

ADVANCING REFORMS IN PHILIPPINE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT: TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

*FINAL PROJECT REPORT
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N.B.: Concerning the Funding Sources with regard to Programmatic Impact

As IFES managed two overlapping USAID awards that were aimed very much at the same objectives, in some cases programmatic impact described in this report may have resulted from processes that were funded at different stages through USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 492-A-00-04-00042-00 and USAID Agreement No. 492-A-00-05-00027-00 as well. Every attempt has been made to focus on those activities planned under and funded through USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 492-A-00-04-00042-00 under Leader Agreement Number: DGC-A 00-01-0004-00.

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In response to an invitation issued by the president of the Republic of the Philippines, IFES and its CEPPS partners, composed of international development and political party specialists from the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, deployed a team of representatives in early March 2004 to the Philippines to assess the political situation leading up to the May 10 Presidential and Legislative Elections. As previous IFES projects have outlined, the electoral situation in the Philippines is particularly if not unusually complex, partly due to its long and turbulent history of democracy and its associated electoral process. The team found that the 2004 election cycle was particularly flawed. COMELEC's¹ plans and programs for the May 10 elections were disrupted by the late release of funds by Congress and the Supreme Court's decisions to stop the automation of polling, counting, and transmission of results from taking place. Transition to a computerized central voter registry was similarly abandoned only days before the election and election officers reverted to using manual voters' lists and voter records. Voter education efforts were uncoordinated and poorly implemented. The training of polling officials was done through parallel training programs developed by the Department of Education, COMELEC, and civil society. COMELEC's training was judged to be the least effective of the three and the most poorly organized.

IFES' observation of the Philippine elections was instrumental in providing a foundation for the organization's assistance of Philippine administrative and management programming for electoral reforms. It established a baseline for future technical assistance and civil society programming. This CEPPS/IFES program built upon the work completed under the CEPPS/IFES Philippines Election Observation Program, "Philippines: Strengthening the Electoral Process," conducted from April through August 2004.² Activities implemented under the earlier program included election observation and holding regional and national-level roundtables on the electoral processes governing the May 2004 elections. IFES' final report from that period clearly illustrated the need to support electoral reform in many areas, including voter education, legal framework, information technology and institutional change within the election administration itself. The new program was designed to address a prioritized list of areas where IFES could make an impact, both in the immediate and long-term, on the electoral reform agenda by working through civil society and directly with the COMELEC. These activities focused on voter information, capacity building within COMELEC, a comprehensive internet technology (IT) review on COMELEC's modernization program, advocating for legal reform through civil society initiatives, and providing technical assistance to both COMELEC and CER to improve the conduct of the August 2005 elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The program was conducted in three phases, which spanned from November 2004 through May 2006. Phase I was conducted in the months of November and December 2004 where the focus was on laying the groundwork for implementing program activities in 2005. Activities included meetings with key partners, co-sponsoring the COMELEC Modernization Summit, and conducting research requested by local partners in preparation for planning and implementing their program activities in 2005.

¹ All future references to the Philippine Commission on Elections will be abbreviated as "COMELEC."

² All work was conducted under USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 492. A-00-04-00016-100. Conclusions and lessons learned from that grant were compiled within IFES' "Final Report: 2004 Philippines National Election" document.

Phase II of the program continued during the second quarter of 2005 with the concerted provision of technical assistance to both COMELEC and CER to improve the conduct of the August 2005 elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The ARMM, located in the southern Philippines, was created in 1990 and has been the scene of near continuous conflict between various militias and with Philippine authorities since 1996. Most recently, a truce was brokered in 2003 and many areas have established Zones of Peace as the people try to rebuild their lives and communities. This IFES-facilitated, USAID-funded, project seeks to help reverse years of irregular electoral practices through the active participation of a group of leading ARMM non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Although the site of past pilot programs for various election automation tests, the August 2005 ARMM elections were implemented using a completely manual system for voting, counting, canvassing and transmission of results. This was due to the Supreme Court decision upholding an earlier ruling to disallow use of the Mega Pacific automated ballot counting equipment. Over one million voters cast their ballots in more than 4,000 precincts across the five provinces to decide the races for governor, vice-governor, and regional assemblymen. Counting was held at counting centers identified by COMELEC; either at the polling place or in specially designated sites as required by the security situation. Upon completion of the first level of canvassing at the provincial capitals, the regional level canvassing was held at the COMELEC headquarters offices in Manila.

In late 2005, with the ARMM election activities completed, IFES turned its attention to the final component of its election assistance program: legal reform. Technical advice was provided to the COMELEC, legislative bodies and civil society in the ongoing debate on election automation legislation.

With the approval of a no-cost extension in early 2006, IFES was able to continue its work to support both the election administration, civil society and the legislative bodies in pursuit of electoral reforms. Key activities included the development of a core training capacity within the COMELEC as well as the support of a COMELEC appointments watch program through its local partner, Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN).

In support of future Philippine elections, and with an eye to aiding its longstanding ally, the U.S. has a strong and continued interest in furthering the stability of the country and its democratic government. This project supported COMELEC and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as they prepared for future elections and provided assistance that responsibly addressed their concerns and contributed to an improved electoral process.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this project was to assist the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and other governmental and non-governmental counterparts in reforming the management of Philippine elections with the goal of improving COMELEC's ability to more effectively administer the next set of national elections in 2007. IFES focused on improving COMELEC's ability to credibly plan, manage, and conduct elections in conformity to international standards and best practices.

IFES proposed to meet this goal through: (i) increasing the capacity of the COMELEC and thereby improving election administration and management; (ii) increasing the involvement of civil society in the electoral reform movement; and (iii) providing technical assistance to both civil society groups as well as the COMELEC in updating the Omnibus election code and to encourage comprehensive legal reform.

The assistance has supported COMELEC in its preparation to successfully implement key areas of an internal reform program. IFES' programming has played an instrumental role in continuing to develop and support the electoral reforms that the election management body, COMELEC, proposes to address and implement running up to the 2007 national elections.

Program activities were designed and implemented in an effort to encourage other governmental and non-governmental organizations to play a role in improving the election process, while encouraging improved electoral governance. IFES notes that its advice has had the greatest impact when it could harness the work of local NGOs, and successfully utilize and coordinate the enhancement of their existing capacity to further advance the reform agenda.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

IFES' program engaged an experienced election expert, the ETE (Elections Technical Expert), to monitor the efforts of COMELEC, and provide advice and assistance on their efforts to undertake electoral reform. The expert was initially deployed in early November 2004, whereupon within one month prepared a program implementation work plan in close consultation with COMELEC, USAID, and other stakeholders.

The expert explored possibilities of improving internal management, organizational and staff development within COMELEC and developed a long-term capacity building strategy to be implemented with IFES' assistance.

In addition to the provision of general technical support to COMELEC, the expert provided support and advice to the partner NGO (the sub-grantee), and provided oversight from the field on the management of the sub-grant.

To maximize available resources, IFES proposed that only one technical expert be deployed on a medium term basis. Other on-site assistance was provided by the short term deployment of electoral and legal specialists in the fields of modernization, election monitoring, electoral law reform and civic education.

II. PROGRAM COMPONENT I: COMELEC CAPACITY BUILDING

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

IFES had a unique opportunity to build trust with the COMELEC Commissioners, senior staff, and rank and file members through the provision of capacity-building activities that had been identified by the CEPPS/IFES program as being critical to the modernization of this institution.

