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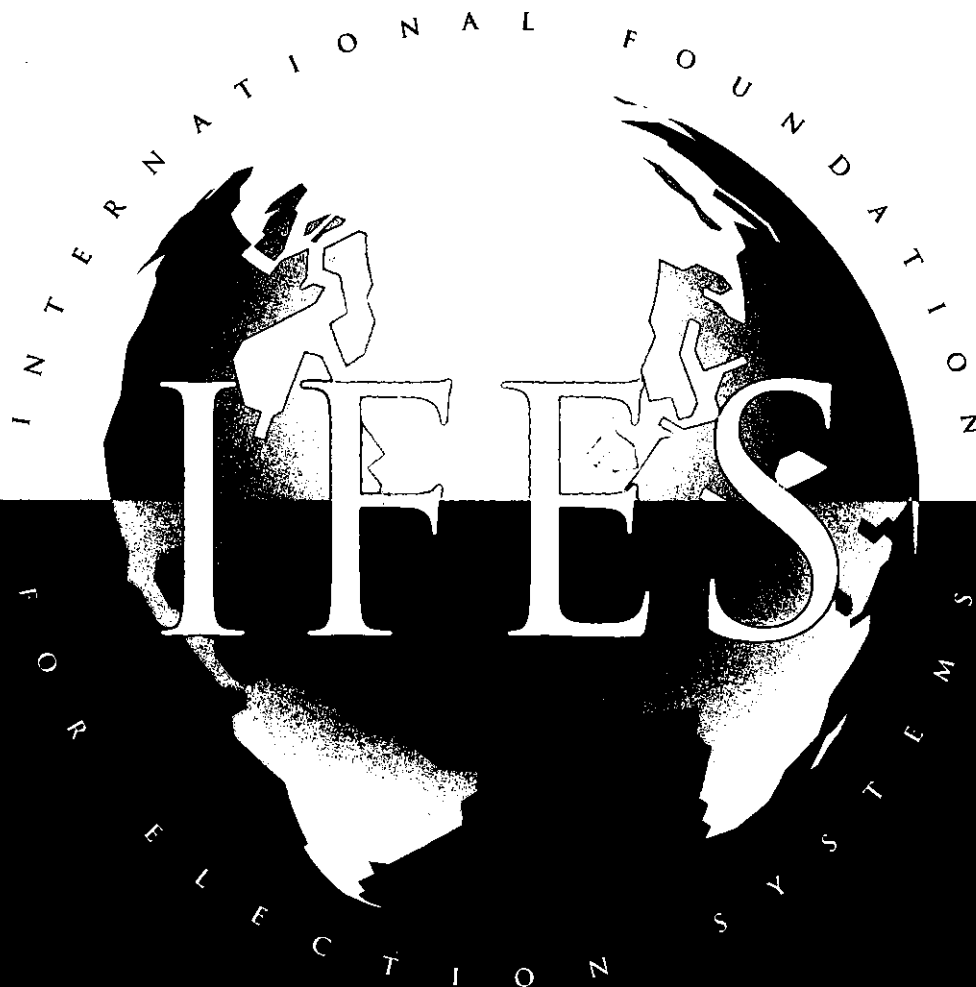
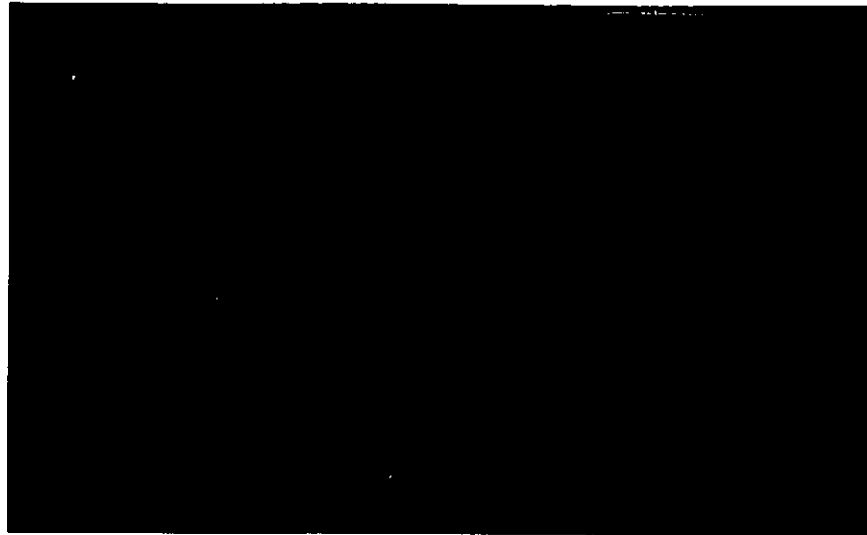
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**PROJECT REPORT
ECUADOR TECHNICAL OBSERVATION PROJECT
MAY AND JULY, 1996**

