Armenian law on referenda

Translation of various international election laws

Election support for May 21 by-elections

- Technical assistance
 - 225 Voter list manuals for participants at voter list seminars
 - 26 precinct signs for community list checking at voter education forums
 - Copies of voter lists produced for Erebuni and Arabkir voter education forums
- Voter Education
 - 2000 voting procedure brochures
 - 260 voting procedure posters for polling stations
- Three days of radio spots, aired three times daily, publicizing voter education forums and the importance of checking voter lists

Recommendations for Reform to the UEC

Public opinion study: "Public Attitudes Toward Political Life: Electoral Experience, Confidence in Leadership and Civic Participation in Armenia" (English and Armenian).

Translation of Electorate Study given to the CEC

2001

Candidate profile brochure for parliamentary by-elections, Vanadzor

Candidate profile brochure and electoral processes information, published for Community Leader by-election in Shengavit

Candidate profile brochure and electoral processes, published for Parakar village mayoral election.

Informational brochure for parliamentary by-elections, Ashtarak

2002

Leaflet on candidate profiles and electoral processes, published for debate on 23 January for Zar village mayoral election

Voter education leaflets for mayoral election in Mrgashen village.

Leaflets on candidate profiles and electoral processes, published for debate on 3 March for Armavir mayoral election

Live television broadcast of Armavir mayoral election candidates' debate

V. IMPACT AND EVALUATION

IFES is viewed as an honest, experienced, and non-partisan technical expert broker in elections and election reform and has had a significant impact on the development and evolution of democracy and democratic elections in Armenia. Elections are now conducted with a higher degree of technical expertise. IFES' work over the term of the Cooperative Agreement has directly impacted the following milestones in Armenia's democratic development:

Development of Universal Electoral Code

The passage of a reformed, democratic and transparent Universal Electoral Code indicates that Armenia is serious about the transition of its legislative and governmental structures to embrace democratic principles. Through continued active participation in the government working groups, Armenian institutional conferences and international seminars, IFES continued to influence the development and passage of the UEC through straight talk on greater transparency, fairness, and democratic election principles. Over the past two years at least five drafts from various committees and outside organizations have been considered, and IFES has been involved in the process since its inception. Throughout the development of the UEC, IFES had a positive impact on what emerged in February 1999 as the new Universal Electoral Code. Victor Dalakian, the main drafter for the successful Yerkrpah draft and a member of the working group, stated that 90 percent of IFES' recommendations were accepted.

IFES supported this effort throughout its inception, incubation, and implementation as a trusted advisor to the legislation development process. Through continued work with UEC drafters, IFES' experienced and knowledgeable legal advisors participated in a consistent, sustained, and cooperative partnership. IFES provided direct legal advice on election legislation, commentary on various drafts, and Armenia-specific recommendations to improve transparency and democratic principles. These initiatives were geared toward internationally acceptable standards of election legislation.

During the UEC development process political parties were in closer contact with IFES than ever before; their representatives regularly visited IFES' Resource Center and requested electoral materials while the UEC was in key stages of development.

In addition, throughout its participation in the deliberations of the National Assembly's Committee on State and Legal Issues, IFES kept USAID and the US Embassy briefed on the ongoing discussions on electoral reform. This open communication enabled the international community to work collectively on the issue of electoral reform in general and on the draft electoral code in particular.

Equally important has been the cooperation between IFES/Armenia and the non-governmental organizations, particularly the Armenian League of Women Voters, in broadening public participation and input in the legislative process.

Improved Electoral Commission Organization and Operations

With its Memorandum of Understanding as a primary operating tool, the CEC demonstrated – until the last six months of the Agreement – its commitment to electoral reform and capacity building through its partnership with IFES. The increased capacity of the CEC to

administer elections in a neutral and legislatively sound way paved the way for increased public confidence in the political process and for future elections to take place. Through the wholehearted support of IFES, the CEC, RECs and PECs, and others responsible for the electoral process were able to conduct improved elections through increased training. These heightened skills were demonstrated by refined election conduct. Election officials were able to conduct more democratic and transparent elections. They were better trained and had polling station reference manuals for the elections. Moreover, fewer counting errors occurred, though evidence of intimidation remains in some RECs where precinct results have been tabulated. As a result of these IFES/CEC efforts, voters were better informed of the electoral process and their responsibilities at the polling station. Armenian citizens and government as a whole have been better informed of the significance of democratic elections.