Consultations were held with COMELEC Commissioners and senior staff in an effort to reach a common understanding regarding potential technical assistance from IFES in 2005. IFES' program developed a working relationship with COMELEC personnel and identified opportunities for building capacity in key departments.

The ETE met with the COMELEC commissioners during an en banc session to present a general outline of IFES' planned activities in 2005. A Memorandum of Understanding

between IFES and the COMELEC was signed on 17 May 2005 to formalize the results of these discussions and provide a written basis for implementing the joint projects as identified.

COMELEC MODERNIZATION SUMMIT

IFES co-sponsored the COMELEC Modernization Summit from November 18-21, 2004, where over 100 COMELEC staff members convened to update the COMELEC modernization strategy. This included the identification of specific electoral legislation that required drafting of amendment proposals. The resulting action plan addressed priority activities for the modernization of the August 2005 ARMM and 2007 elections based on the operational concerns and best practices learned from the May 2004 National and Local Elections, including the strategies necessary to carry out an effective and efficient voter information and education strategy.

Four working group sessions were held on the following topics:

- ARMM Elections/Continuing Registration
- Continuing Registration at the National Level
- Legislative Intervention for 2007 Elections and Beyond
- Information Campaign and Voter Education Strategies

The action plan was adopted following the summit event, which has guided COMELEC's strategic planning and project activities leading up to the August 2005 ARMM elections and beyond.

VOTER INFORMATION SURVEY

COMELEC requested IFES to provide sample survey questionnaires for the purposes of establishing a basis from which to develop a voter information campaign. IFES sent copies of survey questionnaires that had been conducted in the past for other programs. It was requested to have examples from a Muslim country or region with high illiteracy rates targeting first-time voters, the questionnaires sent to COMELEC were designed and used by IFES in Indonesia. COMELEC carried out the voter information survey independently while there was no IFES consultant on the ground during a break in the program.

INTERNET TECHNOLOGY (IT) REVIEW

IFES dispatched an Information Technology Specialist (ITS) to identify and conduct an IT review of COMELEC's automation systems.

The IFES contracted ITS visited the Philippines from May 3-14 to conduct an IT review of COMELEC's automation systems. IFES experts met with COMELEC commissioners, IT personnel and other senior staff to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the system and development process. Recommendations were developed on new features to be incorporated and follow-up actions to be taken. A brief presentation was also made to the COMELEC *en banc* as well as to the US Embassy and USAID officials on the findings of the IT review and recommendations.

IFES' project provided IT technical assistance and assessment of COMELEC. IFES identified an IT expert to research the current status of the automation system and travel to Manila to conduct a focused review of automation systems based on the needs identified by COMELEC and IFES' ETE. The IT expert provided recommendations through a comprehensive report

submitted to IFES. The IT expert conducted a preliminary audit of the system and its development process.

In preparation for the ITS visit, the IFES ETE conducted several meetings with the directors of the COMELEC IT and Operations Departments in order to identify priority issues for examination during the IT review. Information regarding the current status of the automation systems and additional background materials were forwarded to the ITS expert for reference prior to his arrival in Manila. The COMELEC Risk Management Group also conducted consultations with various COMELEC departments in order to identify potential problem areas and possible solutions prior to the ARMM elections. Results from this self-assessment process were also forwarded to the ITS in order to further clarify the needs of the IT and Operations departments during the review process. The ETE worked with the relevant directors within COMELEC to develop the terms of reference for the ITS consultancy.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

IFES' evaluation of the envisioned COMELEC Modernization Program was geared to test its ability to register voters accurately and efficiently, manage elector's information files and database, handle fingerprints voter identification, and implement electronic voting and accurate automatic ballot tabulation. The main concern was to determine the systems ability to comply with minimum electoral standards.

IFES also observed the Automated Vote Counting Machines System's accuracy and reliability, and investigated performance in cases where deliberate attempts to introduce errors into the vote tabulation process were made. IFES also investigated a number of common tabulation capabilities.

IFES' approach recognized that software is regularly changed, while hardware features in most systems is relatively static, especially if standard and off-the-shelf items are used. The assessment looked at all of a system's features working together at one point in time. It can be argued that evaluating hardware and system concepts is more important than the detailed performance of software, because substantial revision of software could be easily programmed to particular specifications as they occur. Software is the heart of any system; it binds hardware and firmware in a working process geared by logical programmed steps. Any change in software will be subjected to a harsh test in order to be certified and qualification testing will be a necessary process to identify any malfunction or equipment that lacks synchronization. This process could take longer than the time it takes to install a working computer. IFES' findings about the software's performance were contingent to how it was working together with other hardware components as one unified Automated Vote Counting unit.

IFES developed criteria that were general in nature, recognizing that there is no practical way to combine a wide range of qualitative and quantitative findings into a single assessment. This approach enabled IFES to focus on the primary criterion of the system's overall suitability for use in the particular situation of the Philippines. The final report will underline the main problematic and possible conflicting issues and recommendations, which will serve as a guideline for a detailed project plan.

Specifications, standards, and assessment criteria for the COMELEC Modernization Program can differ significantly, depending upon one's perspective on the purpose that it is intended to serve. For example, for the results transmission, an Automated Vote Counting Machines System defines many aspects of what might be called an ideal COMELEC Modernization Program. However, this comprehensive system could have features and goals that are not

fully consistent with the electoral needs of the Philippines. For example, this comprehensive system uses old technology intended primarily to apply to centralized vote counting in large metropolitan areas where polling places are concentrated in large polling centers and the transportation of the ballots is minimal and conducted under a controlled environment. Recent developments in voting systems meet the specific requirements of nations such as the Philippines in that they can respond to potential future advances in state of the art infrastructure which extend beyond the capabilities of actual facilities.

The outcome of the assessment was intended to be useful to the COMELEC election administrators who must choose among the diverse types and models of systems currently available or to continue with the current systems. The assessment therefore determines and describes, from the perspective of the election administrator, the strengths and weaknesses of the COMELEC Modernization Program, in the Voter Validation System (also known internationally as the Voter Registration System), Automated Vote Counting and Canvassing, and Electronic Transmission of Results processes, thereby identifying the most important aspects. This will enable the election administrators to determine if the system is best suited to the Philippines's particular situation.

While the IT review addressed several ways that COMELEC could still prepare in time for an automated ARMM election, the conclusions from the review also exposed the crucial need for implementing ongoing strategic planning and legal reform working groups as part of a more comprehensive and long-term approach to modernizing the election system. With the recent Supreme Court ruling upholding their earlier decision to ban the use of the automated counting machines, IFES will focus on longer-term recommendations affecting the 2007 and 2010 elections. This would possibly include the implementation of an electronic voting equipment fair during the last quarter of 2005.

ARMM VOTER EDUCATION AND MONITORING CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS

The ETE met regularly with COMELEC Education and Information Department (EID) personnel to provide technical assistance for the voter education program. While COMELEC was very interested in potential IFES assistance in the area of voter education, no funds were available for materials development or training with COMELEC directly.³ Instead, IFES spearheaded a new effort to bring together various voter education stakeholders who would be actively participating in the ARMM elections, namely the COMELEC Education and Information Department (EID), CER and Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). Weekly consultative meetings were held in order to share information among the stakeholders regarding their voter education initiatives targeting ARMM citizens for the upcoming regional poll exercise. As the August election date approached, monitoring issues were also discussed. IFES believes this type of coordination should be continued in the future during the next election cycle, as resources for voter education activities remain scarce.