Presented to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

August 1996

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PROJECT REPORT

ECUADOR ELECTION OBSERVATION

May and July, 1996

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The president of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal invited IFES to participate in the General Elections on May 19, 1996 and the second round elections on July 7, 1996. IFES' activities in Ecuador consisted of sending one training and civic education consultant, Ms. Marta Maria Villaveces, for two weeks, in preparation of both the first and second round of elections. IFES' activities also included sending a team of three technical observers for both the May 19 and the July 7 election days.

Ms. Villaveces traveled to Quito, Guayaquil, Loja, and Manabi Province prior to the May elections and to Quito and Guayaquil before the July elections. The May observation team consisted of Christian Nadeau, IFES Deputy Director for the Americas Program (observer in Quito, Pichincha Province); Karen Seiger, IFES Program Officer (observer in Portoviejo, Manabi Province); and Timoteo Raúl Niz Paniagua, Paraguayan Electoral Tribunal (observer in Guayaquil, Guayas Province). The July observation team was made of Ambassador George Jones, IFES Director for the Americas Program (observer in Quito); Rebecca Reichert, IFES Program Assistant (observer in Guayaquil); and Augusto Soliz Sánchez, from IFES/Bolivia (observer also in Guayaquil). The observations and recommendations in this report are based on the reports of these people who visited different parts of the country.

The offices being elected in the first round included the president and vice president of the republic, national deputies, provincial deputies, prefects, provincial council members, mayor or president of municipal councils, and municipal council members. In the second round, the office of president of the republic was being elected.

Overall, there was a good sense of civic spirit on election day. Other than the problems encountered throughout the country as outlined below, none of the observers noted anything anomalous about the voting process. The armed forces and the national police were very well trained, disciplined, courteous, and involved in the process. A number of times, observers saw soldiers assisting the process by maintaining order in the lines and looking at voter identification cards to help the pollworkers find the voter on the registry.

This report conveys the observations and findings of the training consultant and the election observation team, as well as recommendations to address the major issues at hand.

II. BACKGROUND

Despite the overall technical success of the elections, a number of complaints were registered, according to the national newspaper, *El Comercio*. In Azuay province, one candidate for a provincial deputy seat reported that neither the name of his party nor the symbol appeared on the

ballot. In Manabí Province, the elections were suspended in two areas due to irregularities on the voter registry and to improper behavior of the political parties. Another ballot error was noted in Paján, Manabí Province, where the photos for two council candidates were transposed. Ballot papers were not delivered on time to areas in the provinces of Esmeraldas Province, El Oro Province, and elsewhere. In some cases the polls did not open until 2:30 PM. Mr. Carlos Pardo, President of the TSE, acknowledged that some difficulties occurred, but overall, the elections were able to proceed with relatively minor obstacles.

The results of the elections put Jaime Nebot (PSC) at 23.9%, and the PSC ahead with 26 deputies, 4 national deputies, 6 mayors (including Guayaquil), and 7 provincial prefectures. Nebot's campaign spent most of its finances on television spots, featuring his family and his commitment to on crime prevention, given the unprecedented levels of armed robbery, kidnaping, and other forms of violence in Ecuador today. His "neo-liberal" platform includes: lowering inflation, promoting decentralization, and reducing the size of the government. Apparently the public responded well to his image and campaign messages, selecting him as the front-runner in the second round of elections.

Abdalá Bucarám and his Roldocista Party came in second place with 19 deputies in Congress, a victory which can be attributed to their attacks on the economic crisis, their antioligarchy stance, the candidate's new image, and sufficient campaign funds. The economic crisis has reduced the wealth of the middle class and marginalized the lower classes, which constitute the seat of Bucarám's popularity. He has developed an image as a public defender of the poor and critic of the oligarchy and social Christians, particularly in Guayaquil. His television campaign was aimed at the middle class and promoted his image as a cultivated leader, athlete, and "man of the people." His animated and didactic style as an orator reached the marginalized populations as well. His running mate is Rosalía Arteaga, who further enhanced his populist appeal.

A surprising element in these elections was the successful candidacy of Freddy Ehlers, of the New Country/Socialist Pachacutic/Democratic Left coalition. His campaign represented new avenues, new visions, new programs, and new styles. A native of Cuenca, he represents small business owners, a dynamic force in Ecuador. He worked with a coalition of interest groups, including environmentalists, to address current political, economic, and social concerns. He is married to a Peruvian woman, a member of the elite class, who refused to take Ecuadorian citizenship. Given the recent war between Ecuador and Peru, this fact served as a major liability in Ehler's campaign.

