

Date Printed: 11/03/2008

JTS Box Number: IFES_4
Tab Number: 17
Document Title: Analysis of the Voter Registration Pilot
Project in Georgia
Document Date: 2003
Document Country: Georgia
IFES ID: R01607



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**Analysis of the Voter Registration Pilot Project
in Georgia**

International Foundation for Election Systems

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January 14th 2003



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Background

In recent times the credibility of Georgian elections have suffered because of inaccurate Voter Lists. Voter Lists for Georgian elections are generated by a door-to-door process in the time immediately preceding the election date and the process lacks transparency and openness. This has led to elections where Voter Lists contain considerable inaccuracies and where large numbers of voters have to vote using Supplemental Voting Lists. This not only makes good election planning impossible but also means that the public perception of the credibility of the elections is seriously undermined.

Many groups have now started to discuss voter registration and the need to develop a new system of voter registration in order to produce more accurate Voter Lists. IFES has been working with the Central Election Commission (CEC) for some time in an attempt to develop a new system for registering voters. Poor quality Voter Lists in recent Local Government Elections and Parliamentary By-Elections have once again demonstrated the need for such a system.

In late 2002 the CEC established a Working Group comprising of the Deputy Chairperson of the CEC, officials of the Secretariat of the CEC and IFES. The purpose of this Working Group was to develop a system of voter registration that addresses the deficiencies of the current voter registration system and produces Voter Lists in a way which is transparent and auditable, leading to Voter Lists which build confidence in the electoral process.

The Voter Registration Consultant was contracted to work, for a short period, with this Working Group on developing a pilot project for the new voter registration system.

ACTIVITIES

The initial period of the three week consultancy was spent receiving briefings from IFES – Georgia staff members and participating in introductory meetings with members of the Working Group. The first meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for the Friday of this first week and prior to this meeting considerable time was spent building a conceptual model of how a new voter registration system would work. This built on the ideas already developed by IFES' ongoing work with the CEC.

At this first meeting of the Working Group a paper was presented to the Group that outlined the problems inherent in the existing system of voter registration, the objectives of any new system of voter registration and a proposal for the basic design of a new voter registration system. While initially there appeared to much opposition to the model discussed, this opposition seemed to soften during the meeting. Eventually it seemed that although there was definite resistance to some aspects of the model, the vast majority of it was acceptable to the Working Group members.

This position was confirmed throughout the next Working Group meetings. Progress was not smooth at these meetings, but progress was made. Agreement was reached on the underlying principles of the new voter registration system, on a detailed timeline for a pilot project to test the system design, and, in the last meeting at which the consultant was present, on the members of the Working Group who were responsible for different tasks in the timeline. One of the Working Group meetings also involved the Chairmen of the District Election Commissions which had been selected to pilot the new voter registration system.

In the opinion of the Voter Registration Consultant this represented real progress towards the realisation of the pilot project. Much of the progress had been IFES initiated, but some members of the Working Group were identified who could be constructive partners in the project. Progress was particularly apparent when time was spent one to one with key members of the Working Group in order to sound them out on different aspects of the voter registration model.

Working Group members did raise a number of issues on a consistent basis which they believed were problems for the project. One of these concerned the possibility of using civil registration data and IDP data as the starting point for the voter register. The CEC Head of IT believed that the address information in these data sources was of very poor quality and that

as a result cleaning the data so that it could be used in a structured way would either be impossible, or take too long. He proposed using the data from Voter Lists that had been entered by the IT Department. After some discussion it was agreed that this could be another source that would be used to establish the initial data for the voter register, but that we should at least try to use the other sources in the pilot to establish whether they in fact could be used.

With a large number of groups currently discussing voter registration in Georgia the IFES team was keen for the Working Group to signal the fact that they were looking at voter registration and proposing a new system for voter registration. A press conference by the Working Group to inform people about the proposed pilot project was suggested, but the Working Group members were reluctant to go to the press at this stage of the project.

Another issue which created a surprising amount of resistance was the need to have an impartial organisation observe the voter registration process – both the door-to-door enumeration and the data entry components of the new system. This, however, is an essential part of making the new voter registration system transparent and open.

An issue which was consistently raised during discussions with Working Group members was that of funding for the pilot project. All of the Working Group insisted that there was no money in the CEC budget to put towards the pilot project and that all of the project would have to be funded by USAID/IFES.

In addition to time spent with the Working Group, the consultant attended, or held, meetings with a number of organisations of relevance to the voter registration project. Senior members of NDI were briefed on the proposed voter registration system, as was the Director of ISFED. The new voter registration system was also presented to the newly launched coalition of NGOs interested in the fair conduct of parliamentary elections in 2003. All of these groups had particular concerns about voter registration, but were broadly supportive of the proposed new system of voter registration.

Meetings were also held with the Deputy Minister of State to discuss a recent electronic voting presentation made by the Department of State, New Rights to discuss their ongoing 'registration' of voters for campaigning purposes, the Department of Statistics to discuss the lessons learned from their recent census project, the Technical Working Group for the 2003 Parliamentary Elections, and the Director of the Stock Exchange to discuss the possibilities for conducting data entry at the Stock Exchange.

In addition to these meetings and co-ordination work, the consultant spent considerable time developing a number of project documents, many of which are attached to this report. These documents included a diagrammatic design of the new voter registration system, a detailed description of the new system, a report outlining a range of issues that required consideration by the Working Group, a detailed timeline for the pilot project, and draft budgets, and brief explanatory notes, for the pilot project and full voter registration project.

PROJECT ISSUES

Considerable progress was made in the time that the consultant was in Georgia, and in principle there is no reason why the pilot project cannot be successfully completed in the time planned. However, a number of issues do still present challenges to the successful completion of the project.