TRAINING OF EMBASSY MONITORS

IFES prepared an orientation session on election monitoring for embassy personnel, working closely with the COMELEC Deputy Chief of Planning, who had agreed to conduct a session on polling and counting procedures. On July 22, the presentation was jointly delivered to approximately 12 US Embassy staff members, as well as several representatives from the British, Canadian and New Zealand embassies. All were slated for observing the August 8 ARMM elections. IFES advocated for the inclusion of a presenter from the COMELEC in order

³ IFES did support voter education initiatives in the Philippines via its sub-grant to CER in support of its civil society program for the ARMM elections.

for their senior staff to gain experience in giving such presentations and to improve their profile among the international community.

SUPPORT TO COMELEC FOR PARTICIPATION IN GEO III CONFERENCE

IFES provided financial assistance to fund Commissioner Resurreccion Borra's participation in the 3rd Conference of Global Election Organizations, which was held jointly with the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO) in Hungary from September 14-17, 2005.

The main topics of the conference were highly relevant to ongoing work within the COMELEC and included presentations on "Legal Remedies in the Election Process" and "Standards of Electronic Voting".

Commissioner Borra was invited to speak as the Asian representative to the Conference Plenary Session on "Global Perspectives on Associations and Alliances", during which he stressed the need for a vendor exhibit in the Philippines and closer relations with India in order to learn lessons from their automation process. There was also an exhibit of suppliers of election equipment and services showcasing various voting and vote-counting machines, and other election-related logistical equipment and materials.

In response to IFES' suggestion, Commissioner Borra disseminated a report outlining the results of the conference to colleagues and local partners, including the members of the Electoral System Assessment Project.

COMELEC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Prior to IFES' engagement, the COMELEC Planning Department was in danger of extinction, with many advocates within the COMELEC calling for its discontinuation due to lack of activity over the past several years. However, a new Deputy Director was hired and demonstrated a commitment to reinvigorate the department. IFES acknowledged that both the COMELEC Planning Department and senior staff required support in long-term and comprehensive strategic planning, training in project management, and development and definition of the planning department's institutional role.

The first training on planning was therefore designed and implemented in coordination with the Development Academy of the Philippines and targeted toward the COMELEC Planning Department's staff as well as selected senior staff members.

The theory behind the development of the training program centered on the belief that moving toward modernizing COMELEC entailed more than just putting in place the hardware and computerizing systems, it required additional development and training for all stakeholders. Even before these could be effectively done, some change management initiatives would need to be undertaken to make the changes acceptable to critical stakeholders.

It was also recognized that an important group of stakeholders in the modernization effort of the COMELEC has been the Commission's employees. They form part of the determining factors that enable or, in fact, disable the change process. For this reason, parallel efforts to capacitate employees needed to be undertaken with the objective of expanding their perspectives and enhancing their skills in relation to the performance of the mandate of the COMELEC.

The objectives of the two-day training program for the Planning Department aimed to help the participants acquire an enhanced understanding of their role in the overall fulfillment of the mandate of the COMELEC and a basic understanding of the process of strategic planning and project management.

Topics included:

- **Perspective Setting:** This module presented the COMELEC as an institution within the broad context of Philippine society in order to provide a larger context within which the participants would be able to situate themselves within the COMELEC. The aim of this module was for the participants see the role their department and function play in the Commission's performance of its tasks.
- **The Function of Planning:** This module reviewed basic concepts and types of planning as a management function and its importance in terms of the accomplishment of the Commission's mandate.
- **Strategic Management Process:** This module gave participants an overview of the planning process by walking them through the different activities undertaken to prepare a strategic plan and the phases involved in strategic management.
- **Project Management:** This module introduced the participants to the concepts and tools of project management.
- **Integration and Next Steps:** This final module integrated the first four modules in a manner that will help the participants see how the concepts and tools introduced earlier can be useful to their work in the COMELEC. The participants also identified the steps the Planning Department needs to undertake to reinforce the first layer of learning acquired.

An evaluation of the implementation of the ARMM election and election-related issues in planning were also incorporated into this introductory training program. IFES continues to follow up with the COMELEC Planning Department to ensure they are able to implement their newly-acquired skills and knowledge into their everyday functions and to reinvigorate the Planning Department's vital role within the large bureaucracy of the institution itself.

To date, a newly-empowered Planning Department has become an engine of change through strategic planning, operational planning, and new training initiatives while advocating for other internal reforms within the COMELEC.

DEVELOPING A CORE TRAINING CAPACITY

As of IFES' initial involvement, the COMELEC did not have a designated training department or an established third-party training program.

The COMELEC Commission en banc adopted a resolution approving the new strategic plan for 2006-2010, which was created and implemented under the auspices of a separate IFES program. In line with the conclusions from the report, IFES conducted a training of trainers program in order to build a new core training capacity of the COMELEC.

IFES contracted the National College of Public Administration and Governance of the University of the Philippines (UP-NCPAG) to provide training services and administrative support. IFES collaborated with UP-NCPAG and the COMELEC to select the pool of trainers, which included 16 core trainers and 2 alternates. Each of the sixteen trainers is to be assigned to one of the sixteen regions in the Philippines to spearhead future training programs. COMELEC has approached IFES to seek additional assistance with furthering the reach of this program to the regional level.

The overall objective of the program was to enhance the knowledge and skills of the new pool of trainers to enable them to more effectively conduct training programs on voter education, election management, and human resource development. The new trainers will also aim to engage civil society organizations in implementing training programs on electoral processes. Each participant not only improved their training skills and techniques, but also learned how to formulate a session plan to apply a learning strategy to an elections-specific training program.

The program achieved its planned objectives as the knowledge and skills of the new pool of trainers were enhanced, enabling them to more effectively conduct training programs on voter education, election management, and human resource development. In this way, IFES has helped to improve the conduct of training for the upcoming election cycle.

In addition, the new trainers aim to engage civil society organizations in implementing training programs on electoral processes, leading to the achievement of a key objective of IFES' electoral reform program.

Most significantly, IFES' assistance in instituting a core training capacity within COMELEC, has led to a fundamental reengineering of internal COMELEC processes.

III. PROGRAM COMPONENT II: CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING

ARMM ELECTIONS: CER SUBGRANT

The Consortium on Electoral Reforms (CER), upon finalizing its 2005 workplan at a national-level meeting in January 2005, identified three projects where IFES could provide valuable technical assistance:

- Legislative lobby and advocacy campaign
- Citizen-voter education campaign
- Support for civil society to be engaged with COMELEC's modernization program

While IFES was prepared to provide its support in all of the above areas, the citizen-voter education campaign took precedence as the ARMM regional elections were scheduled for August 2005.

A sub-grant for the Consortium for Electoral Reform (CER) was finalized through which IFES would provide support for CER's activities in the ARMM elections. CER aimed to contribute to the free and fair conduct of the ARMM elections by providing trainers' trainings on voter education and establishing a regional network for implementing both voter education and domestic monitoring initiatives.

These objectives were met through the organization of the ARMM Electoral Stakeholders Conference, where local NGOs from the ARMM region were invited to participate in electoral activities for the upcoming poll exercise. A plan of activities for voter education and election monitoring was developed during the conference, thus giving ownership to the implementers of the activity.

