PROVISION FOR POST-PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND
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EVALUATION REPORT

TRANSTEC
PROJECT
MANAGEMENT

UDF-RAF-07-133 – Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies in Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe

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I.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i)   Project Data

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies project, implemented from 1 January 2009 to 30 November 2011 by the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) in Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, South Africa, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of Congo. The project was initially to end on 31 December 2010 but was extended 11 months owing to the political situation in Liberia. Co-founded by UNDEF and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), its purpose was to raise awareness among national and international election practitioners about sustainable, cost-effective voter registration (VR) models in Africa. The project had three intended outputs:

- An online database published in booklet form and available for free download, compiling and mapping the available knowledge on voter registration methodologies.
- Case studies published online in book form and available for free download, identifying the voter registration models used in six African countries, with a focus on cost-effectiveness and sustainability. The original project targeted six countries; however, the exercise was extended to Liberia and Senegal, increasing the number of case studies to eight.
- Dissemination of the knowledge acquired through the mapping exercise and field case studies, as well as the results of activities posted on the website of the EISA and ACE Electoral Knowledge Network[1].

ii)   Evaluation Findings

The project was based on a sound strategy that clearly identified the institutional weaknesses in voter registration models. The project was **relevant**, as it addressed the problem of implementing cost-effective, sustainable voter registration methodologies, a challenge for international pro-democracy donors and electoral management bodies (EMBs). The recent appearance of sophisticated ICT-based systems (e.g., biometric systems) has opened opportunities but also created new problems, as the public is still not convinced of the transparency and accountability of these systems. The project was highly relevant in this context, as it documented the existing models that compare assets and liabilities. When the project was designed, there was no comprehensive research to document successful approaches, lessons learned, and country challenges.

In selecting partner countries, geographic balance, a variety of political contexts, linguistic diversity, and different levels of technical knowledge were sought. In the end, the reference panel studied representative elections in African countries, comparing Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, South Africa, Rwanda, and DRC. National and international experts, as well as a reference panel of eminent UNEAD electoral assistance experts, were involved in the design of the project, adding to its relevance. The project's aim was to generate knowledge and disseminate it among experts and institutional stakeholders. However, the link between knowledge, capacity, and the actual election process, which depends primarily on political will, was not explicitly established in the project design, nor was it incorporated as such in the project strategy.

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[1]   The ACE website is an online knowledge repository that provides comprehensive information and customized advice on electoral processes. It is free and accessible to all visitors. See http://aceproject.org.

All project activities were successfully implemented and even delivered beyond expectations; thus, the project was highly **effective.** Two unanticipated case studies were conducted, one in Senegal and the other in Liberia. The online database with over 1,300 documents on VR systems in all the African countries was launched in French and English on 18 November 2009 in Johannesburg (www.vrafrica.org). The book *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis*, containing the eight case studies, was published in 2010, although unfortunately, only in English and not French.

The project management team (PTM) developed a strong organizational and logistical support mechanism to guarantee smooth operation of the database and provided easy and immediate access to it. The study yielded an in-depth understanding of each voter registration system and included a comparative analysis, leading to the development of a common core of recommendations for voter registration systems. This contributed significantly to the project's effectiveness and **efficiency**.

Project activities were implemented at a reasonable cost, and the balance of unspent funds was immediately reallocated to extend the case study exercise to Senegal and Liberia. The dissemination workshop was scheduled for immediately after the two-day 4th annual EISA symposium[2]. This lowered costs, as the target group was already in town**.** However, efficiency suffered, because a thorough study of the time required to construct the database was not conducted beforehand. The six months allocated did not give the investigator time to collect voter registration documentation that was unavailable online – a substantial body of material in the African context. The situation in Liberia hindered planning of the case study. This delayed project completion, suggesting that the extra case study may not have been worth the resources expended. The project was eventually implemented over a period of 23 months, instead of the 12 months originally anticipated.

The project had a number of positive **impacts**, including ongoing in-depth discussions of voter registration reforms. EISA's dissemination of information during international events (i.e., the forum held by the Southern African Development Community[3] [SADC], the workshop conducted by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, the course offered by the Mexican Federal Electoral Institute, etc.) enriched the work of the international election community.

Broad dissemination of the book's findings promoted the project's **sustainability**. Posted on the EISA[4] and ACE websites for free download, the book provides a common core of recommendations and supports attempts to identify the most effective and sustainable VR systems by taking local contexts into account. These recommendations have been used by other electoral agencies, such as IFES Indonesia. The book was translated into Portuguese by the United Nations/European Union Project in Support of the Electoral Cycles in the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOP) and Timor Leste (the Pro PALOP|TL)[5]. These activities helped enhance EISA´s international credibility and prompted the extension of project outcomes to other regions around the world. The integration of the book's

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principles into the BRIDGE curriculum[6] is a clear indication of the project's sustainability, as BRIDGE is a unique, internationally accredited curriculum for local capacity building. Failure to ensure the continued online availability of the project database was a weak point in sustainability. At the time of the field visit, the online database was no longer accessible to external visitors (contrary to the original plan); nor was it posted on the ACE website or printed as a booklet, as originally envisaged.

The project clearly **added value** at a time when elections in African countries are sometimes jeopardized by a lack of voter registration methodologies and the public's distrust of technology (i.e., DRC and Ivory Coast). Acknowledging that no single voter registration system is appropriate in all cases and that there is no literature on the subject were major steps that no other donors had ever supported.

iii) Conclusions

The conclusions presented here are a synopsis of the answers to the evaluation questions in Annex 1.

- At the time of project implementation, there was little reference to African voter registration methodologies in African election literature. This study was a ***pilot project for the African literature on elections.*** By compiling country case studies, comparing existing experiences and drawing lessons from each, ***it created an unprecedented tool for analysis and for peer review***.

- ***The project launched discussions on the factors of failure and success of voter registration methodologies in Africa.*** It laid the ground for voter-registration methodology reform.