1. STATUS OF THE CEC

For some time the future of the CEC, and its Secretariat officials, has been uncertain. There have been moves by the parliament to remove the Commission members, and even members of the Secretariat. The voter registration pilot project followed by a full voter registration are tasks which are going to occupy a considerable amount of time for the CEC Working Group before the parliamentary elections. Any change of Commission members and/or Secretariat members part way through the project could seriously endanger the possibility of implementing the new voter registration system in time for the parliamentary elections in 2003.

The Technical Working Group for the 2003 Parliamentary Elections, consisting of a number of influential Ambassadors, is aware of this issue and has taken it up in high level diplomatic meetings with the Georgian government. They need to continue to press for a quick resolution of the status of the CEC.

2. GEORGIAN COMMITMENT TO THE PROCESS

The Georgian government has stated that it is committed to the development of a more accurate voter registration system, but so far these words have been backed up by relatively little action. The CEC has consistently stated it has no money to contribute to the pilot project.

The voter registration system by the Working Group requires that a permanent structure be established in each Electoral District for publication, scrutiny and amendment of the new Voter Lists. This permanent structure is critical for the success of the new voter registration system and will require a monetary commitment from the Georgian government, although it need not be a massive commitment. The concern is that if the Georgian government cannot

find even a small amount of money to assist with the pilot project, then it is questionable whether it will be able to provide the funding for these permanent voter registration structures.

Ideally the Georgian government should be persuaded to contribute towards the pilot project. Regardless, a commitment to providing the necessary permanent voter registration structures should be obtained before funding is made available for the full registration project.

3. ELECTRONIC VOTING

Many organisations in Georgia, including the Ministry of State, seem to be fixated on the idea of electronic voting as a way to overcome the problems that Georgia has experienced in recent elections. It is unclear exactly what is meant by electronic voting by the groups advocating it, but at a minimum it seems to involve the creation of a Voter ID Card with a digitised picture, and may even extend to the idea of electronic Voter Lists at Polling Stations, electronic vote casting and counting.

IFES has consistently maintained that such solutions are not necessary for producing elections of a far higher standard in Georgia and far from making fraudulent activity more difficult may make such activity easier. In addition to this, it is far from clear that Georgian infrastructure can support such high tech solutions. Tbilisi, the capital, suffers from regular power problems and the power situation is far worse in the regions.

The Ambassadors in the Technical Working Group for the 2003 Parliamentary Elections have stated that they do not support such high tech solutions to Georgia's electoral problems and will only be willing to fund projects such as voter registration as envisaged by the Working Group, training of electoral administrators and voter education. Some have voiced the opinion that these electronic voting issues are only being raised to confuse genuine efforts to reform the democratic process in Georgia, including efforts to reform voter registration, as these are the means by which those already in power maintain that position.

Discussions of electronic voting systems by the various groups advocating them should not be allowed to obstruct the development of the new voter registration system. Any of these higher tech solutions may be added on at a later date to the basic voter registration system that has been agreed by the Working Group, and none are required for the administration of high quality elections in Georgia.

4. DATA ENTRY

The scale of this data entry operation will depend on the accuracy of the preliminary data that is used to establish the voter register, but even if only half of the voters have to be data entered during the pilot project this will still involve 100,000 forms being double data entered. The data entry requirements for the main voter registration project may exceed 2 million forms. Such a data entry operation would require a secure facility with a minimum of 30, ideally more like 50, networked computers and a constant power supply.

The Stock Exchange is the only existing facility in where such a data entry operation could be conducted, and meetings have been held with the Director of the Stock Exchange to investigate the possibility of using the facility for the pilot project. However it is unlikely that the Stock Exchange would be available for long enough to serve the data entry requirements of the full voter registration project. Another solution will, in all probability, have to be found.

Three solutions are apparent. The first is that a new data entry facility is established for the purpose of the full voter registration project. This would require the acquisition of an estimated 60 computers, servers and network capacity, UPSs and backup power source, and an office space large enough to house the computers and process the registration forms. This option could cost around \$250,000.

The second option would involve establishing a smaller data entry facility in Georgia and using optical character recognition technology to do the vast majority of the data entry. In fact much of the technology and hardware is already being used at the Department of Statistics for processing the forms completed for the Georgian Census. Image scanner are being used which have sufficient capacity to scan all of the voter registration forms and a network of computers and operators are being used to verify the scanned data.

However, the data entry that is being conducted on the census forms does not involve text recognition, only ticks and numbers. Optical character recognition technology does exist for Georgian script, but it is new and has not been tested in any large scale data entry project. For this option to be seriously considered a comprehensive test of the character recognition software would have to be conducted.

A final option is to contract out the data entry component of the project to a professional data processing company. No such companies exist in Georgia, but there is no operational need to keep the data entry process within Georgia. In fact, contracting out the data entry to an impartial outside company has some benefits in terms of a perception of impartiality.

A company that has been used previously on voter registration projects has been contacted to establish whether they could conduct data entry in Georgian script, and they have confirmed that this does not present a problem. They are flexible and could take delivery of the registration forms themselves, or conduct data entry from scanned images of the forms (scanning could utilise the scanning machines at the Department of Statistics).

Without further investigation into the feasibility and comparative costs of these different options it is impossible to recommend which is the more suitable solution. A full assessment of each should be conducted before any decision on data entry is made for the full registration project.

5. DOCUMENTATION

The Unified Election Code of Georgia clearly establishes the people who are eligible to be registered as voters, and the documents that prove this eligibility. Discussions with Georgian partners seemed to indicate that every eligible person would be able to produce one of these documents for the purpose of voter registration. It is to be hoped that this is the case.

Nevertheless, a procedure should be incorporated into the voter registration system so that a person who claims to be an eligible voter, but does not have any form documentary proof of this fact, can apply to be added to the voter register. Some form of adjudication process would have to be conducted for these persons.