ARMM ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE

The objective of the conference was to gather various organizations and institutions in the ARMM to become stakeholders in contributing to the success of the regional election. It was expected to establish a local network in partnership with the CER to formulate plans and undertake activities of citizen-voter education and election monitoring in the ARMM election.

The ARMM Electoral Stakeholders Conference was successfully conducted on June 13-14, 2005 with 93 participants representing 64 organizations in attendance. These NGOs represented most of the major civil society organizations in the ARMM and are expected to provide the critical mass necessary for the implementation of the plan of activities.

Speakers from a variety of organizations contributed to the successful conduct of the conference, including the Bangsamoro Center on Law and Policy, Notre Dame University, PPCRV, Consortium for Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), COMELEC and PRRM. CER teamed up with 7 local organizations who acted in the capacity of co-conveners for the conference, with representatives coming from CBCS, TACDRUP, Assalam, COMMA, and Sindaw Kalilitad. Guests included COMELEC Chairman Benjamin Abalos, the then Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Scott Douglas Bellard and Gerry Porta of USAID. Media was also present, with the following outlets represented: PIA, DXMS, ABS-CBN and DXMY.

The conference agreed on two major points. First, the participants agreed to undertake an electoral monitoring project covering all polling places and all towns in the 2004 ARMM elections. In addition, the same individuals voted to implement a continuing citizen-voter education in relation to the 2005 ARMM elections and beyond.

To this end, the conference delegates agreed to the establishment of the Citizen's Coalition on the ARMM Elections (CCAEE). This was a tactical alliance at the civil society level for the 2005 ARMM elections. However, the possibility has been opened for future agreements and initiatives on electoral reform and good governance initiatives.

ARMM REGIONAL VOTERS' EDUCATION TRAINERS TRAINING

The ARMM Regional Voters' Education Trainers Training was successfully conducted on June 15-16, 2005. The objective of the training session was to establish a pool of trainers and educators from various local ARMM organizations and institutions. In attendance there were 70 participants, representing 62 organizations—nearly the entire ARMM Electoral Stakeholders Conference—extended their stay in order to attend this seminar, surpassing the initial target participation level of only 50 participants. These organizations were interested in initiating local plans and activities for voter education throughout the ARMM region.

The training consisted of two separate CER citizen-voter education modules that were fused into the ARMM election module: the Basic Citizen-Voter Module and the Moro Sectoral Module. The CER Education Committee handled the preparation of the module. It undertook the preliminary review of the modules in the light of the situation related to the ARMM election. It also undertook a pilot education session to test the Moro Sectoral Module during the last week of May 2005. All of the conference attendees agreed to participate in the regional citizen-voter initiatives.

The conference represented a breakthrough in the mobilization of ARMM civil society organizations for electoral intervention in the form of monitoring and citizen-voter

education. It proved to be a promising start for launching electoral reforms in the region at the grass-roots level. It remains to be seen, however, if this new consensus would become a permanent and effective intervention. The organizations were a varied lot, ranging from politically aligned organizations, sectoral organizations, NGOs, and non-partisan groups.

CER did note that the influence of traditional politics in the conference was palpable. The agreement to monitor, in fact, was limited to election day monitoring and avoidance of canvassing in certain areas in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, and Basilan due to fears of clan or political violence. There were also suspicions of partisanship from some of the participants and the presence of some political operators in the vicinity of the Conference. A deliberate and cautious approach was undertaken to protect the integrity of the electoral interventions by this nascent civil society network.

CER/CCAIE ARMM ELECTION PROGRAM

The Citizen's Coalition on the ARMM Elections (CCAIE) undertook a dual voter education and electoral monitoring project aiming to cover all municipalities and barangays participating in the 2004 ARMM elections.

The voter's education and monitoring programs aimed to:

- Provide participants with knowledge and skills on the procedures and processes before, during and after the conduct of elections;
- Raise awareness of the prohibited acts during election period;
- Involve citizens in ensuring clean, honest, orderly and fair elections;
- Acts as a deterrent to electoral fraud; and
- Increase credibility in the conduct of the electoral exercise.

The number of precincts, barangays and municipalities per province in the ARMM to be covered by these activities are shown in the following chart:

Province	Municipalities	Barangays	Precincts
Lanao	39 (plus 1 city)	1,175	2,050
Maguindanao	28	481	2,475
Sulu	18	410	1,884
Tawi-Tawi	10	203	704
Basilan	6	213	711

IFES requested additional funding from USAID in order to ensure these follow-on activities were fully supported. While the approval for the cost extension did not arrive until early July, the funding was still received in time in order to implement the planned activities to a partial extent. It is clear that this activity has laid the foundation for larger programs to be implemented in the ARMM for future elections.

MONITORING WORKSHOP

In past elections, domestic monitoring had been conducted primarily by NAMFREL and the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). NAMFREL did not participate in the ARMM polls this year, while PPCRV is an NGO recognized as a predominantly Catholic organization. Against this backdrop, IFES, its local partner CER, and ARMM-indigenous NGOs attending the Electoral Stakeholder Conference saw a need for ARMM NGOs with

significant Muslim membership to play a larger role in ensuring fairness and transparency in the upcoming ARMM elections.

When it became clear that the PPCRV leadership was not interested in partnering with CCAE on the domestic monitoring activity, an IFES Monitoring Expert was brought in to the Philippines in order to provide technical assistance to CCAE for their domestic monitoring project.

A monitoring workshop was held in Manila from July 12-13, 2005 with the following key representatives of the CCAE member organizations in order to plan their upcoming monitoring program:

- Sindaw Ko Kalilintad (Alliance of Peace Advocates), Maguindanao Province
- Maranao People Development Center Inc. (MARADECA), Lanao del Sur Province
- Mindanao Integrity of Muslim Association, Inc. (MIMA), Maguindanao Province
- Muslim Youth for Peace and Development (MYPD), Maguindanao Province
- Professional Women's Association (TRAC-PWA), Tawi-Tawi Province

Each of the five representatives selected one province each for which they would be responsible for project implementation. Since then, new provincial coordinators have been selected for Basilan and Sulu on the basis of their residency and level of performance during program implementation in their area of responsibility.

IFES representatives attended and participated in the planning activities and led discussions on:

- Overall purpose of election monitoring;
- Accreditation issues;
- Planning and logistics of fielding of monitors and election day coverage;
- Items to be included in a monitoring manual and monitoring kit; and
- Plans for monitor training in the provinces.

Working with the five identified provincial coordinators from CCAE, along with representatives from CER, the group jointly decided upon various elements that should be included in a training manual for ARMM monitors. Next, an agenda was developed for a day-long monitor training session to be held in each of the five provinces the following week.

IFES developed the CCAE monitoring manual, paying particular attention to the suggestions received from the planning participants but also ensuring that critical training items were included.

The manual consisted of the following sections:

- Overview of the ARMM elections
- Overview of CCAE
- Why Are We Monitoring Elections?
- Rights and Responsibilities of Monitors
- Glossary of Election Terms
- Election Procedures
 - Before the Voting Begins
 - During the Voting
 - Closing, Counting and Canvassing

- General Information for CCAE Monitors
- Monitoring Checklists
 - Pre-election and Polling Place Opening
 - Conduct of the Polling
 - Closing, Counting and Canvassing
 - Serious Incident Report
- Prohibited Acts (brochure produced by COMELEC)

In addition to the manual, a mock election exercise was developed for use during monitor trainings at the provincial and municipal levels where implemented. This exercise involved role-playing by 25 participants including election officials, party observers, NGO observers, regular voters, voters with “problems”, and bystanders.