- ***Dissemination and impact would have been enhanced by ensuring the database access after the project ended and by translating the comparative analysis into French.*** Three countries studied are French-speaking; project relevance would have been enhanced by considering language at the stage of project design. Besides, if considering a larger scale for dissemination, one should bear in mind that half of the African countries are French-speaking, and knowledge of English among their populations is often limited

- ***The project was in line with electoral needs, which called for greater African political and institutional commitment to improved electoral processes.***

- One of the project's ***main contributions was to show that each country's political, demographical and historical backgrounds are unique*** and that VR systems cannot be adopted without in-depth consideration of all national specificities. The same system can work perfectly in one country but fail in a neighboring one.

- ***The study results were welcomed by international specialists and agencies.*** Its outcomes were used for other projects and were widely relayed by specialized media. ***The study's value added was evidenced by its use by all elections stakeholders.***

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[6] BRIDGE stands for Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections. It is a modular professional development program with a particular focus on electoral processes. For more information, visit http://bridge-project.org/.

▪ Although the project had an impact on international practitioners, the research that it led to, while necessary, was not sufficient to produce real political change. ***There has been no demonstrated impact on electoral cycles that have taken place since then in the countries covered by the study.***

iv) Recommendations

▪ ***The process needs to be both participatory and visible. Additional funds should be allocated to translate the book into French***. French-speaking countries (DRC, Rwanda, and Senegal) were included in the case studies, which should *de facto* have led to the translation of the book, especially since the most problematic voter-registration activities are found in francophone countries (i.e., DRC and Ivory Coast).

▪ ***The online database needs further development if it is to reach a wider audience***. The top priority should be to make it accessible to external visitors. Posting the database's content on the ACE website would guarantee a wider audience and sustainability. Resources unavailable on the Web and collected from other sources should also be made available. The database, which should be turned into an online repository of information, should not be a simple narrative of documentation; it should also offer pointers to track and measure the effective implementation of voter-registration policies in Africa, and to establish indicators for monitoring voter-registration trends.

▪ ***Efforts should be made to raise awareness about voter-registration challenges and lessons learned by targeting a broad spectrum of election specialists and African stakeholders***. There is a need to continue raising awareness about VR and to mainstream it as a key element in discussions on elections. Electoral organizations should continue to relay the message to African stakeholders – that is, electoral management bodies (EMBs), government agencies, political parties, local observers from civil society organizations (CSOs), and the media. These stakeholders play a major role in building confidence in elections and the effective implementation of voter- and civil-registration policy reforms.

▪ ***Future studies should be conducted in line with the countries' future electoral agendas to provide a clear link between research, its dissemination, and policy impact***. It is important to recognize that elections are a political as well as logistical process, because this fosters a closer connection between country electoral agendas and the studies themselves. In this project, clear gaps were still visible between project findings and policy decisions related to the procurement of VR systems. Although the project generated knowledge for the community of experts, it remains unclear whether it has concretely influenced any election in Africa.

▪ ***The project outcomes underscored that both the national and international communities should regard elections in African states in democratic transition as a complex mechanism***. They should better consider elements of sustainability and stability, such as political, legal, organizational, and environmental frameworks, rather than the modernization of VR technologies. Focusing only on the supply-side increases the risk that specific material from external suppliers and foreign technical experts will continue to be given preference, while sustainability issues are ignored. Future studies may explore and further develop this approach to support methodology reforms.

II.   INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

i) The project and evaluation objectives

This report is the evaluation of the Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies project, implemented by the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) in partnership with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) in South Africa over a 24-month period, from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2010, further extended by 11 months to 30 November 2011 because of the difficulties encountered in finalizing one of the case studies.

"The investigations conducted highlighted key elements of any voter registration process. It remains crucial to the maintenance of any democratic state that transparency, comprehensiveness, accessibility and education of the process is within reach of the targeted population."
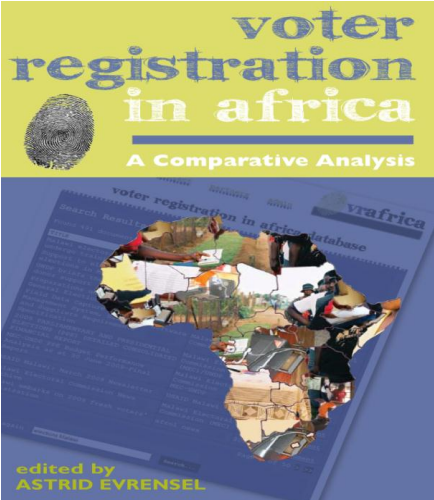**The Elections Guide Digest, published on 20 December**

This project sought to develop and raise awareness among electoral management bodies (EMBs), the donor community, ICT vendors, and other stakeholders involved in electoral processes about registration methodologies, their cost, and their sustainability, while taking the political governance of the countries concerned into account. The assumption was that no single model can be equally effective in all countries. It was hoped that the knowledge generated by the project and the shared experience would enable EMBs and the donor community to make more informed decisions.

The project was implemented in Johannesburg, and field case studies were conducted in Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, South Africa, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The project focused on gathering voter registration (VR) information to construct a comprehensive online VR database and on analyzing empirical experiences through case studies to identify lessons learned, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability challenges related to voter registration. The project had a total budget of US$325,000, $25,000 of which was reserved for evaluation.

ii) Evaluation methodology

The evaluation of this project is part of the larger evaluation of the second and third rounds of UNDEF-funded projects. Its purpose is to contribute to a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which will in turn help UNDEF develop future project strategies. Evaluations also help stakeholders determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether intended project outputs have been achieved. The evaluations are qualitative in nature and based on a standard set of evaluation questions that focus on the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and any value added from UNDEF funding. This report follows that structure.

Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis, 2011

The evaluation took place from November 2011 to January 2012 and the fieldwork in Johannesburg, from 4

to 9 December 2011. During her visit to South Africa, the evaluator conducted interviews and had conference calls with a wide range of stakeholders (see Annex 3), including participants from the Johannesburg workshop, held on 19 and 20 November 2010, and international experts heading projects funded by the United Nations and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in support of electoral cycles.