6. TIMESCALE

The pilot project is scheduled to be concluded by the end of February. With parliamentary elections due in Autumn of 2003 this leaves approximately 6 months for conclusions to be drawn from the pilot project and for a voter registration system for the whole of Georgia to be proposed, accepted, planned and implemented, if the system is to be in place for these elections.

While the approach of piloting the voter registration system is strongly supported, the tightness of this timescale means that there is little room for manoeuvre. It is vital that the pilot project be conducted according to the current timeline, and that the proposal, agreement, planning and implementation of the resulting voter registration model quickly follow on from this. In order to facilitate this, the legislative changes necessary for this voter registration model to happen need to be determined and quickly acted upon once a system is agreed upon.

7. OBSERVATION

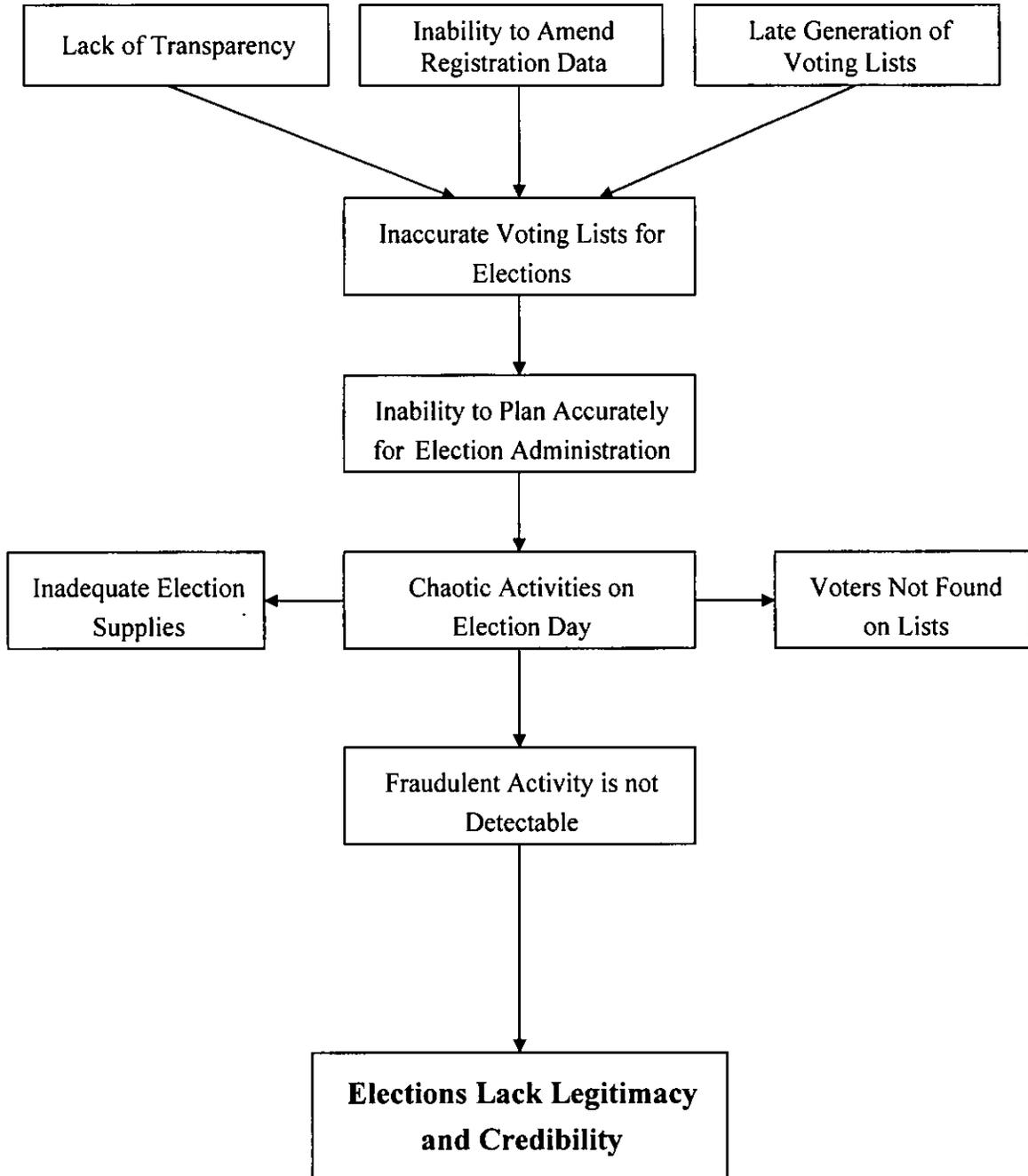
As has already been stated, full observation of the voter registration process is vital to ensure the transparency of the system and to properly defend the process against any accusations of malpractice. Whatever the reservations expressed over observation of the voter registration process, proper observation must be ensured.

8. INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE TO REFORM

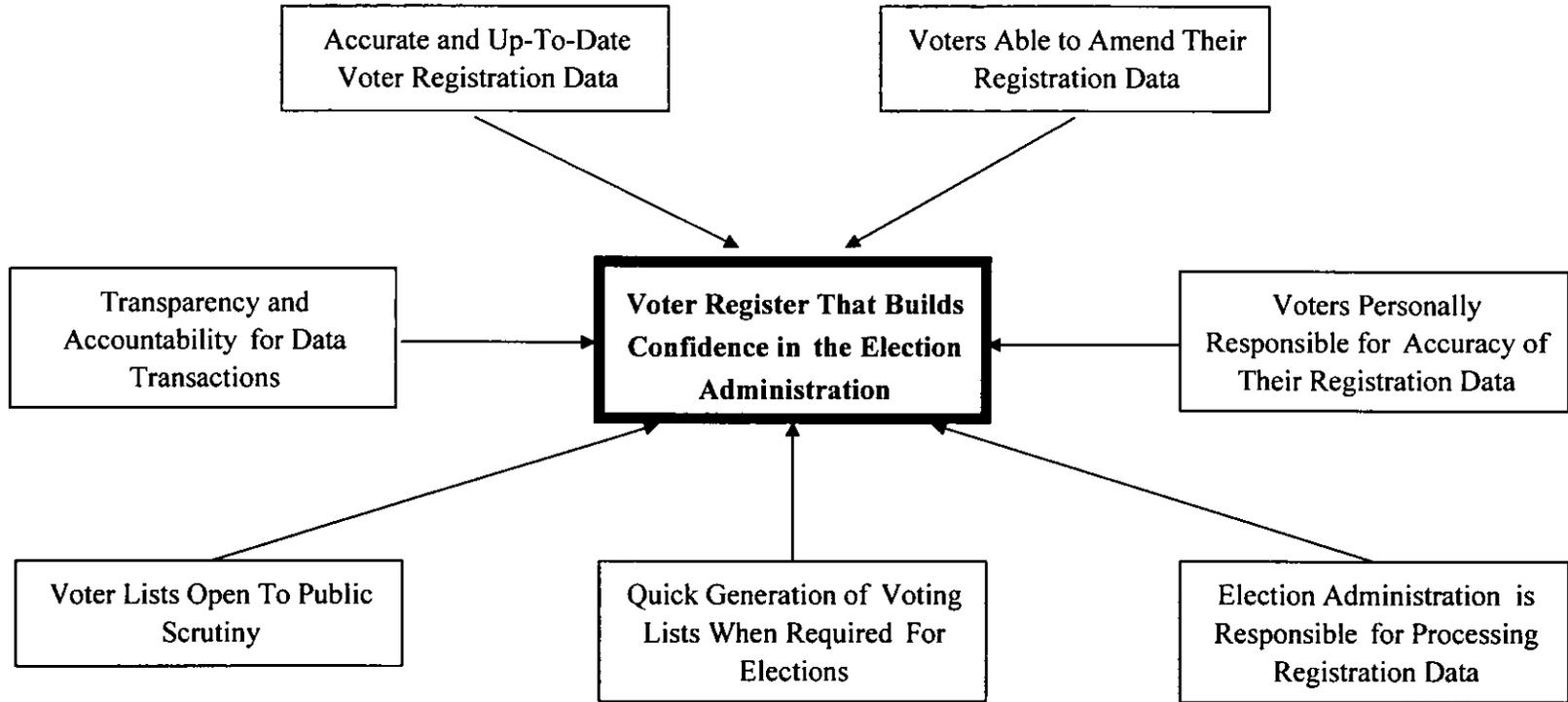
Voting lists appear to have been a significant tool for electoral manipulation in the more recent elections. While government departments, political parties and NGOs are all talking about the need for reform of voter registration, it is entirely likely that powerful political groups will outwardly support such reforms, while attempting to frustrate their realisation. The sudden proliferation of groups calling for voter list reform and the number of groups established to look into the matter (by the parliament and the State Ministry for example) may be a manifestation of this resistance.