IFES also assisted CCAE with their strategy for project implementation. The five provincial coordinators were tasked with recruiting monitors/voter educators from within the ranks of their own and other CCAE member organizations. The original plan envisioned recruitment of five monitors for each municipality in the ARMM. However, budget restrictions eventually reduced the target to three monitors per municipality, allowing for flexibility in the final number of monitors recruited.

In the instructions for monitors, it was suggested that each monitor attempt to observe the polling process at between five and ten polling places during Election Day. At this rate, it was calculated that roughly 40 to 60 percent of all polling places would be observed at some point during the day by CCAE monitors.

PROVINCIAL LEVEL TRAINING

The five provincial coordinators were given the mandate of organizing a two-day training session for the monitors in their assigned province. One day would focus on voter education training and the other on monitoring. They were given roughly one week to organize and hold the session.

Provincial train-the-trainer sessions for voter’s education and monitoring were successfully conducted in the five (5) provinces of the ARMM as shown in the following table, with a total of 429 local trainers participating:

Province	Activities	Dates	No. of Participants
1. Maguindanao	Voters Education and Monitoring Training	July 19 – 21, 2005 August 5 – 6, 2005	102
2. Lanao del Sur	Voters Education and Monitoring Training	July 21 – 22, 2005	180
3. Basilan	Voters Education and Monitoring Training	July 22 – 23, 2005	37
4. Sulu	Voters Education and Monitoring Training	July 22 – 23, 2005	65
5. Tawi – Tawi	Voters Education and Monitoring Training	July 23 – 24, 2005	45

On July 19, the IFES ETE, LPA, and Monitoring Expert traveled to Cotabato City to oversee the training session for Maguindanao monitors and educators. The training session began on July 20 with nearly 70 participants taking part in the training. Mostly young, the participants came from a variety of Muslim-based NGOs and other organizations in

Maguindanao. Also present were several area staff members from COMELEC who acted as resource persons on election technical matters.

The one-day monitor training generally followed the topics in the monitoring manual including, among other items, the roles and responsibilities of monitors, electoral offenses, and the polling and counting procedures. In the afternoon, a mock election was held using "election materials" created by IFES and CCAE personnel. Approximately 25 people role-played in the mock election while the rest of the participants observed and commented on the various scenarios that were presented.

During discussion after the mock election, particular attention was paid to the issue of the proper role/responsibility of the observers in protesting irregularities on election day or during the counting process. Monitors recounted later that the advice to "act in a diplomatic manner at all times" stayed with them during their observation activities throughout the election period.

ARMM CITIZEN-VOTER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

CCAЕ's strategy was to engage in both face-to-face voter education sessions at the local level, while also aiming to multiply their target audience through use of local media, including radio stations.

The specified activities at the local community level where ARMM voter education primers were distributed were conducted in the municipalities as shown in the matrix below:

Name of Provinces	No. of Municipalities	No. of Sessions Conducted	No. of Participants
1. Maguindanao	9	28	838
2. Lanao del Sur	40	32	1,367
3. Basilan	6	15	435
4. Sulu	18	20	620
5. Tawi-Tawi	10	19	808
Total	83	114	4,077

While a relatively small number of voters were reached with this method, the groundwork has been laid in terms of trained educators and developed materials for continuing voter education programs in the future.

As part of the voter's education program, interviews and press conferences were conducted on radio programs to discuss the significance of the right to suffrage and the relevance of ARMM elections. The following communities were included in these programs: Cotabato City, Bongao, Isabela City, Barira, North Upi and Gen. S.K. Pendatun.

ACCREDITATION FOR CCAE AS A CITIZEN'S ARM OF COMELEC

CCAe applied for accreditation with the Commission on Elections in the third week of July 2005. This was granted by COMELEC *en banc* on August 2, 2005 and issued on August 5, 2005. Copies of the accreditation document were sent to the field in time for the local monitors to coordinate and work with local COMELEC officials. However, not all COMELEC officials fully respected this accreditation documentation and therefore did not effectively cooperate with the CCAE monitors in all cases.

ELECTION MONITORING

The CCAE election monitoring campaign was implemented during election day and the counting and canvassing period thereafter. CCAE was able to provide presence in the targeted 100% of all municipalities and the city of Marawi throughout the five provinces of the ARMM.

The August 8, 2005 elections in the five provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) were conducted peacefully in absence of any serious or violent incidents. However, based on the data gathered by the CCAE monitors deployed in the field, fraud and irregularities were widely observed during the election period. The official voter turnouts were listed at 83% of the total number of registered voters, contrary to actual observed turnout on the ground which was running closer to approximately 55%. The exception to this would be in places known to be bailiwicks of certain candidates, where a higher turnout would be expected.

As part of the election monitoring activities in the five provinces of ARMM, the following observations were documented in checklists by the field monitors:

- Rampant vote-buying for as low as PHP 20 and as high as PHP 200 per candidate;
- Presence of military, police men, and local officials inside precincts;
- Presence and intimidation of local officials in polling stations;
- Ballot box snatching;
- In some areas, ballots were already completed prior to election day;
- Voters suspected of having multiple registrations are still on the voter rolls while waiting for lengthy judicial process to remove duplicates from the lists;
- Missing names on the voter lists; and
- Voters name being voted upon by other persons.

CCAe submitted a separate report to COMELEC with recommendations for future activities to improve the elections process in the ARMM.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

IFES supports the recommendations of civil society organizations in the ARMM to intensify and sustain voter education activities at the grass roots level in order to address some of the shortcomings of the ARMM electoral process. Important information from the Omnibus Election Code should be incorporated into the voter education materials. Target groups could include candidates in addition to voters. Domestic monitors should also receive additional training in order to better serve in their capacity as watchdogs of the process. Boards of Election Inspector members were also mentioned as an important target group to receive additional voter education prior to the conduct of the next election, as training received from COMELEC is insufficient. The use of radio was an effective means of reaching

voters and should be expanded in future activities. Voter education materials also need to be translated into local dialects in the future, while prohibited acts and violations regarding the elections process should be incorporated. Voter education materials should be disseminated throughout all educational institutions in the ARMM.

In addition, CCAE had a number of recommendations to make in terms of legal and administrative reform. These included, among others:

- COMELEC reshuffling of field personnel should be done immediately prior to election day;
- COMELEC should work to exclude multiple and ghost registrants from the voters list;
- COMELEC should ensure sufficient facilities are available during elections, especially in Counting Centers.

IFES continued to work with CCAE to review their objectives during a strategic planning exercise that was held later in the year and aimed at developing their work plan for activities to be conducted in 2006/7.

POST-ELECTION EVALUATION AND DEBRIEFING

On behalf of CCAE, CER arranged and facilitated a project evaluation on September 12-13, 2005. An election debriefing was also held on September 10-11, 2005. Both events were held in Davao.

In general, it was concluded that the project was a success overall and provides a strong basis for further electoral work in the ARMM region. CCAE has demonstrated, for a new organization, its capability for electoral work, particularly in the area of election monitoring. Its members are also potential partners in other electoral reform work, especially in the citizen-voter education work at the grassroots level among the Moro people. It should be stressed that this is only a very early stage in developing democracy and democratic practices in the region, particularly at the grassroots level. A sustained effort needs to be implemented for many years yet to ensure these processes takes root in the ARMM.