The project's human resources consisted largely of external international experts, who moved on after project completion. The evaluator therefore placed many phone calls to interview these individuals.

iii) Development context

International observers involved in election management agree that VR is key to an accountable and transparent electoral process. When a VR method is sound, it confers legitimacy on the process. A flawed voter registry, in contrast, complicates electoral planning, eliminates an important safeguard against fraud, and creates the potential for conflict in environments often characterized by ethnic, religious, and linguistic tensions.

In recent decades, virtually every African country has at some point considered modernizing its VR technology. New ICT applications have been adopted in many African countries, particularly in post-conflict situations. ICT applications have often been supported by international donors. However, VR methodologies remain problematic and a challenge for EMBs. Creating a voter registry is one of the costliest, most time-consuming, and complex aspects of the electoral process. It often consumes a major portion of an EMB's budget, staff time, and other resources. Besides the cost implications, the choice of a sustainable VR system depends on a number of political, legal, organizational, and environmental factors and constraints that are specific to each country.

Although international donors have provided technical assistance in Africa to enhance VR efficiency during electoral periods, to date the concrete results are modest given the scale of the challenges. The shift to ICT approaches has not always been synonymous with greater accountability and transparency, nor has it led to political acceptance and public confidence. The last elections in Ivory Coast and DRC demonstrated that the inaccurate civil registry information and poor EMB civil registry procedures still pose problems for VR.

> "We at the UN recognize that there is no 'one way' or 'best way' to conduct elections and therefore voter registration matters. What works in one country does not necessarily work in another. Each country has its own political and socio-economic contexts, its own resource limitations and its own needs to take into consideration when designing a voter registration system."
> **Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis, EISA, Craig Jennes, Director of UN Electoral Assistance Division**

iv) Other relevant initiatives

Recognizing that the focus of the project was to produce a database and case studies on voter registration methodology, the evaluator considered the existing literature to assess the project's value added in terms of raising awareness and identifying sustainable and cost-effective models in Africa. At the time of project design and implementation, there was no similar initiative. Since then, however, international donors have picked up on the issue, and similar publications have been released.

A computerized voter registration kit, as provided by a commercial vendor (Source: *Voter Registration in Africa*)

- The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) published several studies[7] in which voter registration issues are discussed. The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) recently published the guide *Civil and Voter Registries: Lessons Learned from Global Experiences* (2011) to support EMBs through the implementation and reform of civil and voter registries in Afghanistan, Canada, Georgia, Guyana, Iraq, Kosovo, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

- The Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO) conducted a study with an UNDEF grant to develop accurate voter lists in the Eastern European region. The *Developing Accurate Voter Lists in Transitional Democracies Handbook* was published in December 2010. The EU/UNDP joint task[8] force also prepared an operational document *Procurement Aspects of Introducing ICT Solutions in Electoral Processes: The Specific Cases of Voter Registration and Electronic Voting*.

- EISA contributed to the development of the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network by supporting its Capacity Development Facility project in Africa. This ACE initiative seeks to assess EMB capacity in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

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[7] One of the best-known studies published by IDEA is *Voter Turnout Database*. This report includes statistics from more than 1,600 parliamentary and presidential elections in over 170 countries up to 2002 and is constantly updated.
[8] http://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/

III.   PROJECT STRATEGY

i)   Project approach and strategy

The project's overall objective was to produce an inventory of experiences in Africa and promote the development and awareness of sustainable, cost-effective VR models.

Although this objective was not designed to produce a comprehensive catalogue of best practices, the project sought to increase the pool and quality of knowledge available to election practitioners, particularly those with experience in election management and VR, and enable them to select the most effective and sustainable VR methodology and technology. The project intended do so by (i) collecting and mapping all available documentation related to VR, (ii) analyzing the extent to which the VR methodologies used in six countries were relevant, cost-effective, and sustainable, and (iii) widely disseminating the knowledge compiled in the desk study and case studies.

The UNEAD reference group was to offer guidance at all stages of the project. This included sharing information on project implementation and evaluating project outputs.

ii)   Logical Framework

The logical framework is generally weak, in some cases confusing activities (e.g., setting up an office) with outputs (e.g., office set up and operating). The logframe shows that there was an assumption that constructing an online database and conducting the case studies in six African countries would enhance EMB capacities. (Originally, only six African countries were foreseen.)

However, EMBs were viewed primarily as interviewees and workshop participants, and all activities were implemented by international practitioners. It is hard to see the capacity building here. The original project document and logframe did not include activities to assess or monitor the EMBs' VR practices. Finally, while this was not a fatal oversight, it is striking that no account was taken of one particular risk: that boosting the technical efficiency of election processes may merely serve to support a process that is fundamentally flawed owing to political considerations (although these considerations are, of course, beyond the scope of the project). Notwithstanding, the failure to take this risk into account should not be used as a reason to keep from proceeding with such a worthwhile project. However, it should at least be given some consideration at the design stage.