APPENDIX 1 – VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM DESIGN

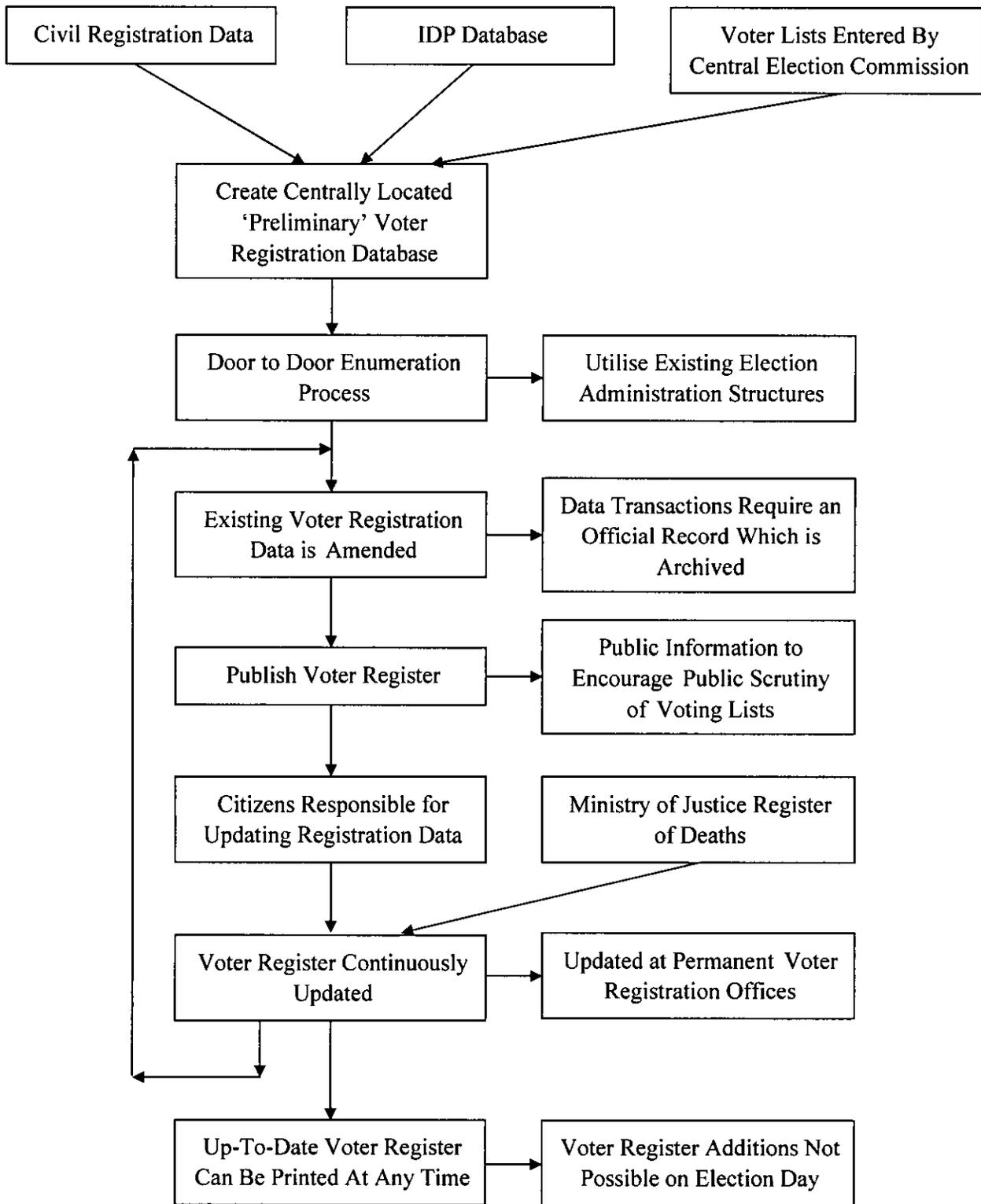
Project Background



System Requirements



Proposed Registration Model



APPENDIX 2 – VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Brief Background

In recent times the credibility of Georgian elections have suffered due to the inaccurate nature of the Voter Lists that have been used to conduct elections. There now appears to be a consensus of opinion that the way in which these Voter Lists are generated needs to be changed.

IFES has been working with the Central Election Commission (CEC) for some time now in an attempt to develop a new system for registering voters. Recent Local Government Elections and Parliamentary By-Elections have once again demonstrated the need for a more accurate system of generating Voter Lists.

The CEC has now established a Working Group comprising of the Deputy Chairperson of the CEC, officials of the Secretariat of the CEC and IFES. The purpose of this Working Group is to develop a system of voter registration that addresses the deficiencies of the current voter registration system and produces Voter Lists in a way which is transparent and auditable, leading to Voter Lists which build confidence in the electoral process.

Project Overview

When developing any new system it is vital to define the objectives that are meant to be achieved by that system. Without establishing this foundation there is no way of determining the correct system to apply. The following objectives have been identified for the new voter registration system:

- Voter registration data must be accurate and up-to-date
- Voter Lists must be open to public scrutiny well ahead of an election
- Voters must be able to amend their data when they find it incorrect
- All data transactions are transparent and auditable
- Voters are personally responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their data
- The election administration body is responsible for processing voter registration data collected
- Voting Lists can be quickly generated when required

On the basis of these requirements a voter registration model has been developed by the Working Group. The model requires that a preliminary set of voter registration data is developed from a number of already existing sources of computerised data - civil registration data, IDP data and some recent Voter Lists which have been computerised by the CEC IT Department. This preliminary data set will be used to develop a Voter Register on a central, computerised database. Centralising the database will help maintain the integrity of voter registration data and ensure that voters are not registered in more than one electoral Precinct.

The data will be printed for the pilot project districts and checked through a process of door-to-door enumeration. Where data is found to be correct by the enumeration process it will be confirmed on the database. Should the data be found to be incorrect, voters will be able to add their details to the register or amend them where they are inaccurate. All of these data transactions will be conducted on a form which will be signed by the voter and the enumerator. All voters who add, confirm or amend their details during this enumeration process will receive a receipt as proof of this transaction. This receipt can be produced on election day to prove that the voter has registered themselves. Completed forms from this enumeration process will be transported to a central data entry facility and then archived.

Once all data amendments, removals and additions have been made to the Voter Register, the Voter Lists will be published for each Electoral District and made accessible for public scrutiny. There should be at least one office in each Electoral District where this public scrutiny can take place. From this point on, the responsibility for checking the accuracy of an individual's registration data lies with that individual. Political parties and NGOs should be encouraged to scrutinise the lists and demonstrate inaccuracies where they exist.

Where inaccuracies in the Voter Lists are found, voters will be able to make amendments or additions to the lists. These data amendments will be forwarded to the central Voter Register for data entry. This system will permit the development of accurate voter registration data in a transparent and auditable manner well in advance of the election itself.

Preliminary Data

Preliminary data will be drawn from 3 main sources – civil registration data, IDP data and recent Voters Lists which have been computerised. The Ministry of Interior maintains the civil registration database, which is generated from applications for a Georgian National ID Card, which are a necessary for Georgian citizens to be issued a passport. There are thought to be approximately 1.5 million records on the civil registration database, although some of the information on this database is believed to be out of date.

The Ministry of Refugees and Displaced Persons maintains a list of all persons claiming IDP status in Georgia. Because of the transient nature of IDPs, they are required to re-register every year and their ongoing benefits rely on this re-registration. The IDP database is considered to be one of the more accurate sources of data that will be used to establish the preliminary set of data for the Voter Register.

The Central Election Commission acted as District Election Commission for the recent Local Government Elections in the ten Tbilisi Electoral Districts, and has been entering the Voter Lists generated for these Districts onto a database. Some estimates put half of the population as living in Tbilisi, so these lists will be a valuable addition to the preliminary data set. However, these Voter Lists are known to contain considerable inaccuracies.

While obtaining copies of the data from these three sources for the preliminary data set should not be problematic, processing the data so that it can be used for enumeration will take considerable time and effort. Duplicates between these different data sources will undoubtedly exist, and these duplicates will need to be eliminated where possible.

Once the data has been cleaned for duplicates, each entry on the register will be allocated a unique Voter Registration ID Number. The Voter Registration ID Number will consist of a sequential 8 digit number, followed by a single check digit.