The successful establishment and operationalization of the CCAE represents a major breakthrough in electoral reform work in the ARMM. This will be the first time that a Moro community-based coalition for electoral reform has been established. This program has the potential for deeper and more effective intervention for the practice of genuine democracy and credible elections in a region plagued by internal conflicts, warlordism, and election anomalies.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The organization COMMA and a part of the CBCS leadership pulled out of the project when it became clear that they could not dictate CCAE's activities or gain control over its finances. The decision to have a deliberate and cautious approach to weed out partisans and protect the integrity of the electoral intervention, from hindsight, was correct.

The unfortunate experience with the leadership of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), who also tried to prevent the effective formation of CCAE and/or control its electoral monitoring activities, has led to the withdrawal of the organization from CER. Though this has been handled formally by CER, it also provided an

insight into how even citizen watchdogs can be compromised in their role as COMELEC citizen arms.

CONCLUSION

The voter education and monitoring of the August 2005 ARMM elections was carried out by local Moro organizations organized in the Citizens' Coalition on the ARMM Elections (CCAEC) with the support of the national Consortium on Electoral Reforms (CER). The project was able to train more than 400 local monitors and educators. On the basis of this trained manpower, the CCAEC was able to monitor all the 101 towns and one city of the ARMM regions. It was also able to conduct numerous education sessions at the grassroots level during the campaign and retains the capability to undertake this on a continuing basis.

There is now a strong basis for election monitoring and voter education in relation to the ARMM elections. There is also the strong possibility now for a sustained electoral reform work in the region after the elections.

CITIZENS COALITION FOR ARMM ELECTIONS (CCAEC): CAPACITY BUILDING

IFES increased the involvement of civil society in the electoral reform movement by implementing capacity-building activities aimed at strengthening the Citizen's Coalition for ARMM Elections (C-CARE). Specifically, IFES assisted C-CARE in designing and implementing training events, which incorporated institutional strengthening sessions held by experienced local trainers and resource persons.

After an intensive planning period, the CCAEC capacity-building workshops took place in November 2005 in General Santos City. Activities included a strategic planning workshop; a two-day workshop on project management, which built on the conclusions from the strategic planning workshop in order to help CCAEC develop a workplan; a two-day financial management workshop; and training on media relations, which capped off the week-long event.

Additional training needs were identified over the course of the first two workshops, and included organizational management and monitoring and evaluation skills. CCAEC submitted a proposal and budget to continue these capacity-building efforts in order to consolidate and strengthen their new organization prior to beginning program activities under the sub-grant award in early 2006.

On February 13, CCAEC officially adopted a new name, Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reforms, Inc., or Citizens Care (C-CARE) as they formally registered their organization with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

IFES conducted a second series of training workshops for the members of the C-CARE leadership. The training sessions focused on Monitoring and Evaluation, Technical and Effective Writing, Organizational System and Development and Teambuilding and were implemented from February 21 – 27, 2006 in Cagayan de Oro City. The 14 participants were members of the Executive Committee and District Coordinators.

Together, the two capacity-building seminars helped to solidify the new C-CARE organization and provide them with the skills to take control of their own internal governance as well as project management.

REFORMING THE NOMINATION PROCESS FOR COMELEC COMMISSIONERS: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY NETWORK (TAN)

IFES Philippines provided funding and technical support to the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN) in order to conduct public information and education programs, dialogues for reform, and public research and monitoring activities to raise awareness about the process of filling the vacancies on the COMELEC.

In accordance with the law, COMELEC Commissioners are appointed by the President and confirmed by a bi-cameral Commission on Appointments. However, the nomination process is not made transparent to the public.

A consortium of non-governmental organizations, composed of TAN, Alternative Law Groups, Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government, Institute of Political and Electoral Reform, Konsensyang Pilipino, La Salle Institute of Governance, Lawyers' League for Liberty (Libertas), Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reform and the Philippine Association of Law Schools, joined together to implement the COMELEC Appointments Watch Project to campaign for a public and transparent selection process. The TAN-led COMELEC Appointments Watch coalition sought to focus public and media attention on the appointments to the COMELEC in order to ensure a credible process and a strengthening of institutions. The coalition did not endorse any specific names to the COMELEC, but believes that if the process is open and credible using clearly defined criteria, then the appointees should be acceptable to the public.

The project's ultimate goal was to work for greater transparency and accountability of the process for the selection and appointment of the COMELEC Commissioners. In line with this goal, the project shall have the following major objectives:

- To enhance venues for the civil society's involvement, and the public in general, in the process for selecting and appointing Commissioners to the COMELEC;
- To heighten public awareness and elicit discussions on the selection and appointment process for the COMELEC Commissioners; and,
- To work towards the institutionalization of the involvement of civil society in monitoring the transparency and accountability of the process.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project had the following major components:

Public Information/ Education Campaign

The public information/ education campaign was launched nationwide through a simultaneous video-conferencing event in Luzon (Metro Manila and Baguio City), Visayas (Cebu City), and Mindanao (Cotabato City) to inform the public in general, especially the concerned civil society organizations of the appointment process that is being undertaken for the Commission on Elections.

The videoconference event linked nearly fifty (50) civil society and media organizations to discuss issues surrounding the current COMELEC appointment process. IFES opened the conference from Baguio with a welcome address. Senator Frank Drilon sent a video address outlining the work of the Commission on Appointments. Commissioner Borra also participated in the event from Manila and responded to questions from the four sites for

nearly one hour. A press conference was also held earlier the same week regarding the importance of the COMELEC appointments watch activity.

TAN produced a Project Briefer as hand-out material to introduce the project, proponents and sponsor of the project.

The public information campaign also included information dissemination on the developments regarding the appointment process and other related activities through a web page in the TAN site (www.tan.org.ph). Beyond the project period, TAN will be maintaining the web page to continue information dissemination on key COMELEC appointments as may be warranted.

Dialogues for Reform

In implementing this project, TAN sought the partnership of other civil society organizations that share the advocacy for an open, public and transparent process in COMELEC appointments. A consortium was created and was composed of TAN as lead organization, Alternative Law Groups, Institute for Political and Electoral Reform, Konsensyang Pilipino, Lawyers' League for Liberty, La Salle Institute of Governance and Philippine Association of Law Schools.

A speakers' bureau was also formed which is composed of Mr. Vincent Lazatin from TAN, Atty. Marlon Manuel from ALG, Mr. Ramon Casiple from IPER, Atty. Luie Guia from LIBERTAS, and Atty. Andres Bautista from PALS. They are the official spokespersons of the consortium on COMELEC appointments issues.

The project consortium organized meetings with three "sectors" to solicit positions on the reforms that will be put forward for institutionalization towards a credible appointment process involving key positions in the COMELEC. The three "sectors" are: 1) civil society groups (e.g. Consortium for Electoral Reforms, lawyers' groups), 2) legislative champions, and 3) technical adviser to the COMELEC appointments process (former Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr.). The meetings involved discussions on the immediate concerns, i.e. current vacancies in the COMELEC, and long-term solutions as well such as possible legislative remedies.

To facilitate a bigger discussion on issues surrounding the much expected COMELEC appointments, TAN set up an e-group (comelec-watch@yahoogroups.com) which has included members of the Consortium and partners in the region that have participated in the video-conference event.