Public Education in Elections and Electoral Process

Public awareness of electoral issues and elections has been increased through IFES' public and transparent work in supporting the development of electoral legislation and its public discussions at forums and other venues. IFES' voter education and information campaigns contributed to the emergence of an informed democratic citizenry. By providing the Armenian electorate with unbiased information regarding election procedures and information on democratic norms in elections, IFES furthered the development of a sustainable democratic system of elections. All public education work was conducted jointly with the CEC, increasing the CEC's capacity to provide unbiased voter education. Further, the provision of a CD-ROM that included the originals of the precincts' protocols assisted in providing transparency by making protocols available to virtually any citizen.

Voter Registration Kept in Public Eye as Key to Democratic Elections

By conducting two voter registration assessments in order to focus the attention of the government on the inaccurate, inefficient, and outdated national voter registration system, IFES has helped to promote realistic dialogue among Armenian officials and international organizations on the need for improvements in voter registration. The two thorough assessments and ensuing concrete recommendations for attachments improved voter registration and serve as useful guides to donor organizations interested in supporting reform of the current system. Furthermore, by focusing in-depth public forums on the need to check voter lists and by training community heads charged with updating voter lists, IFES has increased public awareness on the importance of these processes to achieve accurate lists. Although the inaction and lack of interest of the CEC restricted IFES' ability to address voter list reform in any real sense, IFES remains optimistic that, with the continued involvement of OSCE and other government agencies involved in civil registries and census taking, voter registration will be revamped in Armenia.

By continuing to keep voter registration and the verification of voter lists in the public eye, IFES has reinforced the importance of accurate lists and the public's responsibility to check them as major public concerns. Recent examples of this campaign were the IFES voter list seminars for the parliamentary by-elections, which assembled all the major players responsible for compiling and amending the voter lists. In addition, the seminars provided an opportunity for those responsible for voter registration to offer a wealth of recommendations on ways to improve the process for future elections. IFES has kept the importance of accurate lists at the forefront of government at all levels and has raised the public's consciousness of the need for checking lists and ensuring that changes are made.

Surveys Document Views of Election Officials and Public on Elections

Through the conduct of the official election survey and the study on "Public Attitudes Toward Political life: Electoral Experience, Confidence in Leadership and Civic Participation in Armenia," IFES has provided baseline information useful to both Armenia, as it develops its institutions, and USAID, as it measures the achievement of its strategic objectives. The two studies examined the level of training of election officials, revealed the views of these officials on their training needs and their understanding of the electoral system, and outlined public opinion on the social, political, and economic conditions in the country in the spring of 2000. The studies provided practical information to the CEC and the Armenian government on the general public's views of the status of the electoral system and democracy in Armenia. While the news was startlingly negative in the latter survey, revealing cynical public views on the transition to democracy, economic development, civic participation, and corruption, the study provides a measure of where Armenia stands. The government can choose whether to hear the message. It can choose whether to address the public perception of exclusion from the political process. In any case, it will have been better informed on the views of its citizens. In addition to its contribution to the passage of the UEC, the 1998 survey on election officials resulted in a more thorough and comprehensive training of election officials by IFES and other international providers for the parliamentary elections.

NGO Sector Emerges and Interacts

IFES has had a positive influence on NGOs' efforts to interact and unite in achieving greater self-understanding and greater impact on constituencies and government agencies. Public awareness of NGOs and their imperative role in the growth of civil society has increased through citizen participation in NGO voter education work, seminars, and working groups on UEC issues.