It is crucial that the Voter Register that is created from this data contains a structured address component. Georgian electoral law strictly limits the number of voters that can exist within each electoral unit (Precinct) and this means that the electoral boundaries of Precincts are often changed. In some cases streets are split between Precincts, in other cases individual buildings on a street are in a different Precinct from the rest of the street.

In order to accommodate these changing electoral boundaries a database of valid addresses has to be developed. Each voter's address on the Voter Register will be linked to the unique address on this database of valid addresses. A person's Electoral District and Precinct will be part of the address database, and not the voter registration database, so that when an address is moved from one Precinct to another all of the people registered to vote there are automatically moved to the correct Precinct and will appear on the correct Voter List on election day.

The Georgian Post Office has recently issued a list of addresses in Georgia, each one being allocated a unique post code, and this could be used as the basis for the structured address component of the Voter Register.

Once this address database has been created considerable time and effort will have to be invested in cleaning up the address details from the three sources of data used for the preliminary data set. It is expected that these address details have been entered in inconsistent ways, making it very difficult to link individual records to correct address names, and therefore print out quality lists for door-to-door enumeration. Tidying up this address data will, therefore, be a critical part of the preparatory work before enumeration.

Enumeration Process

Although a number of sources of data will be used to create the preliminary data for the Voter Register, it is expected that inaccuracies will exist in this data, and therefore the data needs to be checked. The enumeration process is a key part of creating an accurate Voter Register.

Enumeration lists will be printed for each precinct and will be sorted by address. For each address, the Voter Registration ID Number, last name, first name, date of birth and ID Card number (if present) will be printed. Each sheet will have a space for the person who conducts enumeration to write their name. Each name will have tick boxes next to it for the instances when the voter is confirmed as living there (including when the voter has filed an amendment to their details), for when the voter is not known at the address stated or no longer lives there, and for when it was not possible to establish the status of the person listed.

Enumerators will be given a list of addresses that they are responsible for enumerating. At each address they will check whether the people listed as living there do in fact live there, whether their details are correct and whether additional people live there. The exact procedures that will be followed by the enumerator when he reaches a property will depend on whether anyone is present at the address, and whether people listed as present are in fact found to be living there.

Case 1 - Listed Person Found Living at the Address

If the enumeration list contains the name of a person who is discovered at the listed address, and their details are found to be correct, then the Confirmed Box will be ticked for the voter on the enumeration list. A Voter Registration Confirmation Receipt will be filled out for the voter to confirm that they have been registered to vote at that address. This Receipt will be filled out by the enumerator and will consist of a tear-off portion that will be given to the voter and a stub which will be kept by the enumerator for data entry.

The enumerator will complete the following details on the tear-off portion of the Receipt :

Voter Registration ID Number
Last Name
First Name
Date of Birth
Voter Address
Enumerator Name
Enumerator Signature

The enumerator will complete the following details on the stub of the Receipt :

Voter Registration ID Number
Voter Last Name
Voter First Name
Voter Phone Number
Voter Address

Case 2 - Listed Person Found Living at the Address But Information Incorrect

If the enumeration list contains the name of a person who is discovered at the listed address, and their details are found to be incorrect, then the Confirmed Box will be ticked for the voter on the enumeration list. However a Voter Registration Amendment Form will be filled out for the voter so that their details can be amended on the Voter Register. This Amendment Form will be filled out by the enumerator and will consist of the main form that will be used for data entry and a tear-off portion that will be given to the voter.

The enumerator will complete the following details on the Amendment Form :

Date
Voter Registration ID Number
Last Name
First Name
Date of Birth
Gender
Voter Address
Voter Previous Address
Voter Phone Number
Document Type
Document Number
Voter Signature
Enumerator Name
Enumerator Signature

The enumerator will complete the following details on the Amendment Form tear-off receipt :

Voter Registration ID Number
Last Name
First Name
Date of Birth
Voter Address
Enumerator Name
Enumerator Signature

Case 3 - Listed Person Not Present, But Confirmed as Resident

If the enumeration list contains the name of a person who is not present at the listed address, but those present at the listed address insist they do live there, then this person is considered to be confirmed as living there. The person(s) present should be informed that their confirmation that the listed person does live there will mean that the person will be registered to cast a vote in that precinct, and they will not be able to cast a ballot in any other precinct unless they later amend their details.

If the person(s) present still insist that the listed person lives at that address then the Confirmed Box will be ticked for the voter on the enumeration list. A Voter Registration Confirmation Receipt will be filled out for the voter (as in Case 1) and left with the person(s) present at the address to give to the voter.

Case 4 – Listed Person Not Present and Confirmed as Not Living There

If the enumeration list contains the name of a person who is not present at the listed address and those residing at the listed address insist does not live there, then this is considered as sufficient evidence to recommend removal of the listed person from the Voter Register at that address.

The enumerator will tick the 'Not Known' box on the enumeration list for this listed person. The enumerator will complete a Recommendation for Removal Form containing the following details :

Voter Registration ID Number
Last Name
First Name
Date of Birth
Voter Address
Enumerator Name
Enumerator Signature
Resident Name
Resident Signature

Case 5 – Person Present Not on Enumeration List

If the enumerator finds a person living at an address who is not present on the enumeration list then they should be added to the Voter Register. This can only be done if the person can prove their eligibility for voter registration by providing one of the documents listed in the electoral law as proving eligibility.

If one of these documents is provided then the enumerator will complete a Voter Registration Form for the person which consists of a main form which will be retained for data entry and a tear-off receipt for the voter. A person can only add their own details to the Voter Register, no proxy registration is permissible.

