

Date Printed: 11/03/2008

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JTS Box Number: IFES\_4  
Tab Number: 7  
Document Title: Ethiopia: Pre-Election Technical  
Assessment, May 1994  
Document Date: 1994  
Document Country: Ethiopia  
IFES ID: R01599



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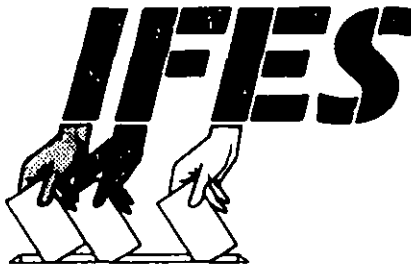
**PRE-ELECTION  
TECHNICAL ASSESMENT**

**ETHIOPIA**

**May 1994**

**Keith Klein**

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**INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
II. INTRODUCTION .....	3
III. POLITICAL CONTEXT .....	5
IV. PREPARATIONS FOR THE JUNE 5 ELECTIONS .....	10
A. The Election Law and Regulations .....	10
B. The Election Board: Form and Function .....	11
C. Constituencies .....	13
D. Calendar .....	14
E. Election Progress in Early March 1994 .....	15
F. Anticipated Challenges in Election Preparation .....	18
VII. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	22
A. The NEBE .....	22
B. The Donors .....	24

### APPENDICES

- A. List of Meetings
- B. Notes on Visit to Registration Sites

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From February 28 through March 8, 1994, Keith Klein, Director of Programs for Africa and the Near East at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) visited Ethiopia to carry out a pre-election assessment and technical consultation. This visit was undertaken at the request of USAID/Ethiopia and with funding from the Agency for International Development (A.I.D.). The primary objectives of the mission were to (1) assess the preparations being made by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) for Constituent Assembly elections scheduled to be held on June 5, 1994; (2) make recommendations to USAID Ethiopia on technical and material needs of the NEBE in the period prior to the June 5 election and in the longer term; and (3) propose activities that IFES might undertake in cooperation with USAID Ethiopia to meet some of the short-term and long-term needs of the NEBE.

Mr. Klein met with the Chairman of the NEBE and with the Executive Secretary and his senior staff members in Addis Ababa. Many of these meetings were held jointly with Mr. Joe Baxter, a U.S. election administrator who was in Ethiopia simultaneously with Mr. Klein on an election assessment mission for the UNDP. Mr. Klein also met with some representatives of political parties and of the NGO and diplomatic communities in Addis Ababa, and with officials at the U.S. Embassy and the USAID mission.

At the time of Mr. Klein's visit, the voter registration period began. This step in the preparations for the June 5 election began nearly three weeks later than originally scheduled by the NEBE, because of delays in the distribution of registration material. This delay, and the short amount of time remaining before the June election date, called into question the NEBE's capacity to successfully prepare the materials and the personnel required for a successful election in June. After extensive meetings with the NEBE's staff and discussion of the election calendar and the current status of preparations, it was the assessment of Mr. Klein (and Mr. Baxter) that it was within the capability of the NEBE to successfully carry out a technically credible election in June 1994. This would require, however, strict observance of the remaining deadlines in the revised election calendar.

The political legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly election has been called into question by a number of political parties and other groups in Ethiopia, for a variety of reasons. Clearly, the election's success in terms of selecting a Constituent Assembly that is truly reflective of the groupings and opinions of the Ethiopian people will be contingent on the degree of political party and voter participation in the campaign and the vote. In early March, the degree of participation was still unclear. It is incumbent on the NEBE and the Transitional Government of Ethiopia to make all reasonable efforts to ensure wide participation in the election both by political parties and voters across the political spectrum and in all regions.

This report identifies a series of potential problems in the period remaining prior to the June election, to be closely watched both by the NEBE and by the external community. The most notable benchmarks are the dates when (1) the ballots are delivered to the printers; (2) the polling station kits, including the ballots, are ready for distribution; and (3) the dates that the polling station kits reach the 548 constituencies.

The report also makes recommendations to both the NEBE and the donor community on ways to strengthen the electoral process in Ethiopia, before the June 5 election, and more importantly, in the period following the Constituent Assembly election and before the probable 1995 national elections to be held under the new constitution. The pre-election needs are mainly in the areas of transportation and communication. In the post-election period, it is highly recommended that the NEBE undertake some form of self-evaluation of the 1994 election process, so that it can apply the lessons learned to its preparations for 1995. It is also recommended the NEBE follow the evaluation with a process of strategic planning for its institution-building goals over the next twelve months. The donor community should consider assisting both this planning exercise and the implementation of the resulting objectives and activities.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is a non-profit, nonpolitical and nonpartisan foundation established in 1987 through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The IFES mandate is to provide technical services and research support for the electoral authorities and other institutions in emerging, evolving and established democracies. Since its inception, IFES has worked in over 65 countries. IFES project activities include pre-election technical assessments, on-site technical assistance, election worker training, election commodities, voter and civic education and election observation. IFES research support includes the establishment of an election resource center, organizing conferences and publications.

With funding provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development's (A.I.D.) Africa Bureau, and with the encouragement of USAID/Ethiopia, IFES sent Director of Programs for Africa and the Near East Keith Klein to Ethiopia from February 28 through March 8. This trip took place in the context of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia's (TGE) decision to set the date for Constituent Assembly elections on June 5, 1994. That decision created several questions for the U.S. government, particularly for USAID/Ethiopia, including whether the June 5 election was technically feasible, whether it was political advisable, and whether short-term technical or material assistance from the U.S. government was appropriate. IFES was requested, through this assessment, to assist in finding answers to those questions.