The table below summarizes the project's logical chain from activities to outputs contributing to the ultimate development objective. The table is based on the revised logical framework provided by EISA, including changes that occurred in the course of implementation.
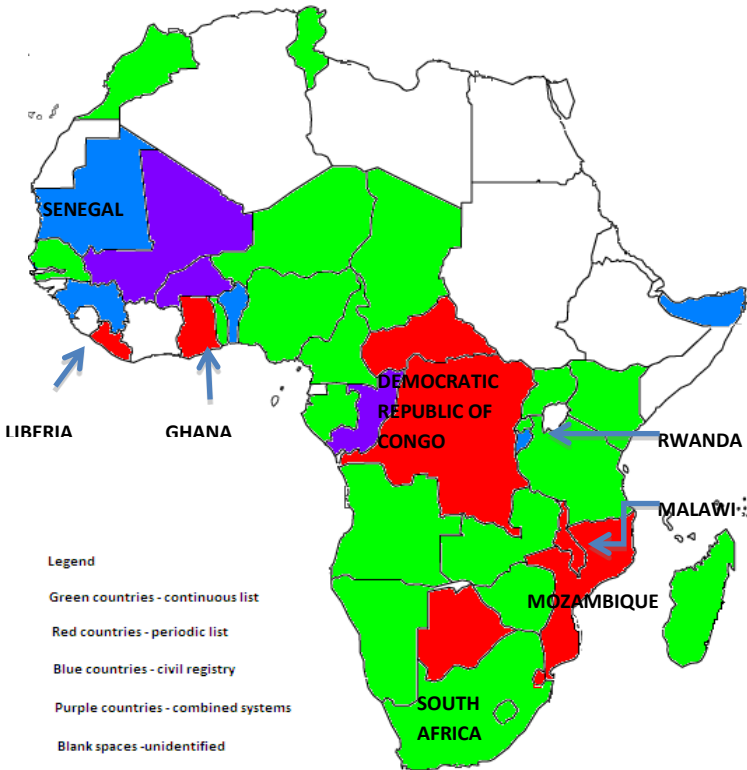
Project activities	Intended outputs	Medium-term impacts	Long-term development objective
Identify and recruit consultant to conduct the mapping exercise	Establishment and operation of project office in Johannesburg		
	Relational database compiling information on country-specific experiences in Africa	Improved decision-making in the procurement of voter registration technology	
Conduct mapping exercise	Six case studies on voter registration models used in different African countries conducted and the results published online and in book form	Less incidence of EMBs procuring unsustainable and impractical voter registration technology	To develop and raise the awareness among the electoral and donor community about registration levels, methodologies, cost, and sustainability issues, while taking the political governance issues of the countries concerned into account.
Produce web -based database software and launch			
Finalize the lists of countries to be studied	Two- day workshop for 35 participants held to discuss the mapping exercise and case studies		
Finalize terms of reference and recruit consultants			
Study tours		EMBs able to adapt and locally produce and service voter registration technology	
Produce draft report and submit to the panel of experts for review			
Publish final report of case studies		Election administrators able to make more informed decisions	
Invite participants to workshop			
Hold workshop			
Produce workshop report			

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation is based on a series of evaluation questions, or EQs, designed to cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, plus the issue of UNDEF value added. The EQs and related subquestions are presented in Annex 1.

i) Relevance

The project was conceived as an exercise to demonstrate the role and importance of VR methodologies in electoral processes. In a situation where measurable monitoring indicators of international electoral assistance are scarce, flexible instruments were needed. An inventory of existing documentation in Africa and field studies represented a useful way of mainstreaming VR issues into international electoral assistance and providing opportunities for electoral practitioners to build on past experiences and discuss VR policy reforms. Since only a few countries in Africa have a functional civil registry and because establishing citizenship or residence is still a complex matter, to ensure sustainability, international electoral assistance needs to look beyond elections and consider the financial and organizational implications of adopting sophisticated VR systems. The African Union has issued a directive calling on African states to work towards self-financing elections[9]. Many African EMBs lack the analytical and technical capacity needed to choose sustainable VR systems. As suggested in the "Development Context" section above, there was a need for more baseline and analytical information on national and international practices to increase the pool and quality of knowledge among practitioners.

Overview of voter registration methodologies in Africa

The value added of the following were both appropriate: (i) identifying all available VR documentation to identify gaps between actual VR practices and outcomes, and (ii) contextualizing, through the case studies, how the VR system fits into the whole electoral and political environment. Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, South Africa, Rwanda, and DRC provided an appropriate range of illustrative situations and adequate coverage: Southwestern, Eastern, and Central Africa; post-conflict countries, stable countries, and non-post-conflict but problematic countries; English-, French- and Portuguese-

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[9] Introduction to *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis*

speaking countries; and low-, medium-, and high-tech approaches to VR.

Although the original project document did not explicitly indicate the implementation modalities, the project design was generally coherent despite the problems with the logical framework described above. The project had a sound evidence base, clearly benefiting from the previous experience of EISA, SDC, and UNEAD, and the intervention logic was clearly related to the stated objectives.

Despite these positive aspects of relevance, we caution below in assessing impact that the ultimate barriers to free and fair elections in Africa (and elsewhere) are political, not technological. That being said, the logical framework of the project explicitly targeted the elections community, not the actual or potential voters, who, of course, were reasonably considered to be indirect beneficiaries of the project.

v) Effectiveness

Most of the planned activities were carried out, and some elements were delivered beyond expectations: two case studies (Liberia and Senegal), in addition to those originally envisaged, were conducted. Apart from a delay in Liberia, the only changes to planned activities were increases in outputs.

The case study methodology that was used was appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of the specificity and effectiveness of the VR systems used. It identified the successes, lessons learned, and challenges of the VR methodology adopted in each country.

Other factors contributing to the project's effectiveness included:

- Hands-on **project management** and close supervision of activities, which played a key role. All planned activities were carefully organized by the project management team. All project files seen by the evaluator show that each activity was the object of specific methodological guidance, setting priorities, identifying needs, and determining how to meet these goals. The researchers and case study consultants were explicit about the external consultants' tasks. The case study consultants received all relevant documentation in advance, interviews were scheduled in advance, and the standard report format was delivered to each expert.

> "'Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis' offers a comprehensive introduction to the single most complex process within the electoral cycle. It critically analyzes the efficacy and sustainability of different voter registration systems across the African continent." **(Source: ZUNIA, article published January, 19, 2011)**

- The **use of well-qualified project members** who stayed involved to the end of the project also contributed to its effectiveness. The mapping and database researcher and case study consultants, as well as the reference panel members, had hands-on experience with VR methodologies in different African countries with different languages and election logistics. Each activity was not dealt with in isolation, and special attention was paid to constantly involving all members. For instance, the

reference panel of five UNEAD experts[10] was identified to offer additional advice when needed. Its main responsibility was to offer guidance at all stages of the project. This included reviewing the case study reports, offering technical advice, and sharing information. Facilitation of the workshop by EISA staff, case study experts,[11] and the UNEAD reference panel members[12] who oversaw the project promoted the sharing of experiences. The workshop was organized in a way that gave international and African participants an opportunity to learn about other African VR experiences and discuss their own voter registration methods system.