Adjudication of Election Complaints: International Interest Continues

Throughout the Cooperative Agreement IFES has continuously monitored the adjudication of complaints resulting from elections at all levels. This constant emphasis on the resolution of outstanding cases has demonstrated that western democracies and international organizations expect assurance that due process is applied to all election cases. The continuous monitoring also expresses the principle that a timely and fair resolution of each complaint is important to the democratic process. It appears that the court system is playing a larger and more independent role as arbiter of election disputes.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Future Program Needs

IFES contributes to the larger overall plan of USAID and American foreign policy for Armenia, steadily raising the bar in democracy development. These efforts encompass work in elections, civic education, rule of law, NGO development, and other democracy-based sectors. Future initiatives could include:

- **Voter Registration:** Development of a new or totally revamped voter registration system, with the CEC assuming responsibility for its leadership and administration. Lack of voter list reform continues to mar electoral reform. Voter lists have not shown improvement. Voter registration can now be identified as the largest outstanding electoral problem in Armenia.
- **Refinement of the UEC:** Continuation of work begun in 2000 to fine-tune the UEC so that it is an efficient instrument for administering elections.
- **Government Support for the CEC:** The Armenian government's financial and moral support of institutions such as the CEC to enable them to achieve institutional independence and to focus on improving and reforming international democratic standards rather than on the day-to-day survival of its members.
- **Complaint Adjudication:** Analysis of the complaint adjudication process for elections at all levels. A public education campaign to increase awareness and support for fair and democratic resolution of election disputes would necessarily be a significant part of this effort.
- **Direct CEC Support:** Should the CEC resolve to take a proactive position in supporting reform of the electoral process and in addressing election complaints, support could be reinstated. Recommendations for U.S. technical assistance could include:
 - Development of a Secretariat: Upon demonstrated confirmation that the CEC wishes to reform itself into a democratic, independent, and enlivened institution, IFES would again work with the organization to establish a viable secretariat to administer Armenian elections.
 - Establishment of an Election Official Training Institution with Ongoing Curriculum. The institution would focus on the further transference of skills in elections administration through a grassroots development of expertise at the PEC and REC levels. This initiative would be administered by the CEC itself, once fully trained and functional.
 - Continuation of the IFES/CEC partnership to effect reformed electoral systems at all levels.

Challenges

With the end of the Cooperative Agreement comes a review of accomplishments and of actions that, in hindsight, might have improved the implementation of the work under the agreement. The relationship with USAID was positive; USAID responded quickly, clearly, and completely to questions and comments. The Cooperative Agreement was successful in many ways, as documented in this report. From IFES' perspective, the most challenging

problems derived from its three-year partner, the CEC, and the government that supports it. The distinct lack of political will within the CEC governed its actions and limited the possibilities for cooperation. The problems in Armenia and its emerging reformed election systems and democracy can be traced to larger issues and attitudes of the population at large. Some of these issues were articulated in the 2000 IFES Study, "Public Attitudes Toward Political life: Electoral Experience, Confidence in Leadership and Civic Participation in Armenia." As the study reports, it is difficult to buy into a system when there is little evidence of the national leadership embracing democracy, the quality of life has greatly diminished, a drastically lower standard of living prevails, a sense of cynicism is the norm, there is little faith in government structures, and the country has lost a third of the population to emigration since independence.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Cooperative Agreement in Armenia concluded on 30 September 2002. Over the course of the Agreement, IFES thrived in its role as a neutral and non-partisan organization, earning the respect of both local organizations and government officials as a valuable and effective contributor to democracy-building in Armenia. In this critical role as an impartial but trusted actor in the political development of Armenia, IFES made significant strides in promoting the development of democratic and electoral institutions throughout the country.

IFES completed its electoral work in Armenia with the satisfaction that the country had enjoyed a period of relative improvement in election administration. The elections of 1995 and 1996 were widely criticized for their irregularities, and observers alleged that the results were not reflective of the will of Armenian voters. The presidential elections of 1998 were also flawed, but seen as an improvement. After the passage of the Universal Electoral Code in 1999, observers continued to note improvements in elections. Major IFES accomplishments completed during the course of the Cooperative Agreement, such as a more fair and transparent Universal Electoral Code, strengthened election complaint adjudication capacity, improved organization and operation of the electoral commission, and increased level of public awareness through IFES' voter education and published survey results, have had a great impact on the development and progress of Armenia's democracy and the country's democratic elections.