The purposes of this IFES Assessment Trip to Ethiopia were the following:

- (1) Assess the status of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)'s preparations for June elections, with a focus on the NEBE's ability to meet the technical deadlines of carrying out a credible June 5 election;
- (2) Assess the political viability and credibility of the June 5 Constituent Assembly elections, to aid in informing IFES and USAID on the appropriateness of assisting the NEBE prior to the election;
- (3) Assess the NEBE's needs for external technical and material assistance prior to the June 5 Constituent Assembly elections, and the impact which material or technical assistance might have on strengthening the capacity of the NEBE and on ensuring that the June

elections are organized in a transparent, efficient, and fair manner;

- (4) Discuss with the NEBE and other appropriate actors the long-term technical and material needs of the Board, to strengthen it institutionally in the period prior to national legislative elections;
- (5) Propose to USAID a program of election-related assistance to be implemented in Ethiopia by IFES both prior to and/or after the June election.

To carry out these objectives, Keith Klein met with the Chairman and the Executive Secretary of the NEBE, as well as the chiefs of the relevant technical departments of the Board. Most of the meetings at the NEBE were held in conjunction with Joe Baxter, a UNDP election advisor who was making his third visit to Ethiopia at the same time as Mr. Klein's trip. In addition to extensive meetings with NEBE staff, Baxter and Klein visited registration sites in the 4th Region and the Southern Region. Keith Klein also met with several Ethiopians who are leaders of political parties or NGOs, to gain a perspective on the political context of the June elections. (See list of meetings, Annex 1.)

### III. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) was established in July 1991, following the defeat of the Mengistu regime by forces led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The TGE was formed within the guidelines of a National Charter, adopted by 27 political movements attending a Transitional Conference convened by the EPRDF in July. The Charter provided the TGE a mandate to preside over a transitional period of two-and-a-half years, during which a new constitution was to be adopted and national elections held. That two-and-a-half year period ended in January 1994.

The Charter called on the TGE to organize three nationwide elections during the transitional period. Article 13 authorized elections for local and regional representatives within three months of the signing of the Charter. Article 11 specifies that the draft constitution is to be adopted by a Constituent Assembly elected by the direct participation of the people of Ethiopia. Article 12 calls for elections to a National Assembly to be subsequently held on the basis of the provisions of the new constitution, with the majority party or parties assuming responsibility of forming a government to replace the TGE.

Regional and local elections were eventually held on June 21, 1992, eleven months after the signing of the Charter. The elections were beset by many technical and political problems, as was reported by the international observers present and as was admitted by the TGE. The TGE's Office of the President assessed the elections in the following terms on June 25, 1992:

While the elections process was flawed in many ways and suffered the effects of administrative and logistical difficulties, budgetary problems, and the withdrawal of some organizations from the process, the Transitional Government views the elections as an important first step towards establishing a democratic political process in Ethiopia.

A report of the National Democratic Institute entitled An Evaluation of the June 21, 1992 Elections in Ethiopia summarized NDI's assessment with the statement, "[T]he June 21 elections did not contribute directly to Ethiopia's development as a democratic state." NDI's evaluation of the election according to its explicit and implicit objectives is worth summarizing here for its relevance to the similar objectives of the 1994 elections. According to the writers of the NDI report, the 1992 elections fell short if its objectives in several regards.

- (1) *"Competitive participation, for the most part, did not occur."* The EPRDF dominated the



electoral playing field, overwhelming other smaller and new parties almost completely lacking in organization capacity and financial resources. In addition, several political parties, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) withdrew from the election process shortly before June 21.

- (2) *"Acute administration and logistical shortcomings seriously impaired the electoral process."* Prominent among these shortcomings were the late arrival of registration and polling materials in many locations, and the failure of local administrative personnel to act in an unbiased, noncoercive manner and to effectively control the distribution of election materials.
- (3) *"The elections failed to resolve the nagging ethnic problems concentrated in the southern regions of the country."* The TGE's perceived failure to administer a fair and open election process resulted in the withdrawal of the OLF from the Council of Representatives soon after the election, and the resumption of open warfare between the OLF's armed wing and the EPRDF army.
- (4) *"The voting exercise did not educate a majority of the population regarding the nature of genuine, multiparty elections."* Voter education was ineffectual in preparing the bulk of the population for the election and explaining its relevance. Little campaigning occurred anywhere in the country, and voters witnessed little debate on the issues crucial to the future of their country.

The NDI analysis, whether or not one accepts the specific judgements, provides a useful framework for looking at the political goals of the 1994 elections. In accordance with Article 11 of the Charter, the TGE will hold national direct elections for members of a Constituent Assembly on June 5, 1994. The Assembly's mandate will be to adopt a new constitution, paving the way for a further round of national elections and the completion of the transitional period.

The TGE has continued on the course that was set by the 1991 Transitional Conference, redrawing regional boundaries, redefining the relationship of Ethiopia's various ethnic groups to the central government, and proceeding toward the completion of its major transitional task: the establishment of a new constitution. The wounds to the Ethiopian body politic that were inflicted at the time of the 1992 elections continue to fester, however. This is particularly evident in the continued non-participation of the OLF and other political groupings in the Council of Representatives, and in the probable non-participation of many political parties in the Constituent

Assembly elections.

This situation presents the TGE with a list of objectives for the June 1994 elections that is similar to the objectives which it failed to fully accomplish in 1992:

- (1) Competitive participation, at the constituency level and the national level;
- (2) Administrative fairness and logistical efficiency;
- (3) Reduction rather than exacerbation of ethnic and regional conflicts;
- (4) Further education of the population on the nature of multiparty elections and democratic government.