Research and Publication

The project consortium undertook research work to support public information/ education and dialogues for reform activities. The research also covered monitoring work on development regarding the appointment process. As a conclusion, the COMELEC watch consortium released a publication documenting the experience of CSOs in their involvement in reforming the appointment process for key positions in the COMELEC.

The Lawyers' League for Liberty (Libertas), a member of TAN, also conducted focused research on the history of appointments at the COMELEC under the 1987 Constitution. This material was distributed during the video-conference. The study revealed patterns of appointment practices for COMELEC Commission positions. Since 1987, nearly two-thirds of

COMELEC appointments have been made on an ad interim basis. Such appointments become opportunities for abuse, as the Executive has power over whether to continue supporting their appointment or allowing it to expire without confirmation.

IFES continues to work with civil society in this important reform area to make all stakeholders more aware of the critical nature of having a transparent appointment process to the COMELEC and find more effective means of ensuring strong and credible leadership at the Commissioner level.

IV. PROGRAM COMPONENT III: LEGAL REFORM AND SUPPORT

IFES originally planned to provide support to civil society actors in the area of legal reform. CER, as the lead election reform civil society organization, had indicated they would need technical assistance for an advocacy campaign with only minimal review of the laws and codes themselves.

Regarding the legislative advocacy campaign, CER's agenda encompassed:

- Amending the electoral modernization law
- Amending the Omnibus Election Code
- Enacting the law on political party reform and development
- Amending the law on overseas absentee voting
- Amending the law on the party-list system
- Enacting the law on local sectoral representation

During the course of 2005, however, civil society was sidetracked with other issues, namely the Garcillano wiretapping scandal and subsequent calls to impeach the President. IFES shifted its focus to provide support in the legal reform arena to COMELEC and the legislative bodies as well as civil society.

In the midst of damaging scandals involving the election process that link the presidency itself in alleged attempts to defraud the election results, and further allegations of serious irregularities in the recent ARMM elections, the election apparatus is in disarray. The public confidence in the COMELEC is at an all-time low. Recent calls for impeachment and demands for expansive electoral reform are resonating among legislative bodies, political participants, civil society and the public. Constitutional reform, changes in the entire system of representation, the restructuring of the COMELEC, the formation and registration of political parties and campaign financing are all on the table. With the clear focus on election reform at the epicenter and a number of new electoral bills being introduced in the House and Senate, the time was ripe for IFES to offer technical assistance in helping relevant forces in moving toward reforms that are reasonable and have the best likelihood of producing the improvements being demanded.

In the face of such broad-sweeping global issues, IFES made a conscious choice to focus its immediate attention on the one key issue that it believes is not only doable and can also produce a perceivable positive affect in improving the election system in the shortest term. In particular, IFES believes that single most important reform in the immediate time frame relates to the potential automation of the election process. COMELEC's previous attempts have failed as a result of a hostile Supreme Court decision halting the use of newly purchased equipment on the basis that COMELEC had violated bidding procedures. As a result of that decision the COMELEC had to return to a manual system on very short notice; the newly purchased equipment is currently stored, secured and unused per the court's order.

In spite of these events, IFES agrees that automation, if implemented judiciously and managed well, can achieve several important objectives and mitigate many of the conditions that currently promote human error, cause extraordinary delays in the announcement of results aggravating suspicions of impropriety, and actually provide windows of opportunity for fraudulent activities to occur. Automation will help overcome these impediments by:

- Accelerating the counting process;
- Reducing opportunities for manipulation of results by eliminating human intervention during the consolidation and canvassing processes;
- Allowing for electronic transmission of results simultaneously to COMELEC and up through the jurisdictional hierarchies; and
- Providing precinct detail justifying the announced results for publication and distribution to political parties.

In this political environment, IFES provided technical assistance through the deployment of a Technical Election Assistance Advisor (TEAA) in September 2005 to Manila. The TEAA worked as a member of the IFES team in the Philippines and proved important as a technical advisor through providing recommendations on how to properly automate the election system; provide technical election assistance and recommendations to government election officials regarding the electoral code, as it incorporates automation; and providing recommendations on updating the electoral code with regard to an automated system while retaining the flexibility to fit a manual system; and providing recommendations on how to improve the nomination process for COMELEC commissioners. The TEAA also developed and coordinated a roundtable on election reform for civil society participants and provide her relevant recommendations into a working report.

ADVANCING THE AUTOMATION AGENDA

Upon agreement of the House Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms and in consultation with USAID, a Technical Election Assistance Advisor (TEAA) traveled to the Philippines to aid IFES' efforts to provide expert advice to the relevant stakeholders on how to proceed with revising the election code in order to advance election modernization efforts.

Through the course of the IFES specialist's visit three objectives were served. First, IFES reviewed existing Law 8436, which currently governs modernization and made recommendations as to how it might be amended to remove obstacles to implementation and achieve an appropriate balance between the imposition legislative authority and an appropriate level of flexibility to the COMELEC to act.

Second, IFES developed and presented a step-by-step overview on how COMELEC should initiate its modernization plan, and identified the major issues that should be addressed in developing its strategy for implementation.

Third, IFES made specific recommendations regarding improvements and overall objectives that can be made even if automation cannot be achieved in time for the next election, or if automation can only be accomplished in parts of the country, while other parts must remain manual. In particular, IFES recommended changes in the manner in which ballots are printed that would still speed up counting processes, and also introduced ideas as to how results could be transmitted electronically, even in a manual system.

Toward these ends, IFES made presentations to the House Committee on Election Reform, the COMELEC, as well as the Consortium on Election Reforms and a Civil Society Roundtable sponsored by UPNCPAG. IFES also provided a separate briefing to USAID democracy program staff. IFES will continue to work with its local partners in pursuing the best framework for advancing the necessary reforms and assist the COMELEC in getting the automation process on track again.

After the departure of the TEAA, IFES continued to expand the electoral reform arena through direct technical assistance to governmental bodies and support of pro-active civil society groups. While efforts to push forward legislative reform intensified, IFES was able to continue to inform the ongoing debates with recommendations on strengthening the current legislative drafts by considering the application of generally accepted principles and international standards. IFES also continued to develop partnerships with the information and communication technology community in the Philippines to discuss ways to ensure a good basis for electoral reforms in the area of election automation.

V. CONCLUSION

In the face of a present-day electoral environment marred by political scandals implicating COMELEC Commissioners, IFES' programming continues to be relevant for reforms stressing the strengthening of administrative and management of elections as well as the inclusion of civil society. IFES has continued to prepare local non-governmental organizations and stakeholders to address substantial reforms in the Philippine political and electoral environments.

IFES has achieved the objectives set forth in its main program components. Namely, IFES has implemented programs to build the capacity of the COMELEC through the provision of technical assistance, including an IT review of their automation system in preparation for future implementation. IFES supported the advancement of civil society's involvement in the electoral reform movement through provision of a subgrant to CER. It achieved this through specifically implementing sub-grant activities that focused on voter education, but also included domestic monitoring. These were designed to have a direct effect on the conduct of the next national election cycle, with a focus on improvement of voter awareness in the ARMM for the August 2005 electoral exercise. Finally, IFES provided critical expertise to the debate on the election automation legislation to all stakeholders, including COMELEC, the House of Representatives, the Senate and civil society. At the time of writing, bills have been passed in both houses of Congress and await final passage by a bicameral committee. If successful, this new legislation will lay the groundwork for a modernized election process that can potentially be rid of many procedures plagued by electoral fraud, or perceptions thereof, in the past.