IFES concluded its program by focusing on particular ongoing election administrative problems, such as voter lists. While much work remains to be done in the areas of voter registration, refinement of the universal election code, and in continued improvement of election administration, the electoral system has taken crucial and tangible steps forward on IFES' watch. Today, IFES continues some of the election activities through the new Citizens' Awareness and Participation in Armenia (CAPA) project under Cooperative Agreement No. 111-A-00-00-0168-00. Among others, these activities include candidate debates, extensive voter education, and updating of voter lists in eight Armenian communities. Should conditions change, IFES has the capacity, the commitment, and the necessary infrastructure to reinforce and expand electoral assistance in Armenia.

Over the course of the Cooperative Agreement, IFES used its extensive expertise and experience in the field to ensure that a capable and robust corps of newly emerging indigenous NGOs would carry on with the task of democracy-building in Armenia. In addition, IFES made a lasting impact on the Armenian electoral system by providing direct training and manuals to election officials and increasing the level of transparency at all levels of government. By improving ties and building trust between the government, opposition groups, the citizenry, and international organizations, IFES has fostered a productive and dynamic environment for further political change and development in Armenia.

ATTACHMENTS

1. IFES Recommendations for Amendments to the Election Laws of the Republic of Armenia, For the IFES Legislative Briefing: May 14, 1996.
14 May 1996
2. Elections of the President of the Republic of Armenia, Manual for Members of Precinct Electoral Commissions.
May 1996
3. Questionnaire, Precinct Election Officials.
June 1996
4. Armenia National Survey August 1996, Analysis of Findings.
Gary Ferguson
August 1999
5. General Guide for International Observers, Prepared for the Election for President of the Republic of Armenia.
22 September 1996
6. Precinct Worker Handbook, 22 September 1996 Presidential Elections. (In Armenian)
22 September 1996
7. Armenia Technical Assistance, November 10, 1996 Municipal Elections.
Ann Gardner, Christopher Shields, and Jim Stover
10 November 1996
8. Precinct Worker Handbook, 10 November Municipal Elections. (In Armenian)
10 November 1996
9. IFES/Armenia Precinct Officials' Study.
1996
10. Draft Law on Domestic Monitoring As Provided to the Armenian Central Election Commission with Annotations.
Dan Blessington
February 1998
11. Training of Chairmen of Precinct Election Commissions in Gyumeri, March 11, 1998.
Gregor Niessen
11 March 1998
12. Voter Education Brochure for 16 March 1998 Presidential Elections. (In Armenian)
13. Comments of IFES on Issues Related to the Universal Electoral Code as Requested by the National Assembly Committee on State and Legal Issues of the Republic of Armenia.
Antonia Dolar
May 1998

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14. The Adjudication of Election Complaints IFES Roundtable, October 2, 1998, Remarks by Daniel McGrory, Election Law Advisor.
Daniel McGrory
2 October 1998
 15. Assessment of the Voter Registration System of Armenia.
Joe Baxter
2 October 1998
 16. Survey of Election Officials in Armenia 1998.
Thomas Carson
 17. IFES Recommendations to UEC Final Draft and Subsequent Disposition.
March 1999
 18. IFES Training Plan, Current Regional Electoral Commission Training Monday, March 29, 1999.
25 March 1999
 19. IFES Voter Education Campaign: 30 May 1999 Armenian Parliamentary Elections, Final Report.
Leanne McDonald
 20. IFES Armenia PEC Training Attendance Analysis May 23-27, 1999.
23-27 May 1999
 21. Current Regional Election Commissions, "Quick Guide to the New Electoral Code, For the May 30, 1999 National Assembly Elections."
1 April 1999
 22. Community Heads of Armenia, "Guide Book to the New Electoral Code for the May 30, 1999 National Assembly Elections."
1 April 1999
 23. Observation of Parliamentary Elections in Armenia, 30 May 1999, Report of EOM Statistical Unit.
31 May 1999
 24. For the National Assembly Elections, the Republic of Armenia, on May 30, 1999, "Guidebook, Precinct Electoral Commission."
31 May 1999
 25. 30 May, 1999 National Assembly Elections, "How to Fill Out the Protocols" Precinct Electoral Commission Members. (In Armenian)
30 May 1999
 26. Election Administration in Armenia, Options for Development of a National System of Voter Registration.
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29 September 1999