The overall goal of the June 1994 electoral exercise is the selection of a body--the Constituent Assembly--with a membership reflective of the groupings and opinions of the Ethiopian people. Successful accomplishment of that overall goal will require some measure of success in the four objectives listed above. It is the judgement of this report that accomplishment of the second object--administrative fairness and logistical efficiency--is possible given the progress made by the NEBE in these areas as of early March. The likelihood of success with the other three objectives was difficult to judge at the time of the assessment visit, particularly given the short period of time spent in the country.

These three objectives, and the questions that remain of the possibility of their successful accomplishment, point toward the critical issue of the political viability and advisability of holding the Constituent Assembly elections in June (as opposed to a later date). A definitive judgement on this issue is beyond the scope of this report and beyond the ability of its author, but a few comment may be worth making in this context.

The four objectives listed above can be viewed as components of the socio-political purpose of this election. In addition to serving the purpose of selecting a representative body to ratify the constitution, the Constituent Assembly election functions also as one of several means for the people of Ethiopia to discuss and reach consensus on the major issues of the new state that is being created.

The TGE has presented at least four formal mechanisms for this discussion and consensus

building to take place. The first was a nationwide series of town meetings held at the kebele-level beginning in December 1993 and continuing through the early months of 1994. Organized by the Constitutional Commission, these meetings were intended to give the ordinary citizen an opportunity to express his or her opinion on constitutional issues. Reportedly, the kebele-level process worked better in some regions of the country than others, but to some degree was successful in airing constitutional issues at the grassroots level. The data gathered at these meetings was to be reflected in the actual drafting of the constitution, but in early March the process by which that was to happen was unclear.

The second mechanism for discussion and consensus is the work of the Constitutional Commission itself. This body, selected by the TGE, was intended to be made up of individuals both technically equipped for the task of drafting a constitution and politically representative of the spectrum of opinion. There was some questioning by opposition leaders of the legitimacy of the Commission on both counts. Little of the Commission's work was visible to the public. The culmination of the Commission's work was the presentation of a draft constitution to the Council of Representatives in late April 1994.

The third mechanism, and potentially the most important, is the election process itself. In principle, competitive campaigning prior to the June elections in the 548 constituencies is an opportunity for discussion and debate on a much more open and on-going level than was possible in the kebele town meetings. While it may be preferable for this debate to be mediated by political parties which take definable positions on constitutional issues and run candidates nationwide that represent the parties' positions, it is possible for independent candidates also to serve as focal points for the mediating and coalescing of public opinion. Indeed, in the view of the NEBE, this is an election for candidates, not parties. The minimum requirement for competition, and for politically useful debate, is the registration and active campaigning of at least two opposing candidates in each constituency, whether or not they have the backing of a political party.

The fourth mechanism for a national "processing" of constitutional controversies is the work of the Constituent Assembly. This body of 548 members will meet to review the draft constitution written by the Constitutional Commission and presented to the Assembly by the Council of Representatives. The work of the Assembly will be an effective and legitimate means of reaching national consensus on the shape of the future state of Ethiopia only if the Constituent Assembly election has been technically credible and has featured truly competitive participation. The Assembly will be able to accomplish its socio-political task of giving Ethiopia a legitimate

constitution only if it succeeds in being, in perception and in reality, more than a rubber-stamp body for the dominant political tendency in Ethiopia.

Seen from the perspective of its socio-political function, the Constituent Assembly election process is only one mechanism out of several whereby discussion moves the body politic of Ethiopia toward consensus on the constitution. It does not, and should not, carry the entire burden. The election's central importance to this process, however, is inescapable given (1) the shortcomings of the first two mechanisms listed above (kebele meetings and the work of the Constitutional Commission) in moving the people of Ethiopia toward consensus; and (2) the fact that it is difficult to conceive of a means whereby the fourth mechanism (the Constituent Assembly itself) can successfully complete the task of consensus building unless the June 5 elections is viewed as credible both technically and politically.

The main focus of this report is on the technical preparations for the June 5 elections. The following chapters address those issues, largely leaving aside the political aspects of the question.

#### IV. PREPARATIONS FOR THE JUNE 5 ELECTIONS

##### A. The Election Law and Regulations

In mid-1993, the Council of Representatives promulgated an Election Law intended to govern the process of holding Constituent Assembly elections. Its applicability to any subsequent elections is likely to be limited, as the new Constitution may revise the basic framework for electing national representatives. A major component of the 1993 Election Law is the creation of a National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), replacing the Ethiopian Election Commission which organized the 1992 elections. The law's eighty-two articles provide satisfactory though general guidelines for organizing elections with sufficient safeguards for the requirements of a democratic and transparent process. In early 1994, the NEBE completed and published more detailed regulations for the Constituent Assembly elections in a document entitled "Definition of the Procedure for Electoral Execution and Determination of Decisions." These regulations will serve as the operational guide for the 1994 elections, and, other than one or two exceptions discussed below, also provide sufficiently for the checks and balances required for a credible election process.

Some of the more important provisions of the Election Law and the regulations are the following:

**Constituencies.** Ethiopia is divided into constituencies, each of which elects one representative to the Assembly. The constituencies are to take the existing administrative divisions of the woreda as their basis; and should guarantee the principle of one-person, one-vote by each having approximately 100,000 inhabitants. Ethnic minorities of less than 100,000 and more than 10,000 members should be provided with special constituencies. On the basis of these principles, the Council of Representatives established 548 constituencies.

**Voter registration.** Voters are required to register in advance of the election, at a registration center that will also be their polling place. An electoral roll is established at each registration/polling center, and each voter is provided with a voter card at the time of registration.

**Candidate registration.** The primary requirements for someone to register as a candidate in a constituency are five years residency (with some exceptions) and endorsement signatures of 500 voters registered in that constituency. A candidate may be party-affiliated or independent. A maximum of twelve candidates may run any a constituency.