The main part of the Form will contain the following details:

Voter Registration ID Number (pre-printed)
Last Name
First Name
Former Name
Gender
Date of Birth
Place of Birth
ID Type
ID Number
Address
Former Address
Voter Phone Number
Voter Signature
Enumerator Name
Enumerator Signature

The tear-off receipt will contain the following details :

Voter Registration ID Number (pre-printed)
Last Name
First Name
Date of Birth
Address
Enumerator Name
Enumerator Signature

Case 6 – Residents Present, But More Residents Exist Who Are Not Listed

Those not present cannot be added to the register in their absence. The enumerator should endeavour to return to the property at a later date in order to register those who are absent. A list of those who were not able to register because of this should be maintained by each enumerator and return visits could be pre-arranged.

Case 7 – No One Present at Address

If no one is present at an address when the enumerator calls then the enumerator should try to call back at a later date. If however the enumerator still fails to find anyone at the address then they will have to mark all persons listed as living at that address as 'Status Unknown'.

All of the registration forms will be designed so that data that is entered on them is written into boxes, where one character is entered in each box. This will make the data more legible and data entry easier.

In order to ensure that the enumeration process is successful, considerable effort will have to be put into informing voters about the enumeration process – what it is for and the importance of making sure that each person is registered. Although mainstream media outlets, like television and newspapers, may be suitable for informing voters in urban areas, in rural areas such media will not be an effective form of voter information and more appropriate methods of voter information will have to be used.

Enumeration will have to be conducted in 2 stages. There will be an initial enumeration of all addresses in Georgia. Once all of this data has been entered onto the Voter Register there are likely to be a number of voters who have more than one entry on the register. Voters cannot have multiple entries on the register, but there will be no way of knowing from the details on the Voter Register which of the details are correct. Therefore, once these duplicates are identified there will need to be a smaller enumeration process to establish which is the correct entry for each of these duplicate entries. To make this process easier, the telephone number of each voter is collected when they are found during the enumeration process.

Duplicates which are identified as incorrect, or fraudulent, will be marked as such on the Voter Register to ensure that voters cannot use these entries on election day to cast multiple votes.

Data Entry

There will be two kinds of forms requiring data entry – addition/amendment forms and confirmation/removal forms. The addition and amendment forms contain a lot of data (name, address, former address etc) that needs to be entered, and will be subject to double data to ensure accuracy. This will form the bulk of the data entry operation.

Confirmation and Removal forms will also have to be data entered, but this data entry process should only consist of entering the Voter Registration ID Number from the stub of the Confirmation form or from the Removal form. The data entry program will call up the name, address and date of birth from the database for this Voter Registration ID Number, and if these details match those on the stub/form, then the data entry operator should be able to accept the confirmation/removal. The entry of confirmation/removal details may not require double data entry as this process already contains a check that the entered Voter Registration ID Number is correct.

It is difficult to assess the scale of the data entry project that will be required after the enumeration process as it entirely depends on the accuracy of the preliminary data used for enumeration and the resulting proportion of addition/amendment forms that are generated as opposed to confirmation/removal forms. The more addition/amendment forms that are generated, the bigger the data entry process will be.

With a total of approximately 2.8 million records on the three data sources that will be used and approximately 2.8 voters in Georgia it is to be hoped that most of the voters of Georgia will be in this preliminary data set used for enumeration. However these data sources are known to contain inaccuracies and undoubtedly have duplicates within and between the different data sources. It is probably reasonable to expect that 50% of voters will be recorded correctly in the preliminary data and 50% will either be missing or have incorrect details. This will mean that 1.4 million addition/confirmation forms will be generated from the enumeration process, requiring 2.8 million of these more time consuming forms to be data entered, and 1.4 million of the quicker confirmation/removal forms to be data entered.

This is a considerable data entry task and it is estimated that a 50 workstation data entry facility operating 24 hours a day for 6 days a week would take 20 weeks to complete this data entry task.

A number of options exist for conducting this data entry. The first is that a facility be created where this data entry could be conducted. This would require a room, or series of rooms, where 50 data entry workstations and 10 supervisor workstations could be set up. A network would have to be created and a server room established to run the network and database. Space would also have to be found to organise the forms through the data entry process, including receipt of materials, first data entry, second data entry and archiving. Due to Georgia's power problems UPSs and a generator would be required.

A second option is to use the Georgian Stock Exchange. Their offices have 50 computers which can be rented, and also include a large training room that could double up as a materials room for forms. The Stock Exchange does have limitations though. For three hours on Tuesday and Thursday the facility has to be used exclusively for the purpose of stock trading. Due to past theft problems the owner of the

Stock Exchange building requires that all offices are vacated by 19:00 every day. This would preclude a 24 hour data entry operation. Even if this exclusion could be overcome, the 50 computers that the Stock Exchange has are less than the number required, and the Stock Exchange would probably require the use of these computers for some Stock Exchange business outside of trading hours on Tuesday and Thursday.

A third option is that the task of data entry be contracted out to a professional data entry company. Companies exist which have the capacity to establish round the clock data entry operations on hundreds of workstations, using highly qualified data entry operators. No such data entry companies exist in Georgia, but they do exist elsewhere in the world. Transporting forms to a company outside of Georgia might make such an option too expensive, and also risky in case they were lost or damaged in transit, but there is the capacity within Georgia to scan the Voter Registration forms and send them to a data entry company digitally. The Department of Statistics has three high speed scanners which could scan all of the form generated by enumeration in as little as 14 days (working 24 hours a day).

A final option for data entry also involves scanning the registration forms, but would involve using optical character recognition software to do the bulk of the data entry. The software for optical character recognition on Georgian script has only recently been developed and its feasibility would have to be properly investigated in order for this option to be seriously considered. If this software was seen to work effectively then the existing capacity for data entry at the Department of Statistics, developed for census data entry, could be utilised in order to do the scanning, checking and verification required for this process.