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27. Voter Education Campaign, IFES-Armenia, Armenian Local Government Elections 24 October 1999, Final Report
Steve Telford
24 October 1999
 28. Comments on UEC Reform Issues.
June 2000
 29. Public Attitudes Toward Political Life: Electoral Experience Confidence in Leadership and Civic Participation in Armenia.
Thomas Carson and Gevorg Pogolian
August 2000.
 30. Initial Recommendation for Universal Electoral Code.
 31. Comments on the Yerkrpah Draft.
 32. Comments on the Unified Group Draft.

Other Attachments:

Posters (In Armenian)

33. "Amendments and Appeals in Regards to Voter Lists."
34. "Mark the Ballot."
35. National Assembly By-Elections Voter Education Poster: "Voting Procedure."
36. 22 September 1996 Presidential Elections: "Presidential Elections."
37. 16 March 1998 Extraordinary Presidential Elections: "Sample of a Ballot."
38. Armenian Presidential Elections 1998: "List of Candidates."
39. Armenian Presidential Elections 1998: "How to Mark the Ballot."
40. National Assembly Elections 1999: a) "Sample of a Ballot for Majoritarian Electoral System"
b) "Sample of a Ballot for Proportional Electoral System."
41. 24 October 1999 Local Elections: "These are the Simple Steps You Should Take to Vote."
42. 24 October 1999 Local Elections: "Be Sure that You are Registered: Use Your Right to Vote."

CD-Rom (In English and Armenian)

43. Presidential Election 16 March 1998. CD-Rom.

Video Attachments (In Armenian)

44. IFES/Armenia TV PSAs for the 16 March 1998 Presidential Elections

March 1998: IFES Voter Education Project in Cooperation with CEC

- Voting Process
- Your Vote is Secret
- Be an Informed Voter
- Ballot Counting
- Candidates for Presidency
- How to Mark the Ballot
- Everything is under Control
- Your Right to Vote is Safeguarded

IFES Voter Education Program

1996: Republic of Armenia, CEC Project for IFES

Hrazdan (Voter Education)

September 1996: IFES

CEC TV Forum

April 1996: CEC Republic of Armenia

IFES/Armenia TV PSAs for the 30 May 1999 Parliamentary Elections

1999: IFES Voter Education Project in Cooperation with CEC

- Checking the Voter Lists
- What are the Responsibilities of a Parliamentarian?
- How to Mark the Ballot
- Checking the Voter Lists (reminder spots)
- Voting Procedures
- Secrecy of the Ballot
- Be an Informed Voter
- Voting is Secret
- Why Two Separate Ballots?
- Be Sure You are on the List of Voters

45. Pre-Election Panel Discussion

September 1996: "ARPA" VAJOTS DSOR TV Company, Special for IFES

TV Forum, ARTASHAT

August 1996: CEC, Republic of Armenia

CEC TV Forums (Debates)

September 1996: NORK TV (Armenia)

46. National Assembly By-Elections 1997

Vacancy, Make Your Choice

47. *IFES Forum on UEC Drafts.*

Key Issues, 29 November 1997 (Tape 1 and 2)

48. *Electoral Forum.* TV Reports, 2 October 1998

49. *IFES/Armenia TV PSAs for the 24 October 1999 Municipal Elections*

October 1999: IFES Voter Education Project in Cooperation with CEC

- Checking the Voter Lists
- Electoral Offences
- Voting Procedure

Radio Spots

50. *1999 Municipal Elections:* Collection of Radio Spots. (In Armenian)

Open Air Forum in Arabkir and Erebuni-Nork Marash: National Assembly By-Elections
21 May 2000. (In Armenian)

National Assembly Elections 1999: Check the Voter Lists. (In Russian)

National Assembly Elections 1999: Why Two Different Ballots? (In Armenian)

To obtain copies of the report attachments, please feel free to contact the F. Clifton White Resource Center:

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