**Campaigning.** Candidates are guaranteed freedom of written and oral expression, equal access to state-owned media, and free use of air time on the mass media. Candidates are granted immunity from prosecution for all but serious offenses during the campaign period.

**Voting.** Voting will take place on a single day, using a paper ballot listing all candidates in a particular constituency. No absentee voting will be permitted; voters must vote where they registered. Indelible ink will be used to protect against double voting. Ballots will be counted at the polling station.

**Election Personnel.** In addition to the NEBE and its national staff, the law specifies electoral offices at the regional and woreda levels. Registrars/pollworkers at the polling station level are appointed by the NEBE. Five individuals are elected by the residents of a polling station area to serve as observers during the registration and voting period.

## **B. The Election Board: Form and Function**

The seven members of the Election Board were appointed in November 1993 by the Council of Representatives. The Board's chairman is Kemal Bedrie. The Electoral Law specifies that the day-to-day operations of the Board are to be supervised by the Chief Executive of the Secretariat, assisted by a Deputy. The Chief Executive is Assefa Biru.

The NEBE has regional coordinators in each of the ten regions (the Southern Region comprising Regions 7-11). The regional coordinators were not appointed by the Board but were chosen by the regional presidents. Partly because these coordinators may be more loyal to the regional president than to the Board, the NEBE has minimized their role, and uses the 62 zonal coordinators as the second layer of the electoral structure for most purposes. Bypassing the regional level was also credited by some NEBE staffers as increasing the efficiency of Board operation. The primary responsibility of the regional coordinators is to be the Board's liaison with the regional administration. The Board has very few resources of its own at the regional level, and so the coordinators are dependent on the cooperation of other administrative structures. The Prime Minister's office has ordered the regional administrations to cooperate with Board officials. Regional coordinators have to depend on that cooperation with the administration for their transport and other support. They do not have Board-provided vehicles. Regional coordinators are paid 1220 birr/month; zone coordinators make 980 birr/month.

The ten regional coordinators and the 62 zonal coordinators are employees of the NEBE. The

woreda-level coordinators are temporary appointments, mostly seconded from other government services.

At the level of the registration/polling station, the pollworkers were mostly chosen from the ranks of teachers, agricultural extension workers, health workers, etc. Almost all are government employees, and most live in the community where they serve as registrars/pollworkers. In the Afar and Somali regions, where literate government workers are scarce, some pollworkers had to be supplied from outside the local communities. All pollworkers have to sign an oath that they are not members of a political party. In charge of the pollworkers at a each station is a presiding officer. Choosing the presiding officer was the responsibility of the zonal election officials, after receiving "nominations" from the Woreda level.

At the national level, the Board has divided its many tasks among several departments including finance, legal, logistics, civic education/training, and administration/follow-up. Each department has its head officer, most of them young government employees transferred from other ministries. Some of them had also worked with the Election Commission and had been involved in the 1992 election.

Samson Ghieta Hune is the Legal Advisor and has been responsible for the drafting of the electoral regulations. Lelsaegad Erkyehun is the head of the civic education and training department. His department has designed the radio training program for the registrars/pollworkers. Ato Abebe is the logistics chief, responsible for the planning and implementation of the movement of all the required election materials and personnel. Petros Haile Mariam heads the department of election control and follow-up. His job is to oversee all election administration work--to gather information from the field and to solve problems. He meets weekly with a Policy Committee, which includes Board members and serves a coordinating function for general election administration. He can bring his questions and problems to the Committee at the weekly meeting and get policy clarification.

Working under Petros are eleven desk heads who are responsible for communicating with zonal officials each day. Each evening, there is a meeting with the desk heads to get the questions answered that they have received from the field, about the training program, transportation, materials, money, etc. There is phone link to about half of the constituencies, and radio link to some others. The most tenuous link in the chain of communication is between the constituency and the polling station levels.

The final layer of personnel involved in the 1994 election process are the Ethiopian observers. Although domestic election observers are little mentioned in the Electoral Law, the election regulations describes the means for electing polling station observers and their responsibilities (Articles 5 and 6). The polling station presiding officers are charged with the duty of conducting an election for observers in each polling station area. Five people are to be elected who are residents of the area and are not members of political organizations. Their duties are to observe electoral processes at the polling station (including the voter registration process and vote counting, in addition to voting itself) and to report irregularities to the presiding officer or to the Woreda electoral office.

In most polling station areas, observers were elected at the end of February 1994, just before the beginning of the voters registration period. They received no training for their task, except what they were told by the presiding officers or by officials from the Woreda electoral office. In Addis Ababa, a large meeting was held for observers on March 5 at the Municipal Hall. Members of the Board and the department chiefs told the assembled 600-700 observers about the work of the NEBE and of the duties of observers. There was not an opportunity for the observer to ask questions.

### **C. Constituencies**

As noted above, the country has been divided into 548 constituencies, each of which will elect a representative to the Constituent Assembly. In principle, each regular constituency has approximately 100,000 inhabitants. In order to guarantee representation to small ethnic groups which are not large enough to merit a regular constituency, the Council of Representatives has drawn up 22 special constituencies for groups of less than 100,000 members, but more than 10,000. These special constituencies have a geographical basis; to be eligible to vote in a special constituency an individual must both be a resident of that geographical area and be a member of the particular ethnic group. Often there is overlap between the regular constituencies and special constituencies. In Harar, for instance, the city as a whole is a regular constituency. There is a portion of the city where a particular small ethnic group is concentrated which has been defined as a special constituency. In this area, registration stations were established with two registration books. The members of the minority ethnic group register in one book and non-members of the group who are resident in the area sign in the other book. Members of the minority group resident within a special constituency have the option of registering in the minority or the "majority" book. Members of the minority group who are not resident in the special constituency area are not eligible to vote in the special constituency.