Rodrigo Paz's election loss was another surprise. His campaign started late and was marred by internal disagreement and quarreling. He relied upon technical advisors from Chile and Venezuela, rather than national experts. His image as a proactive leader never coalesced in the public's opinion. His Popular Democracy Party fell from being the third political power in terms of the number of seats in Congress to the fifth, which represents a major defeat.

The second round of elections were held on July 7, 1996, between Jaime Nebot and Abdalá Bucarám. Both candidates are natives of Guayas Province, a fact which has citizens concerned since no president from the coast has ever served out a complete term in office without military intervention. Bucarám's popular appeal and his anti-oligarchy stance has gained him mass

support, but Nebot's moderate platform has also made him a popular candidate. The Roldocista candidate Abdalá Bucaram won the election by a fairly wide margin, 54.3% to Jaime Nebot's 45.7% according to Telered's Electoral count. Bucaram won mostly in the rural areas such as Napo, Esmeraldas, and Cotopaxi, while Jaime Nebot won in the urban areas even in Guayas, where Bucaram was thought sure to win. Presidential candidates from the first round were present the day of the elections. Freddy Elhers presented a null vote, while Frank Vargas Pazzos voted for candidate Bucaram. Rodrigo Paz, Peña Triviño and Febres-Cordero also were present to cast their votes.

Once Bucaram accepted his presidential position and Nebot accepted his defeat, the new President assured the people of Ecuador that he would fulfill his campaign promises and concentrate on helping the poorest sector of the population. He also met with advisors to decide on the next steps to taken on economic issues.

III. VOTER REGISTRY (PADRÓN)

A. Errors on the Registry

The voter registry contained many errors. Of the sample of voting tables taken in Pichincha, 5-10% of the voters did not appear on the registry. In Santa Ana, a small town outside of Portoviejo, each table had between 15 and 30 names that were not on the registry. Guayas had a major problem with the registry because over 60,000 changes of address or name were not entered into the registry. These changes were not made because they apparently were registered after January 19, 1996, which was the deadline for making any changes to the registry. From what the observers were told, the Tribunal Supremo sent word to the provinces that the deadline would be extended, so Guayas allowed the changes to be made. However, the request to extend the deadline was denied in Congress, so the changes were not entered into the registry. The result was that all of these people had wrong information on the registry and were not be permitted to vote. In the second round of elections, these errors in the voter registry still persisted. In both Guayaquil and Quito 5-10% still did not appear on the registry. No changes had been made between the first and second round elections.

- *Recommendation: Changes and errors on the registry were entered on a specific form at the voting tables when an individual was not permitted to vote. These changes were sent to the Tribunals and should be entered into the registry and cross checked with the original changes that were not allowed after January 19. All changes to the registry should be entered now.*
- *Further investigation as to the cause of the high number of people not allowed to vote is recommended. It is possible that some voters went to any table within their "parroquia"*

to obtain the certificate that they tried to vote. Verifying the data on the "rejected" people would help identify the cause of the problems with the registry and offer solutions to these problems with the registry.

B. Obsolete Information

The President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal says almost 1,000,000 entries on the voter registry are obsolete. Many are no longer living in Ecuador and many may be deceased.

- *Recommendation: Anyone who does not vote in two consecutive elections should be eliminated from the list. If individuals want to vote after they have been dropped from the list, they will have to re-register. These efforts should be accompanied by a massive civic education campaign.*

IV. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

A. Guayas

The province of Guayas has the largest number of voters of all the provinces. The size of the electorate makes this a difficult place to manage election administration, logistics, and training.

- *Recommendation: The province of Guayas could be divided into three electoral administration entities. The Tribunal Electoral Provincial de Guayas would remain the final authority over the smaller divisions. Each division would have a director and full staff. The three entities should work in a similar manner, with a high level of cooperation and communication so as to ensure adequate management and stimulate voter participation.*

B. Political Propaganda

The observers noted that many of the offices in the provincial Tribunals had political party propaganda on the walls. In Guayaquil, the offices of the members were known by the party to which each member belonged. This display of partisanship destroys the sense of impartiality that contributes to the legitimacy and public trust of an electoral tribunal. It does not make sense that the polling stations were not supposed to have any political materials in or around them, while the offices of the provincial tribunals offices did. (N.B.: The observers did not see any political materials at the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.) The observers did not see the political propaganda on the walls in the Electoral Tribunal in Guayaquil during the second round of elections.