> "The publication (Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis) produced with the assistance of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) (…) examines voter registration in different regions of the world, critically analyzes the efficacy and sustainability of different voter registration systems across the African continent. It identifies guiding principles for voter registration." **The Voting News**

- The **quality of relations between EISA, UNEAD, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** (SDC) as partner organizations demonstrated that the partnership predated the project. The project benefited from the trust among the partners.

The **visibility and communication strategy** also promoted effectiveness. At the time of the field visit, the evaluator verified with EISA's ICT program officer that the online database, which covers nearly all African countries, was actually online and accessible in French and English at www.vrafrica.org. It was an opportunity for the

Access to the online database (source: EISA website)

evaluator to verify that the online database was conceived as a unique repository of VR information in the form of documents available for download. Care was taken to clearly define how the current research exercise would contribute value added in comparison with other websites. The variety[13] and number of documents selected (over 1,300) enhanced the credibility of the exercise. The seriousness and relevance of the information provided by these documents were examined, and the overall challenges and lessons learned in relation to VR methodologies were identified and briefly described. EISA's ICT program officer demonstrated that this database provides easy and immediate access to documents, as well as links to original websites. However, by the time of the evaluation mission, the evaluator learned from EISA staff that the database was available only internally and was no longer accessible to external visitors.
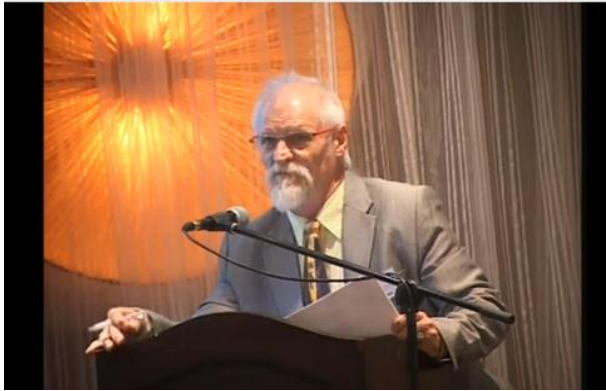
Adoption of the standard case study report format was useful for undertaking a comparative analysis of VR systems. Moreover, it was especially effective in demonstrating that similar methodologies and technical specifications have enjoyed varying degrees of success across countries.

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[10] The members of the reference panel group were Carlos Mario Valenzuela Tamayo, Matthew Blakley, Michael Yard, Hadija Miiro, and Michael Maley.
[11] (i) The voter registration process and the electoral cycle, Ole Holtved; (ii) Factors affecting the choice of voter registration methodology, Michael Yard; (iii) Stakeholders' participation, Alan Wall; (iv) Role of donors in voter registration, Hubert Akumiah.
[12] (i) Sustainability of the voter registration process, Carlos Valenzuela;
(ii) Building trust in the voter registration process, Hadija Miiro; (iii) Effective and sustainable implementation of ICTs, Michael Yard.
[13] The database is a compilation of research papers, relevant electoral legislation, reports of international and national election observation missions, donor-community reports, videos, manuals, and handbooks.

Launch of the database by Alan Wall during the workshop

The decision to launch the database and the book during events heightened overall project visibility. The online database was launched during the project workshop held in Johannesburg in November 2010, and the book was launched at the Global Electoral Organization (GEO)[14] conference in Botswana in March 2011. The discussions and recommendations of the panel of election experts, donors, and EMB representatives during the two-day workshop also increased the project's visibility. Some 35 attendees participated in these discussions. Although the presentations focused more on database content than case study findings, the interviewees stressed that all the topics dealt with significant issues of concern that had arisen during the case studies. The discussions did not generate a comprehensive catalogue of best practices or recommendations. However, they provided an opportunity to consider VR issues in the broader perspective of elections and democracy. On the other hand, by the time of the evaluation mission, the database was no longer accessible to external users. This must be considered a heavy blow to project effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

The project knowledge posted on both the EISA[15] and ACE websites[16] ((www.eisa.org.za and www.aceproject.org, respectively) heightened visibility among the electoral community. Project visibility was also increased by the presentations of eminent VR experts posted on YouTube by the ACE project: www.youtube.com/user/aceprojectorg/featured.

vi) Efficiency

The project has been implemented efficiently. Some costs may have been overestimated in the original proposal – particularly those of the case studies, which turned out to be lower than originally budgeted. However, this new situation provided an opportunity to expand the case study exercise by two additional countries, Liberia and Senegal.

The activities that were carried out involved reasonable costs, thanks to excellent project management. The workshop dates were strategically programmed to follow the two-day 4th annual EISA symposium[17]. The workshop provided a platform to review the successes and challenges of VR methodology and technology. Logistical costs, including travel and accommodations, were reasonable, thanks to the presence of the target groups in Johannesburg**.**

There are questions, however, about the project implementation timetable. The timetable for collecting and compiling VR documentation did not provide the opportunity to collect documentation that was unavailable online as originally foreseen. Most African countries do not post VR documentation online, and its collection and compilation would have resulted in a much more extensive view of VR documentation in Africa. The situation in Liberia

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[14] GEO is a joint ACEEEO, ECF, EISA. IEC Botswana, IDEA, IFE, IFES, UNDP event.
[15] http://www.eisa.org.za/PDF/vrafrica.pdf
[16] http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/voter-registration-in-africa-a-comparative/?searchterm=voter%20registration%20in%20africa%20a%20comparative%20analysis
[17] *Preventing and Managing Violent Election-related Conflicts in Africa: Exploring Good Practices* Symposium , http://aceproject.org/regions-en/countries-and-territories/ZA/events/4th-annual-eisa-symposium

hampered the case study planning, and project completion was delayed. The project was eventually implemented over a 23-month period instead of the 12 months originally foreseen. While the situation in Liberia was unexpected, the time devoted to the mapping and database exercise should have been better anticipated. Ultimately, the value of the additional case study needs to be weighed against the delay occasioned.