The distribution of constituencies in the zones and regions of Ethiopia is as follows:

Region	Zones	Constituencies	Polling Stations	Population	Eligible Voters
1 Tigre	5	35	1,937	3,474,049	1,549,192
2 Afar	5	8	534	751,756	355,196
3 Amhara	7	138	7,620	14,039,554	6,400,060
4 Oromo	12	176	12,134	18,356,997	8,064,305
5 Somali	9	22	1,480	2,376,026	1,038,256
6 Benshangul	4	9	516	840,905	371,264
7 Southern	11	108	5,994	11,073,894	4,810,319
12 Gambala	1	3	132	114,624	53,874
13 Harar	1	2	88	179,446	80,751
14 Addis Dire Dawa	6 1	23 2	1,092 90	2,213,296 184,223	1,118,677 90,268
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>31,617</b>	<b>53,501,854</b>	<b>23,942,162</b>

On average there are nine constituencies per zone, 58 polling stations per constituency, and 757 voters per polling station.

#### **D. Calendar**

Soon after its appointment, the NEBE established in December 1993 an election calendar in which it revised the calendar that had been drafted by the Election Commission. The Board's calendar was both more detailed and more realistic than that of the Commission. The December calendar seemed to indicate that the Board could successfully organize a national election by June 1994 if they were able to keep to their timetable. The Board, however, quickly began to fall behind its self-established schedule, missing many of the deadlines set for December and January. As a result, voters registration did not begin as scheduled on February 12. With little publicity and with few complaints from the political parties, a new date was set for the beginning of registration, March 6, putting the Board 19 days behind in its calendar. Internally, the Board adjusted its schedule, planning to make up for the lost 19 days during March, April and May. The new calendar that the Board was using in early March set the following benchmarks:

<u>Old Schedule</u>	<u>New Schedule</u>	
Feb. 12	March 6	Voters registration begins.
Feb. 25	March 15	End of voter registration.
March 17	April 1	Candidate registration ends.
March 31	April 15	Arrival of candidates' names and symbols at NEBE in Addis Ababa.
April 26	May 9	Printing of ballots is completed.
May 21	May 23	Ballots arrive at Woreda level.
May 25	May 28	Ballots arrive at polling stations.

As can be seen, the timing of most of the crucial activities during the last three months of the election process has been shortened. The new schedule depends most importantly on shortened periods for the registration of voters and of candidates, and for a more efficient system of distributing ballots from Addis to the polling station level. The NEBE was confident that it could shorten ballot delivery time because of lessons learned in the distribution of registration materials. In particular, the Board hoped that they could make delivery more efficient by by-passing the regions as a distribution point; ballots will go directly from Addis Ababa to the zonal level and delivered from there to each of the constituencies.

#### **E. Election Progress in Early March 1994**

The IFES visit to Ethiopia took place in early March 1994. At that time, the NEBE seemed to be operating efficiently, confident that all the pieces would fall into place by election day on June 5. A summary of the status of some aspects of election preparations in the first week in March follows.

#### **Training**

One of the most significant changes in the election plan that the NEBE was forced to make in

early 1994 was a reorientation of the training and civic education program that had been devised by the Election Commission. The Commission had developed a training plan whereby nearly 100,000 people would be trained at the polling station level to be registrars, pollworkers and civic education trainers. They would be trained by nearly 3000 Woreda level trainers who had been trained by zonal level trainers. The 100,000 polling station level trainers would conduct training sessions for the people in their polling area, so that all eligible voters in Ethiopia would receive direct training in the basics of democracy and voting. The total budget for the training/civic education program was more than 90 million birr, or \$15 million.

After beginning this training program at the regional and zonal levels in January 1994, the NEBE was forced to face the reality that the program was far too ambitious given the available time and financial resources. The Board scaled down the program so that its target population was the 100,000 registrars/pollworkers rather than all eligible voters. The scope of the training was also narrowed, from a comprehensive civic and voter education program to a program focussed on the procedural information that the registrars/pollworkers needed to perform their duties. Most importantly, the medium of training was changed from direct, in-person, small-group training sessions to training by radio broadcast.

According to the new plan, training would be conducted through programs aired over the educational radio network. This network, which is used mostly in schools to supplement the regular curriculum, was already established, with eleven regional transmitting stations, radios in many schools, and a cadre of experienced radio educators in the Ministries of Education and Information. In the view of the Board, radio training would address not only the economic constraints they faced, but also a problem that the Board had noted in the early phases of the face-to-face training that began in January. The Board was dissatisfied with the level of learning that occurred in those January sessions, and it worried that the information being passed on to each succeeding layer in the training pyramid would deteriorate such that the pollworkers at the bottom of the pyramid would be inadequately equipped to do their jobs. Radio training offered the advantage of presenting a standardized training program to each of the nearly 100,000 pollworkers.

The obvious disadvantage of radio training is that it is only one-way. There is no way to ensure that trainees understand and absorb the material presented to them in the radio programs, or even that they attend the trainings.

Training of pollworkers/registrars was conducted nationwide on March 2-5. Pollworkers were

to gather at the Woreda level (or in other groupings) to listen to the programs over the four-day period. A total of eight 15-minute programs had been written, covering all the information that the registrar needed to perform his/her duty. The programs were broadcast from the eleven transmitting stations around the country, in ten languages. In the few areas of the country not reached by the broadcasting network, audio cassettes of the programs were distributed.

Two 15-minute programs were broadcast on each of the four days of training. The pairs of programs were repeated three times during the day. Between the two programs was a 45 minute discussion period. Discussion was led by trained radio-education facilitators from the Ministry of Education. These facilitators had received no special training in election procedures, and used the same manual that the pollworkers themselves received to clarify questions that arose in the discussion periods. The radio training sessions were to take place in 6,000 centers nationwide. In a very limited sample of these training sessions on the second day of training (March 3), the radio programs seemed to present the material in a creative and effective manner, and the discussions did enable some two-way communication to take place. At least, the discussions permitted the training participants to come up with their own joint answers to questions that arose, if no authoritative answer was available.