Publication, Scrutiny and Amendment

In many ways the aspects of the voter registration system previously outlined are on the periphery of the proposed new voter registration system. They are the steps necessary to establish an accurate starting point for the system of voter registration. The crucial component of this new voter registration system is that the Voter Lists are prepared well in advance of any election and that there is ample opportunity for people to scrutinise and amend their registration details.

Once enumeration and data entry have been completed, Voter Lists will be published for each District and at least one office established in each District where these lists can be scrutinised and amended. In more rural Districts it may be necessary to publish these Voter Lists in local government offices, or even to establish a schedule for a mobile facility to scrutinise and amend the Voter Lists.

As many groups as possible (individuals, NGOs, political parties, community leaders etc) will be encouraged to scrutinise these lists. The lists will be available on the internet and could be made available on CDs issued by the CEC. While anyone has the right to scrutinise the Voter Lists, and point out inaccuracies where they are found, only the individual voter has the right to amend their own details, or add their details if they are absent.

This represents a change of emphasis in voter registration from a state initiated voter registration process, to one where the individual voter is responsible for ensuring that their registration details are correct. This is only possible if the Voter Lists are made accessible, and if voters are well aware of why they have to check their details and where they can do this. This will require a considerable amount of voter re-education.

While voters may be able to submit amendments to the Voter List on a continuous basis, they are only likely to be entered onto the Voter Register periodically throughout the year, after which a new set of Voter Lists would be issued for inspection.

In addition to these amendments submitted by individual voters, the central voter registry will have to be linked to the Register of Deceased maintained by the Ministry of Justice. Currently the Ministry maintains a paper system of registering the deceased. This will need to be computerised, and the CEC will have to work with the Ministry of Justice to establish the content and format of the data that it will require from the Ministry in order that those who have been registered as deceased can be efficiently removed from the Voter Register.

Implications for Elections

In recent elections inaccurate Voter Lists have been a serious cause for concern among the election observers. Where voters were not found on the Voter List, but can prove their eligibility to vote by producing a National ID Card, they have been permitted to vote by entering their name on a Supplemental Voter List. There is little control of the use of these Supplemental Lists and although they are necessary because of the inaccurate nature of the Voter Lists that have been used for recent elections, they provide one of the easier methods of defrauding the electoral process.

The voter registration system that has been agreed by the CEC Working Group will make it possible to substantially reduce the use of Supplemental Voter Lists. By creating more accurate Voter Lists in the first place it should cut down the need to use Supplemental Lists. It is not possible, or desirable, to remove the use of Supplemental Voter Lists altogether because there will always be cases where voters have done everything necessary to ensure that their details are on the correct Voter List, but due to an administrative error their details fail to appear on the correct Voter List.

Such voters should not be denied the right to vote, and should be permitted to enter their details on a Supplemental Voter List, but this should only be permitted where the voter can prove that they have registered to vote in the Precinct in which they are attempting to vote. This can be demonstrated by presenting the receipt that they receive when they confirm, amend or add their details onto the Voter Register. All voter registration receipts will show the address at which the voter has registered, and therefore whether they are at the correct Precinct to cast their ballot.

This should be the only instance in which a voter who is not on the Voter List should be able to use the Supplemental List to vote. This will not eliminate the fraudulent use of Supplemental Voter Lists, but will make it more difficult, and will make such fraud detectable. The central, computerised Voter Register will permit the eligibility of the names on these Lists to be verified after the election, with the possibility to invalidate the results from a Precinct where significant fraud was found to have taken place.

It is possible during the enumeration process that a voter may have been registered more than once, either deliberately or in error. These duplicates will be identified after the data entry process and follow-up enumeration will take place to identify which are the correct registration details. Those entries which are found to be incorrect will not be entirely removed from the Voter Register. The names of invalid duplicate registrations will appear on the Voter Register on election day, but in the place where the voter should sign the register, the word 'Duplicate' will appear. In this way the polling station staff member will know not to issue a ballot to the voter. The number of the Precinct at which the duplicate voter is legitimately registered to vote will also appear on the list so that the voter knows where they should go to cast their ballot.

As can be seen this system of voter registration represents a significant change in the way in which voter registration is conducted. The Georgian Election Code is very detailed concerning the conduct of elections in Georgia, including the way in which voters are registered and allowed to vote. It is vital that a full legal assessment of the Election Code be conducted in order that all articles which are incompatible with this new voter registration system be identified, and amendments drafted.

Pilot Project

While the voter registration system described here appears to be sound on paper and in discussions with various interested groups in Georgia it is always sensible to test out the system before moving to full implementation. The Working Group has agreed that it will run a pilot project of the voter registration system in a small number of Electoral Districts in January and February of 2003. Once this pilot has been completed, a recommendation can be made for a new voter registration system for the whole of Georgia.

The pilot will look to test a number of components of the voter registration system. In particular it will be used to assess the ease with which data from the different sources available can be cleaned and linked to a structured address database. Once enumeration and data entry is completed it will also be

possible to assess which of the data sources is more accurate, and whether some of them are too inaccurate to be useful.

The pilot project will serve to develop and test the voter registration database, which will be used for pilot project data as well as the rest of the data when a full registration in Georgia is conducted. This development will take a considerable amount of the time necessary for the pilot project.

Enumeration procedures and organisation are a crucial component of establishing an accurate starting point for ongoing voter registration in Georgia and it is incredibly important that these procedures are tested and work properly before enumeration is conducted for the whole of Georgia.

As has already been discussed, data entry is a time-consuming and labour intensive operation. The pilot project will provide important information on the suitability of the data entry software, the time it takes to do data entry and also provide a good estimate of the accuracy of the preliminary data and therefore an assessment of how many forms will have to be data entered when enumeration is conducted for the rest of Georgia.

APPENDIX 3 – PILOT PROJECT TIMELINE

See attached file.

APPENDIX 4 – PILOT PROJECT BUDGET

See attached file.