With a stronger COMELEC institution and professionalized staff, empowered civil society organizations in the most problematic region of the Philippines, engaged civil society groups fighting for accountable election officials and new legislation that can pave the way for a more credible election process, the Philippines electoral environment stands ready for a greatly improved election process in 2007. At the same time, efforts in advancing election reform need to be continued in order to maximize the impact of these results while at the same time prepare the country for clean and modern elections by 2010.

APPENDICES

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

1. Memorandum of Understanding between COMELEC and IFES
2. COMELEC Modernization Summit Report (November 2004)
3. Heilman Report (CER Subgrant work with CCAE)
4. Domestic observer manual
5. CER Subgrant Agreement
6. CER Subgrant Agreement Reports
 - ARMM stakeholder conference (Cotabato City)
 - ARMM regional training on voter education (Cotabato City)
 - Post-election evaluation conference with CCARE (Davao)
 - Narrative and final report
 - CER/CCAЕ voter education materials – samples
 - CCAE ARMM election observation report
7. COMELEC presentation on ARMM election (Embassy Training)
8. Edgeworth / ERTC PowerPoint Presentation – September 2005
9. Edgeworth / ERTC Report – September 2005
10. Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) COMELEC Planning Department Training Report
11. Citizens CARE capacity building reports (General Santos City 4th quarter 2005 and Cagayan de Oro 1st quarter 2006)
12. UPNCPAG Train-the-Trainer Report for COMELEC core training capacity/ERTC
13. TAN COMELEC Appointments Watch – Contract 1
14. House and Senate Bills on Election Automation
15. Edgeworth Analysis of Philippine Automation Legislation
16. Citizens CARE SEC Registration

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES

- The Election Technical Expert (ETE) represented IFES at the Asian Conference on Democracy and Electoral Reforms and participated in the panel discussion on International Initiatives in Electoral Reform.
- COMELEC Modernization Summit was held, with the support of IFES and USAID, resulting in a detailed plan of action for COMELEC in preparation for the ARMM Elections in August, 2005.
- A cost extension was approved by the Executive Project Council (EPC) for the Consortium for Election and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), increasing the program funding by \$215,000 and extending the implementation period through the end of 2005.
- IFES met with the COMELEC Commission to agree upon program activities and to formalize COMELEC-IFES cooperation through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in May 2005.
- At the request of COMELEC, an IT Specialist concluded an Information Technology review of COMELEC's election modernization program and long-term strategy from April 30-May 13, 2005. The review helped COMELEC evaluate strategies to implement its automation systems and to manage and conduct elections in conformity to international standards. Results were presented to the COMELEC commission during an en banc session in May 2005, as well as to an audience at USAID Manila.
- A sub-grant agreement was finalized with the Consortium for Electoral Reform (CER), through which IFES provided technical and financial assistance to support civil society participation in the ARMM elections.
- The ARMM Election Stakeholders Conference was held from June 13-14 in Cotabato City, where the Citizen's Coalition for ARMM Elections (CCAIE) was created.
- A regional level train-the-trainer session for the CER ARMM voter education module was held from June 15-16 in Cotabato City.
- IFES initiated regular consultative meetings among COMELEC, CER, and PPCRV representatives in order to improve communication and provide a venue for sharing information and coordinating activities regarding voter education programs.
- ETE obtained accreditation for and observed the special elections held in Cebu on May 30, 2005.
- IFES Monitoring Expert, Jim Heilman, traveled to the Philippines to organize and train CCAIE election monitoring trainers. A monitoring workshop was designed and held from July 12-13, 2005 in Manila, while the monitoring manual, checklists, and mock election materials were also developed.
- On July 20, IFES observed a provincial-level monitoring train-the-trainer sessions in Cotabato City, Maguindanao. Domestic monitoring train-the-trainer sessions were held in all five provinces of the ARMM, with echo trainings led by municipal team leaders recruiting over 400 monitors.
- Voter education train-the-trainer sessions were held in all five provinces of the ARMM, with local level activities implemented at the community level during the two weeks leading up to the election. More than 400 educators were trained at the provincial level trainings. With limited time and funding for implementation, 4,000 voters were reached during face-to-face voter education sessions immediately prior to election day. Radio programs were also conducted in six communities, reaching an undetermined number of additional voters.
- A joint IFES-COMELEC training session took place on July 22nd to prepare the embassy monitoring teams to observe pre-election, election day, and post-election activities in the ARMM.

- ARMM elections took place on August 8th. IFES obtained accreditation for and observed the polling, counting and canvassing processes in Basilan and Maguindanao.
- CCAE monitored elections in all 101 municipalities and one city of the ARMM. An analysis of the checklist results was included in their final report to the COMELEC.
- A post-election seminar to evaluate CCAE voter education and monitoring efforts in the ARMM was held from September 10-13, 2005 in Davao.
- Capacity building programs in COMELEC were initiated on September 7th and 8th in coordination with the Development Academy of the Philippines with a basic training course for the Planning Department.
- IFES arranged and funded Commissioner Borra's participation in the 3rd Conference of Global Election Organizations, which was held in Hungary from September 14-17, 2005.
- Linda Edgeworth traveled to the Philippines in the capacity of Technical Election Assistance Advisor (TEAA) to aid IFES' efforts to provide expert advice to the relevant stakeholders on how to proceed with revising the election code in order to advance election modernization efforts. Results were presented to the House Committee, including civil society invitees, and COMELEC en banc and selected senior staff. A separate debriefing was also arranged for USAID's democracy program staff including Director Robert Wuertz, OEDG. In addition, the TEAA participated in a civil society roundtable on electoral reform, arranged by CER specifically to provide direct access to international expertise on various topics in election law and administration.
- Capacity-building activities were implemented in General Santos City during November 2005 to strengthen the Citizen's Coalition for ARMM Elections (CCA) and assist them with preparing for their 2006-7 program. Trainings included sessions on strategic planning, project management and financial management.
- Provincial assemblies were held throughout the five provinces of the ARMM, targeting the NGO participants who attended the original ARMM Election Stakeholder's Conference in June 2005. The purpose of these assemblies was to give feedback and updates on CCA's accomplished activities and to validate the membership of other organizations in CCA.
- A no-cost extension request was submitted to USAID in anticipation of savings to be reprogrammed for priority activities to be implemented during the early part of 2006.
- Additional capacity building workshops were held with the Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reform (C-CARE), previously known as CCA, in February 2006 in Cagayan de Oro. Training topics included Monitoring & Evaluation, Effective Technical Writing and Organizational Structure & Development. The event also provided an opportunity for C-CARE board members to meet and vote on organizational issues to solidify the new institution.
- IFES, in coordination with UP-NCPAG, initiated capacity-building activities for COMELEC senior staff during the first quarter of 2006. Targeted areas included strategic planning, project management and establishing a work plan for the 2007 national elections.
- IFES continued its partnership with UP-NCPAG to develop a program to provide a core training capacity within the COMELEC through the selection of 18 core trainers and implementation of a train-the-trainer program.
- IFES hired civic education specialist, Foster Tucker, to travel to the Philippines to provide technical assistance to IFES partner The Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reform (C-CARE) through a voter education workshop targeting project planning, materials development and training trainers in the delivery of the content of the voter education materials.