### **Voters Registration**

Preparation for voter registration had been facilitated by mobile NEBE teams that have been in the field since the beginning of the distribution of registration material. These sixteen teams of two to three people are each based at a zonal center, and each has a pickup truck. Their job is to make sure that preparations are proceeding on schedule at the zonal level, and to assist the zonal staff in staying in touch with the constituencies. They have also helped deliver materials to constituency level. It was their responsibility to see that all the registration materials get all the way to the polling station level.

Voters registration began on March 6, nearly than three weeks later than originally scheduled. According to the Board, registration materials had been delivered to all polling stations, and pollworkers had been trained in all areas of Ethiopia prior to March 6 except in parts of Regions 2 and 5 and in isolated areas of Gambala (Region 12). The Board estimated that only half the zones in Region 5 were ready to begin voters registration on March 6 because of security problems.

IFES visited eight registration sites between Addis Ababa and Awasa on March 6, and found all

stations to be operating more or less satisfactorily. (See Annex 2.)

### **Voter Education**

As noted above, the NEBE has not undertaken the elaborate training and voter education program that had been designed by the Election Commission. At the time of the IFES visit, the Board's voter education efforts had been minimal. The Constitutional Commission's civic education program, which used the radio as its primary medium, was pointed to as being more comprehensive at that time than the Election Board's.

The Board had produced posters showing pictorially the registration and voting process. The registration posters had been delivered to each registration site. The voting posters would similarly be posted at each polling site on election day. The Board was also in the process of preparing voter education slogans which would be used around the country on posters and street banners. The slogans, to be translated into five languages, included the following three: (1) "What type of constitutional system do you like? Participate in the election." (2) "If you want to exercise your right to vote and to be a candidate, register to vote." (3) "It is the right and responsibility of every man to vote."

Other civic and voter education efforts by the NEBE included press conferences and press releases, to get news to the national radio, television and press. The Board also organized a session where journalists were invited to interview Board members and staff. The NEBE's civic education department planned to hold at least one more session of that sort, where the press would be invited to walk through the voting process.

## **F. Anticipated Challenges in Election Preparation**

### **Delivery of Voting Materials**

According to the NEBE staff, voting materials, including ballots, will be delivered to the Woreda level by May 25. From there, it will be the responsibility of the polling station presiding officers to pick up the ballots and other materials for their polling stations, and have them ready for voting on June 5. Accomplishing this plan will depend several crucial elements.

(1) Advance preparation of polling station kits. By early March, almost all the materials for

election day had been received by the NEBE, except for some envelopes--and the ballots. The NEBE had also ordered 10,000 new ballot boxes, to replace the ones that were damaged in 1992 or in storage. The NEBE planned to pack all the materials into the ballot boxes (actually, canvas bags) for all 31,617 polling stations well in advance of the distribution date. They estimated that once the ballots are delivered from the printer, the final packing of the polling station kits could be done in five days.

(2) Transportation. In early March diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa expressed interest in assisting the NEBE with the transportation of the polling station kits to the woreda level by lending trucks and drivers. Only with this kind of assistance will the NEBE be able to keep its timetable of delivering the 31,617 polling station kits from Addis Ababa to the 548 constituencies by May 23.

(3) A reliable local delivery system. To ensure that the polling station kits will be delivered from the constituency to the polling stations, the NEBE should insist that the chief officer in each constituency communicate with each of his presiding officers well in advance of election day, and approve the presiding officers' plan for pick up and delivery of his voting material. The constituency chief officers should pass on these plans to the zonal and national offices for review on those levels.

### **Ballot Security**

With millions of ballots being printed and distributed around the country, the fact that the distribution will be done hastily and that the ballots will pass through many hands points to the need for a well-thought-out plan for ballot security. It will be important that ballots and the polling station kits be adequately guarded at each distribution point, especially at the constituency level and at the polling stations, in the days preceding the vote. Equally important will be the system for controlling the number of ballots printed and ensuring that all ballots, both used and unused, can be accounted for following the voting day.

### **Training of Pollworkers**

The NEBE will have had adequate time to evaluate its radio training of registration workers prior to the beginning of the training program for pollworkers. The NEBE should review the strengths and weaknesses of the registration training program so as to make the polling training program as effective as possible. Unlike the registration period, election day permits very little

opportunity for learning on the job. A plan should be established for the training of pollworkers in areas that are not reached by the educational radio system.

### **Printing of Ballots**

One of the crucial steps in the election calendar that has been developed by the NEBE is the printing of ballots. This step cannot begin until candidate registration is complete and all the names of the registered candidates and their symbols have reached the NEBE in Addis Ababa. The NEBE will attempt to facilitate the gathering of names and symbols from the 548 constituencies through the use of radio and fax as much as possible. The Board will also encourage candidates to choose their symbols, which will appear next to their names on the ballot, from a catalogue of suggested symbols. If symbols are chosen from the catalogue, which was to be widely distributed, then the candidate's symbol does not have to physically reach Addis Ababa before the ballot can be designed for printing.

### **Election Finances**

In early March, NEBE staff spoke of problems, both actual and impending, of election finances. At that time, the Council or Representatives had not approved the full NEBE budget for the election. More immediate problems had to do with the payment of registration workers and other local workers for the NEBE. There did not seem to be a consistent policy or formal pay scale for registration workers, either as a stipend for their work or for the reimbursement of their travel expenses. In the Afar and Somali regions, where there are few government workers or others with the necessary qualifications, many registrars had to travel long distances to get to their polling stations. If local election workers feel they were not treated fairly during the registration period, this might have a detrimental impact on their willingness to work effectively at the time of the election.