There are also questions about the wisdom of posting the online database on the EISA website – particularly since its servicing is outsourced and costly. Posting this online database on the ACE website (like the book and the workshop discussion summaries) would have been cheaper and more sustainable. Allocating funds to translate the book into French could have yielded additional benefits. This is especially true since the most problematic VR activities are located in francophone countries (e.g., DRC, Ivory Coast, Chad, and Niger). EISA and interviewees noted that translation of the book into French should have been planned to achieve a better local impact.

vii)Impact

With project completed, there is no evidence to date that the database and case studies have had a demonstrable impact on the ground. The last elections in Africa showed no specific change in the VR approach and technical specifications selected. Recent elections in Niger[18] and the upcoming elections in Burkina Faso[19] show that sophisticated VR systems with biometrics systems are still viewed by African authorities as a guarantee of social tranquility. For instance, the Burkinabe government, under pressure from political parties, has officially requested support from the international community, through UNDP, for the adoption of a biometrics system. Elections are a quintessentially political process, and the major barriers to good VR practice are neither methodological nor technological; they stem from a lack of political will to hold free and fair elections. However, as mentioned above, this project explicitly targeted the elections community, not the voter. See, moreover, our comment on BRIDGE under "Sustainability."

> "I used the book findings to advocate EMBs during my mission in Pakistan.
> It has many useful experiences from which EMBs instituting new VR systems can learn, and these have formed the basis of my advice provided to EMBs."
> **Case study consultant, EISA project**

As noted above, the project had less of an impact because the book was not translated into French. This is clear when contrasted with the fact that the book's translation into Portuguese facilitated implementation of the EC/UNDP Project in Support of the Electoral Cycles in the African Portuguese-Speaking Countries (PALOP) and Timor Leste (Pro PALOP|TL).[20]

One impact of the project was to strengthen the global international electoral assistance community itself. The study produced a common core of recommendations for different voter registration systems to guide the electoral community in its support for VR systems (i.e., excerpts taken from ***Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis***. November

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[18] After the coup d'état in 2010, six elections supported by an international community were held in 2011. Working with the Nigerian authorities, the European Union has funded VR equipment with a biometrics system. Due to delays and lack of EMB capacity, this system was not used for the 2011 elections.

[19] Local and parliamentary elections in Burkina Faso are scheduled for 2012.

[20] Pro PALOP-TL is a multicountry project whose strategy is to provide support for activities across the full electoral cycle in Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste. Project support extends beyond elections and electoral events, aiming instead to meet the needs of these countries throughout the phases and activities of their electoral cycle.

2010). It provided material to improve the quality of VR assistance and modernization in advance of upcoming elections (e.g., Nepal, Pakistan). Following this project, two voter registration experts who participated in this study have confirmed that they presented the guiding principles of the book to the Nepalese and Pakistani authorities, as well as members of the international community. The goal was to make them aware of the risks involved in adopting an electronic voter registration system without any consideration of the context. This improved their understanding of what works and what doesn't, what is sustainable and what isn't. Contributing both to this impact and sustainability was the decision to publish project outputs online.

Guiding principles (excerpts from *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis, November 2010)*

Integrity The integrity of the voters' roll is one of the basic principles on which the legitimacy of an election is founded.

Inclusiveness ensures no group in society is denied equitable opportunities to register to vote; and *Comprehensiveness* targets the registration of every eligible person in each societal group.

Accuracy relates to ensuring both the validity and correctness of all information on the voters' register.

Accessibility In keeping with the simple rule of 'where you register is where you vote'.

An informed public (…) To allow voters to check their registration data.

Transparency in registering voters promotes public trust in the integrity of voter-registration processes and products.

Security Field registration staff and people registering to vote must be assured of their safety and security.

Accountability The institution(s) responsible for voter registration must be subject to accountability mechanisms (…). These mechanisms could be internal or external.

Credibility Transparency measures and the provision of regular and accurate information on voter registration can promote public credibility in a well-implemented registration process, and can also provide knowledge to improve less well-implemented processes.

Stakeholder participation must be informed regularly and their views considered both at the decision-making phase and during the conduct of a voter-registration exercise.

Sustainability of voter registration is not just a matter of having sufficient assured future funds to continue voter-registry operations(…)*Financial and economic sustainability* requires that all voter-registration systems are, in the medium to longer term, capable of being implemented with minimal or no reliance on funding from international institutions or other countries (…) *Technological sustainability* requires that any equipment and automated processing (...) is reliable when employed in local conditions (…) *Political sustainability* requires that systems and processes are widely accepted across the political spectrum, promote the legitimacy, inclusiveness and integrity of elections, (…)

In terms of having a positive impact, project outcomes were taken seriously by other international agencies such as IFES, the European Union, and UNDP.

The information from interviews also suggested that the project had made a significant contribution to ongoing discussions on policy reform in Africa as well as globally. The VR information generated was used extensively by EISA as a reference tool for discussions. The publication of the case study book has triggered further EISA workshop activities all over the world: (i) One presentation, Voter Registration and the Voters' Roll Right, was given during the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC countries at the Annual General Council in August 2011; ii) Three presentations were given at the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) in

Mexico[21] during the first specialization course on voter registration for African and Haitian Electoral Authorities in November 2011; and (iii) one presentation was given at the Voter Registration Zimbabwe Election Support Network in Harare in June 2011. A special effort was made to increase the audience, because sustainable VR systems require raising awareness among direct and indirect stakeholders. These workshops were attended by CSOs, media representatives, EMB members, and other electoral stakeholders.