- *Recommendation: No political material or party affiliation should be displayed in the*

Tribunal offices.

V. MATERIALS AND TRAINING

A. Training Materials

1. Video

The TSE produced a video to be used in training poll workers. Ms. Villaveces, the IFES training consultant, reviewed the training video and thought it was very well done and useful.

2. Training Manual

The IFES teams agreed that the training manual (la cartilla) was also a effective as a training tool. The members of the polling stations referred to the manual frequently on election day, particularly during the complex counting process. However, given the fact that so many pollworkers did not receive training, some recommendations are given to make the manual a stronger reference source for election workers.

- *Recommendations: A more detailed index should be added to the manual for easy reference. The manual did not have a section for "troubleshooting." It would be helpful to discuss possible difficulties the pollworkers might encounter, particularly during the vote count, and give a reference to the proper section in the manual. Although the video is quite good, it should be used in conjunction with the manual, which is more detailed.*

The manual was also not clear enough as to what constitutes a null vote.

- *Recommendation: Provide more detailed description and pictures of what a null vote could look like.*

3. Additional Materials

The Pichincha Provincial Electoral Tribunal developed additional materials for the first round of elections, including transparencies for overhead projectors for use in large groups. These slides included each step of the voting process and how to manage the documents, (i.e. how to fill out the actas and where to send all the copies). They also produced examples of null, blank, and valid votes so that the election workers could get a better idea of what each looked like.

- *Recommendation: Encourage provincial election tribunals to create materials that will enhance the pollworker training. These ideas and materials can later be incorporated in*

the national materials.

B. Training Sessions

Marta Maria Villaveces worked with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to arrange training sessions for pollworkers and the coordinators (individuals designated by the electoral tribunals to assist in the organization of the electoral process on election day), who would in turn train pollworkers. In Guayaquil, she trained over 120 rural coordinators and 100 coordinators in Zamora. In Loja, she trained over 24 coordinators and 60 pollworkers.

She visited the Pichincha electoral tribunal during the last phases of their training and had the opportunity to speak with some of the trainers. They went over each step of the voting process from beginning to end, utilizing the above mentioned materials. Before they moved from one step to the next, they verified level of comprehension of the pollworkers with impromptu quizzes on the information covered. The trainers and electoral personnel were quite receptive to her ideas and recommendations.

Guayaquil was of major concern in terms of pollworker training. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal was concerned that Guayaquil had not yet begun their training sessions two weeks before the election. Another concern was the politicization of the training process. When Ms. Villaveces traveled to Guayaquil on May 6 and 7, the Supreme Tribunal had arranged with the President of the Guayaquil Electoral Tribunal to gather coordinators for a training session so that they would have time to train the pollworkers in the city. However, the president neglected to call this meeting. The next day, he offered to arrange another meeting, but this time he only called the coordinators from his own political party. So Ms. Villaveces and her counterpart from the Supreme Tribunal, Ms. Rocio Criollo, went to speak with each "vocal," or member of the Guayaquil Tribunal, to ask them to call all of their own coordinators for the meeting. This session took place at 13:00 with approximately 140 coordinators in attendance.

Before the second round of elections, Ms. Villaveces conducted a pollworker training session in Guayaquil. However, the pollworker training session at the Coliseo Jiménez Parra was abruptly ended when the site was needed for another activity. In addition, Ms. Villaveces found the process of selection of pollworkers to be highly politicized and disorganized.

- *Recommendation: The Guayaquil Tribunal should work to establish a firm and impartial training schedule for the province.*

VI. VOTING PROCESS

A. Observation of the Process

1. Pollworkers

By accounts from the six observers, the voting process went very well. Security was ensured by the large number of soldiers and national police in the polling areas. The tables were orderly, and the pollworkers respected the procedures. Generally, the voting screens were arranged in such a way as to maximize secrecy. In Pichincha, a large number of pollworkers had received training within the last month. In a sample of 35 tables, 70% had received training, and 56-60% had worked at the polls before. In Manabí, many pollworkers had not received training because they were pulled out of the line when the original designated pollworkers did not show up. In fact the observer in Portoviejo did not see one table where all the members were present. In the second round of elections the observations were much the same. In Guayaquil, a large number of pollworkers did not show up and the polling station had to be constituted from the line. Once again, in a sample area, approximately 50% of the pollworkers had worked at the polls the previous elections.