### **A Neutral Field Staff**

A central problem for the NEBE is ensuring that its field staff, from the regional level to the polling station level, acts in an unbiased manner and is perceived as being neutral. The observers chosen at the polling station level are a key ingredient in this effort. For observers to be effective, they must be given sufficient information on the electoral law and on their responsibilities, and a mechanism for receiving and responding to their feedback must be in place.

A second key ingredient in creating an unbiased electoral structure is a clear communication of that expectation, from the highest levels of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and of the NEBE.

### **Registration of Political Parties**

The registration of political parties began at the beginning of March and will continue for three months. According to the NEBE, this process will have no direct effect on the June 5 elections, because candidates may run as independents or as representatives of a political party. It must be granted, however, that the number of political parties formally participating in the Constituent Assembly elections will have an effect on the perceived credibility of the election. A wide spectrum of parties registered and running candidates will bode well for the legitimacy of these elections.



## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. The NEBE

#### Communication

The NEBE would be well-served by improving its communication with political parties and with the press and other media. The Board should make all reasonable efforts to explain the election process to the political parties and to solicit their feedback on the NEBE's execution of the law in the field and their recommendations for strengthening the process prior to election day. In addition to increasing its communication with political parties, the NEBE should open up lines of communication with the general public, especially through the press, radio and television. The appointment of a press secretary or a public information officer whose primary responsibility would be publicizing the activities of the Board would be recommended. At the very least, the Board must have in place a mechanism for communicating to the media reliably and in a timely manner in the days immediately before and after the June 5 election, to ensure the flow of correct information about the vote and the count and to reduce the spread of false rumors.

#### Training

The Board should follow up on its radio training of registrars, to see where the gaps and the misinformation are, so as to improve the radio training of pollworkers. This innovative training program, if successful, might be a useful model for other countries, as well as for future elections in Ethiopia. In order to judge its degree of success the Board should put into place a mechanism for evaluating the program's effectiveness in producing well-trained pollworkers for election day.

#### Observers

A crucial but untested component of the electoral system put into place for the June elections is the locally elected observers. These five individuals at each polling station--more than 150,000 around the country--have been charged with reporting any violation of the electoral law or any other inappropriate actions on the part of the local representatives of the NEBE. For this admirable program to be effective, the elected observers (1) must be motivated by a desire to monitor and safeguard the democratic electoral system, rather than the interests of a particular candidate or political party; (2) must be sufficiently educated in the electoral law and regulations

that they recognize violations when they see them; (3) must be provided with a effective and responsive mechanism for registering their observations and complaints. As with training, the Board will have an opportunity to learn from the strengths and weaknesses of this program during the voter registration period so as to make adjustments to improve the observers' effectiveness at the time of the election.

The new electoral regulations stipulate that observers and agents of the media may not express their opinions about the conduct of the election until the completion of the election period, i.e., after the results are officially announced. This regulation seems to apply to both domestic and international observers. This regulation, even if it is not enforced, is an overly restrictive constraint on observers' objective of collecting information and communicating it to the NEBE and others, and should be changed.

#### **Voter Education**

The NEBE should continue and strengthen its program of voter education targeted at the general public. To the extent possible, the NEBE should reach all voters with non-partisan information about the meaning and the mechanics of the June 5 vote.

#### **Post-Election Evaluation**

The Constituent Assembly election, while important in its own right, also serves as a prelude to and training ground for the national elections to be held under the new constitution, probably in 1995. It is recommended that the NEBE develop some mechanism for undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the 1994 election process with the goal of assessing the lessons learned that can be applied in 1995. External observers can contribute to this evaluation but the most effective assessment can only be carried out by the Ethiopians who were directly involved in organizing the 1994 elections. From the NEBE senior staff in Addis Ababa, through the regional, zonal and constituency officials, all the way to the pollworkers, the tens of thousands of people involved in implementing this election all have learned lessons about the strengths and weaknesses of the 1994 process. Soliciting the evaluations of these individuals, or at least taking a representative sample, would be an effective means of pointing the NEBE toward improvements to be made by 1995.

## **B. The Donors**

### **Pre-election Assistance**

The crucial needs of the NEBE in the period prior to the June 5 election are in the areas of communications and transportation. Donors should respond to requests from the NEBE for assistance in transporting people and materials to polling sites in the days prior to the election, and in facilitating communication between the NEBE at the national, zonal and constituency levels and the polling stations. Immediate (phone, fax or radio) communication between central (national or zonal) offices of the NEBE and each of the 548 constituencies would help immeasurably the successful administration of this election, and is a goal that external donors should assist with in any way possible.

### **Post-Election Assistance**

**Post-election Evaluation.** A team of Australians will be evaluating the NEBE's training and civic education efforts. External donors should encourage the NEBE to perform their own self-evaluation, perhaps through a post-election evaluation conference to be held soon after the official certification of the election results, so that the NEBE can begin its preparations for 1995 elections with a list of lessons learned from 1994.

**Training of Board members and staff.** Some Board members and staff would benefit from exchanges to allow them to observe election processes in other countries. In addition, training programs should be designed and implemented for all permanent Board staff at the central, regional and zonal levels. This training can usefully take place at some remove from the next election.

**Election planning and budgeting.** When an election is announced, some targeted assistance would be useful at the time when the Board is preparing its basic planning documents and budget, for the government and for the donors.

**Other institution-building support.** The Board has requested assistance in building its audio-visual capabilities, to give it an ability to produce training and civic education materials in-house. These and other similar requests (for more vehicles, for instance) should be examined in light of the structures in place in other government ministries that the Board should be able to call on.