> "We would like to distribute copies of your Voter Registration in Africa book to registration stakeholders here in Indonesia. (...) We would like to know if it is possible to order 30 copies directly from EISA? (…) We found the book to be excellent and want to share it with our close partners in our work."
> **Senior Voter Registration Officer**
> **IFES Indonesia**

viii)   Sustainability

The project's impacts are sustainable. Although EISA outsourced the development of the knowledge base to external consultants, its staff was on hand to provide responses and clarifications of VR issues.

Broad dissemination of the book's findings to international organizations (UNEAD, UN agencies, IFES, European Union), the EISA network in Africa, and South African academic libraries ensures that the project's outcomes will last beyond the lifetime of the project itself. EISA published 600 copies.

Other international agencies' use of the book to train electoral stakeholders is a significant plus for project sustainability. The IFES office in Indonesia used it to train Indonesian stakeholders and other international electoral capacity-building programs funded by the international community. Use of the book in the implementation of the EU/UNDP Project in Support of PALOP and Pro PALOP|TL mentioned above[22] bolsters the credibility and sustainability of the project's results.

The incorporation of the specific VR findings matrix into the BRIDGE program [23] is another factor that strongly supports sustainability. BRIDGE[24] has a unique curriculum designed to reach all direct and indirect electoral stakeholders, including CSOs, local observers, the media, EMB members, and local government authorities. In this regard, integrating VR case study principles into the BRIDGE program, which affects participants at the individual level, represents an opportunity to heighten local "ownership," as BRIDGE participants are directly supervised by BRIDGE and accredited as BRIDGE trainers to provide training and put BRIDGE principles into practice.

One factor that tends to undermine sustainability is the project's outsourcing of most VR

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[21] (ii) Voter identification means in Africa and (iii) the possibility of introducing Biometric methods: Advances and Challenges in Africa and main challenges for citizen inclusion and political representation in Africa.

[22]   Pro PALOP-TL is multicountry project whose strategy is to provide support for activities across the full electoral cycle in Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste. Project support extends beyond elections and electoral events, aiming instead to meet the needs of these countries throughout the phases and activities of their electoral cycle.

[23]   BRIDGE stands for Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections. It is a modular professional development program with a particular focus on electoral processes. For more information, visit http://bridge-project.org/ .

[24]   The five BRIDGE partners are the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), International IDEA, the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD).

expertise to external experts. Although EISA staff has widely distributed the project's findings, there is no evidence of a real improvement in in-house capacity to mainstream VR and expand empirical research.

Sustainability in relation to the online database targeting the general public is also hard to assess. Any comprehensive overview of sustainability in terms of the awareness-raising results of this activity should take the number of individuals who search for documents on this database into account. However, no information on the number of visitors to the database is available, and the database was no longer operational at the time of the evaluation visit.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented here represent a synopsis of the answers to the evaluation questions provided in Annex 1.

i) Based on findings related to relevance, impact, and sustainability, ***the project was a pilot project for African literature on elections. At the time of project implementation, there was little reference in African election literature to African VR methodologies***. Although the project did not yield a complete or comprehensive catalogue of best practices or recommendations, it did compile accurate information and make it available to election specialists and African stakeholders, as an unprecedented tool for peer review.

ii) This project also ***opened discussions on the various factors that influence the success or failure of a VR exercise.*** It laid the ground for reforms of VR methodology, focusing on the most critical issues that hamper genuine elections by identifying the disconnect between practices and results.

iii) ***Relevance and impact would have been enhanced by translating the resulting book into French***. Considering translation at project design stage would have enhanced project relevance considering three countries out of eight are French-speaking countries. In general, knowledge of English in French-speaking African countries is limited. ***Effectiveness, impact, and sustainability*** were also hampered, due to the relatively high cost of web-posting the database and the fact that the ***database was no longer accessible online*** at the time of the evaluation.

iv) Based on our findings concerning relevance and effectiveness, ***the project was in line with electoral needs, which called for a greater African political and institutional commitment to improved elections***.

v) The collection of VR documentation and empirical research in eight African countries yielded important outputs, building on experiences, successes, and failures on the African continent. By identifying the institutional and operational weaknesses of current voter registration systems in Africa, ***the project demonstrated that each country has its own unique characteristics and that VR systems cannot be adopted without in-depth consideration of the historical, political, institutional, and legal context***.

vi) ***The project has had an impact on international practitioners.*** The project's impact is illustrated mainly by the fact that the results were taken seriously by other international agencies and widely relayed by specialized international media. The study's value added was evidenced by its use by all elections stakeholders.

vii) ***However, its contribution to actual VR change is more debatable.*** Although this project disseminated knowledge, whether it has had any real impact on African elections remains unclear. We recognize that the logical framework explicitly identified the elections community as the target audience, but more in-depth consideration of the political and governance constraints on the implementation of technical improvements would have been useful.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations stem from the conclusions of the evaluation:

i) When findings generate additional knowledge, make sure that adequate provision is made for translation. The evaluator found that the impact on French-speaking stakeholders was limited, because the book had not been translated into that language.

ii) Ensure the long-term availability of project outputs/achievements on the Web. The online database needs to remain online and requires further developments to reach a wider audience. The top priority should be to make it accessible to external visitors. Posting the database's content on the ACE website would guarantee a wider audience and sustainability. Resources unavailable on the Web and collected from other sources should also be made available. The database, which should be turned into an online repository of information, should not be a simple narrative of documentation; it should also offer pointers to track and measure the effective implementation of voter-registration policies in Africa, and establish indicators for monitoring voter-registration trends.

iii) Raise awareness about voter-registration challenges and lessons learned by targeting a broad spectrum of African stakeholders. There is a need to continue raising awareness about VR and to mainstream VR as a key element in discussions on elections. Electoral organizations should continue to relay the message to African stakeholders – comprising electoral management bodies (EMBs), representatives of government agencies, political parties, local observers from civil society organizations, and the media. These stakeholders play a key role in building confidence in elections and the effective implementation of voter and civil registration policy reforms.