- *Recommendation: There should be some sort of incentive to make pollworkers show up for their assignment. There could be a lottery system to select pollworkers in a fair and random fashion. A campaign to instill a sense of civic duty into the job might make it more appealing. A small monetary reimbursement would also be an incentive if deemed feasible by the electoral tribunal.*

2. Late Opening of Polling Stations

Most of the polling stations opened to voters long after 7:00 AM. The pollworkers were under the impression that they were not allowed to open up the ballot boxes containing all the materials until 7:00 AM, so by the time they got themselves organized and the materials separated, it was after 7:30 AM. The lack of pollworkers also contributed to the late opening of the polls. In the second round of elections, the pollworkers had been advised to come earlier in order to have the polling station ready at 7 AM. In Quito, the majority of polls were open on time or shortly thereafter, however, in Guayaquil in certain districts, the polls not only opened late, but some were still not open by 8:30 AM.

- *Recommendation: The manual and training sessions should emphasize the importance of setting up the polling stations at 6:30 PM. If pollworkers do not show up by 6:45, they should begin to be replaced immediately.*

3. Pollworkers Could Not Vote

In many cases, if not most, the pollworkers were not working at or near their designated polling site.

- *Recommendation: Pollworkers should either be allowed to write-in their name on the registry where they are working and be allowed to vote. Or they should receive a certificate of participation.*

4. Electoral Materials

In the first round, many polling stations were missing materials and, therefore, could not open the polling station. However, in the second round of elections, this problem had been solved and very few polling stations were missing materials. In one case, the lock of the ballot box was missing and immediately the coordinator of the Tribunal was called, the lock was replaced, and the polling station opened.

5. Vote Count

The counting process was very complex and time consuming. At one polling site in Portoviejo, the counting took almost six hours to complete. Part of the problem was that the president did not follow the procedure by counting the total number of ballots before he started the vote count, so at the end the totals did not match up (two of the races had two or three more votes than the others). The result was that the ballots had to be recounted twice, with special attention to the null votes, which added another hour to the process.

- *Recommendation: Possibly reduce the number of ballots by using a partial straight list for local, provincial, and national level races. Look into other ways to consolidate the number of ballots the voter has to handle.*

In the second round of elections, there was only one ballot (the president of the republic) to be counted, therefore, the counting process was simplified and took a maximum of twenty minutes to be completed.

6. Voters in Line after 5:00 PM

Voters who were in line at 5:00 PM were not allowed to vote. Instead, they received a certificate stating that they presented themselves to vote.

- *Recommendation: All voters in line at 5:00 PM should be allowed to vote. A member of the armed forces would place himself at the end of the line and prevent others from entering the line.*

In the July election, no one was observed waiting in line to vote. At 5 PM, the police drove through the streets of Guayaquil signaling the end of voting with a siren.

B. Ballots

As it was observed, there were too many ballots to be handled at once by the voters (a total of seven, all of different sizes), which resulted in long delays when it became time to sort them out, and count them. In all, it was estimated that on average it took poll workers about one hour to sort and about five hours to count the ballots.

- *Recommendation: Each table could have fewer voters, which would mean fewer ballots to organize and count. Peru, for example, has 200 voters per polling station. Another alternative would be to hold the elections at different times. If the CSE is prefers to have multiple elections simultaneously, it could put all the races on one larger ballot and count it multiple times. Peru and others have used perforated ballots so that the voters have one piece of paper that is then separated prior to counting.*
- *Separate ballots boxes for each office could cut down on the time spent separating and sorting the ballots for each office. Should ballots wind up in the wrong box, pollworkers would be trained to adjust the count accordingly.*

In the second round of elections, there was only one ballot (the president of the republic) to be counted, therefore, the counting process was simplified and took a maximum of twenty minutes to be completed.

VII. CONCLUSION

The two most significant problems facing the TSE are the inadequacies of the voter registry and the disorganization in Guayas Province. These two issues should be addressed immediately and need to be resolved for the long-term benefit of the Ecuadorian electorate and the TSE. The number of registered voters who were not allowed to vote is unacceptable by international standards. The situation in Guayas results from an unwieldy bureaucracy and a large number of voters. Breaking this province into three sections for the purpose of improved election administration should result in improved and more efficient management, assuming the political challenges can be properly addressed.

Despite these challenges and some logistical shortcomings, the both May 19 general elections and the July 7 second round elections went quite well. There were few reported incidents of violence or tension. The relatively low voter turn-out in the first round can be attributed to the fact that most people assumed that there would be a second round of elections. A higher level of voter participation occurred in the second round on July 7th, 1996.

Appendices

- A. Electoral Manual (Cartilla) from the First and Second Rounds
- B. Electoral Documents (Acta)
- C. Photos
- D. Newspaper Articles
- E. OAS Materials