**Other research and technical assistance.** Some general research/technical assistance needs have been identified by the Board's Executive Secretary, including research into innovative ways to reduce the cost of holding elections in Ethiopia and in maintaining ballot security in the most cost-effective manner. This type of applied research could have longterm positive benefits in making Ethiopia self-sufficient in organizing future elections.

**APPENDIX A**

**ETHIOPIA ASSESSMENT TRIP  
MEETINGS**

**February 28 - March 8, 1994**

Monday, February 28

10:30 - 12:30

**USAID**

Walter North, Deputy Director  
Wendy Fenton, Program Officer

5:00 - 7:00

**NDI**

Kevin Johnson  
Steve Luderbeck  
Joe Baxter

Tuesday, March 1

11:00-12:00

**U.S. Embassy**

Ambassador Marc Baas  
Daniel Walker, DCM  
Rick Olsen, Political Officer

3:00-5:00

**Election Board**

Samson Ghieta Hune, Legal Advisor  
(Joe Baxter)

Wednesday, March 2

9:30-10:45

**OLF**

Zegaye Asfan

11:00-1:30

**Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in  
Ethiopia**

Teshome Gabre-Mariam, Vice Chairman

2:30-5:00

**Election Board**

Lelsaaged Erkyehun, head of civic education department  
(Joe Baxter)

Thursday, March 3

10:00-12:00

**Radio Training Session**

Akake, Region 14, Woreda 26, Kebele 1  
Lelsaaged Erkyehun, head of civic education department  
and other members of the civ. ed. team

2:30-5:00                      **Election Board**  
Petros Haile Mariam, head of the department of election control  
and follow-up  
(Joe Baxter)

Friday, March 4

9:00-10:45                      **Ad Hoc Committee for Peace and Development**  
Dr. Yacob Haile-Mariam, Executive Director  
(Joe Baxter)

12:00 - 1:30                      **Election Board**  
Assefa Biru, Executive Director  
(Joe Baxter)

Saturday, March 5

9:30 - 10:00                      **Election Board**  
Kemal Bedrie, Chairman, Election Board  
(Joe Baxter)

10:15 - 11:00                      **Municipal Hall**  
Board presentation to the Region 14 observers.  
(Joe Baxter)

1:00 - 3:30                      **Lunch at Assefa Biru's house**  
(Joe Baxter)

6:15 - 7:45                      **Ab-Bu-Gi-Da (Ethiopian Congress for Democracy)**  
Sahelselasie Abebe, Ab-Bu-Gi-Da  
Kevin Johnson and Steve Luderbeck, NDI

Sunday, March 6

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.                      **Tour of registration sites**  
Kefene Gormu, Elections Board  
Protasi Buteera, UNDP  
Joe Baxter

9:00 a.m.                      Debre Zeit  
10:00 a.m.                      Alemtena  
10:35 a.m.                      Maeki  
11:30 a.m.                      Zuway  
2:30 p.m.                      Awasa (Three polling stations)  
3:30 p.m.                      Shaashimani  
3:45 p.m.                      Negebe

Monday, March 8

9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Election Board**

Assefa Biru  
Samson Gheita Hune  
Protasi Buteera  
Joe Baxter

12:45 - 2:00

**Special Prosecutors Office**

Todd Howland, Patrick Ball, Ed Tigner

3:00 - 4:00

**British Embassy**

Carston Pigott, Deputy Head of Mission



**APPENDIX B**

## TOUR OF VOTERS REGISTRATION SITES

March 6, 1994

### Sunday, March 6

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Tour of Registration Sites  
Kefene Gormu, Elections Board  
Protasi Buteera, UNDP  
Joe Baxter

9:00 a.m.

Debre Zeit

Registration going OK. About 15 people had registered, with people waiting.

10:00 a.m.

Alemtena

Registrars were using two tables and two registration books. About 45 had registered. 15 women. One observer.

10:35 a.m.

Maeki

The pollworkers had assembled the community to explain the registration process to them. About 100 people were there, mostly old people. They said they expected about 2000 people to register at that site. The pollworkers said that the radio training was good, though they would have preferred in-person training.

11:30 a.m.

Zuway

The presiding officer asked for IDs from us before he would let us come in as observers, citing the election directives. He said that they received the registration materials about Feb. 8. The radio training went well--they all gathered to hear it and to discuss. The pollworkers included a retired ag. worker, a Health Ministry worker, and a retired lawyer. There were 3 observers. 61 had registered. They had posted a hand-written sign outside the polling station with the requirements for voters and candidates registration.

2:30 p.m.

Awasa

First polling station. Only one pollworker there, a woman; the others had not yet returned from lunch. About 80 had registered in the morning. She was dissatisfied with the level of contact and support they had received from the zonal and regional board officials. They had received no detailed directives from them--they were having to improvise as best they could. Only this morning they had received the new instructions about using the two registry books. There were no observers--they had been told that they were to observe only the day of voting, not registration.

2:50 p.m. Second polling station. Still closed for lunch. We were told that they

had only closed at 1:00.

3:10 p.m. Third polling station. 138 had registered. No observers. Radio training had been effective, but there had been no moderator. They too complained about the lack of support from regional and zonal officials.

3:00 p.m.

Shaashimani

They had already done registration in this constituency, starting more or less on the original schedule. In one polling station, about 1500 had registered, in about 5 days in February. They thought this was all but one or two of the eligible voters in the kebele. They were allowing people to still come and register, however.

3:30 p.m.

Negebe

48 had registered. There were no observers because of pre-Lent feasting day. The training went OK--the manuals were helpful. They had publicized registration using megaphone announcements. (In another neighborhood in Negebe, noone we asked knew where registration was going on.)

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