iv) Future studies should be conducted in line with the countries' future electoral agendas to provide a clear link between research, its dissemination, and policy impact. It is important to recognize that elections are a political as well as a logistical process, because this fosters a closer connection between country electoral agendas and the studies themselves. In this project, there were still clear gaps between project findings and policy decisions with respect to the procurement of VR systems. VR challenges are still poorly understood and recognized. This increases the risk that supplier-driven voter registration modules, which include significant ICT and specialized equipment from external suppliers and require oversight from foreign technical experts, will continue to be used, while sustainability issues take a back seat.

v) Electoral assistance experts must make a greater effort to look at the reasons for poor voter registration and not only at the delivery mechanism. Better understanding of the role of voter registration in electoral processes, viewed in their specific context, is critical to the design of effective, well-targeted interventions. This understanding needs to go beyond the technical and supply-side issues that were the main concern of this project. Future studies may explore and further develop this approach to support methodology reforms.

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related subquestions
Relevance	▪ To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	▪ To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	▪ To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	▪ To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	▪ To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	▪ To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc.). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Related documents
EISA 2002, *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis*, edited by Astrid Evrensel.

EISA, *Voter Registration in Africa database* www.vrafrica.org.

Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies; mid-term report, October 2009.

Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies; final report, November 2010.

Workshop Guidelines, Development of Sustainable Voter Registration in Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa, 19 and 20 November 2010.

ToR for the mapping exercise - Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies.

Terms of Reference for Country Case Studies – Development of Sustainable Voter Registration Methodologies.

Final list of participants in voter registration workshop held on 19 and 20 November 2010.

Documents on voter registration issues
ACE, voter registration topic index
http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vr/topic_index

ACE, comparative data, voter registration
http://aceproject.org/epic-en/CDMap?question=VR008&set_language=en

BRIDGE, Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections; Curriculum, Voter registration synopsis
http://bridge-project.org/curriculum/curriculum/979-modules/986-voter-registration

European Commission and United Nations Development Programme, Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance, 2010, *Procurement Aspects of Introducing ICT Solutions in Electoral Processes - The Specific Case of Voter Registration*.

R. López-Pintor and J. Fischer, 2005, *Cost of Registration and Elections (CORE) Project*, Center for Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance and UNDP.

R. López Pintor and M.Gratschew, 2002, *Voter Turnout since 1945: A Global Report*, IDEA.

H. Boneo, 2000, "Observation of Elections" in *International Encyclopedia of Elections*, edited by R. Rose. Macmillan, London.

IDEA, *Introducing Electronic Voting: Essential Considerations*; policy paper, December 2011.

IDEA, 2011. 5th Global Electoral Organization Conference, Credible Elections for Democracy, *Conference Report*.

IDEA, 2006. *Handbook of Electoral Management Design*.

M. Yard, 2011, *Civil and Voter Registries: Lessons Learned from Global Experiences*, IFES.

M. Yard, Election Administration and Technology Expert, 2010. *Direct Democracy: Progress and Pitfalls of Election Technology*, IFES.

G. Bardall, Research Officer, 2010, *Lessons in Modernizing Civil and Voter Registration.*

R. López Pintor, 2000, *Electoral Management Bodies as Institutions of Governance*, United Nations Development Programme.

M. Maley, 2000, "Administration of Elections" in *International Encyclopedia of Elections*, edited by R. Rose.

M. Tremblay, January 2001, "The Right to Vote: The Heart of Democracy." *Electoral Insight.*

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

Date	Name	Designation	Office/ Organization
5/12	Ilona Tip	Director, Operations	EISA
5/12	Denis Kadima	Executive Director of EISA	EISA
6/12	Astrid Evrensel	Project Manager	EISA/ UNEAD
6/12	Cecile Bassomo	Mapping database researcher	EISA/UNEAD
7/12	Yvette Walljee Ondinga	Elections and political programme officer	EISA
7/12	Naphtaly Sekamogeng	Elections and political programme, ACE project facility project officer	EISA
7/12	Jackie Kalley	Publications Manager,	EISA
8/12	Alka Larkan	Information and communication technology, Senior Programme Officer	EISA
9/12	Alioune Cisse	Case study consultant (Liberia and Senegal)	EISA/UNEAD
9/12	Ephrem Tadesse Gebre	Regional Programme Manager – Governance - workshop participant	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
12/12	Ole Holtved	Case study consultant Ghana	EISA/ UNEAD-
12/12	Yusuf Aboobaker	Workshop attendee (EMBs)	Current member of EISA board - Mauritius
13/12	Jekemu Wonder	Workshop attendee (donor)	SIDA Zimbabwe
13/12	Azu'u Fonkam Samuel	Workshop attendee (EMBs)	ELECAM-Cameroon
13/12	Elijah Rubvuta	Workshop attendee (CSOs)	FODEP (Forum for Democratic Processes) - Zambia
18/12	Alan Wall	Case study consultant (Malawi-Mozambique-South Africa)	EISA/UNEAD
18/12	Fabio Bargiacchi	Technical adviser	Project in Support of the Electoral Cycles in the African Portuguese-Speaking Countries (PALOP) and Timor Leste (Pro PALOP|TL)

Annex 4: Acronyms

ACE	ACE (Administration and Cost of Elections) Electoral Knowledge Network
ACEEEO	The Association of European Election Officials
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EISA	Electoral Institute South Africa
EMBs	Electoral Management Bodies
EU	European Union
GEO	Global Electoral Organization
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFE	Federal Electoral Institute
PALOP	Project in Support of the Electoral Cycles in the African Portuguese-Speaking Countries (PALOP)
PRO-PALOP	Project in Support of the Electoral Cycles in the African Portuguese-Speaking Countries (PALOP) and Timor Leste (Pro PALOP|TL)
PMT	Project Management Team
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEAD	United Nations Electoral Division
SADC	The Southern African Development Community
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
ToR	Terms of Reference
VR	Voter Registration