

## Recommendation Report

### Review Committee for the “Elections with Integrity” Shared Framework

**TO:** Global Board Committee on Strategy, Budget and Performance  
**FR:** Mary Cadagin, Vanda Felbab-Brown, Ozias Tungawara, Marta Martinelli, Susan Treadwell, Johanna Chao Kreilick, Julia Toffoli  
**DT:** January 13, 2014

#### Background

“Elections with integrity” are a critical component of vibrant and tolerant democracies where governments are accountable to their citizens. For decades, OSF has worked on elections through its local foundations and network programs, particularly by supporting a broad range of activities implemented by local partners. This work has included a broad range of activities related to electoral law reform, electoral systems design, election monitoring, capacity of election management bodies, development of regional electoral norms and standards, and post-election violence mitigation. OSF’s depth of experience with elections is evident in the fact that the issue was the most frequently cited focus area across all OSF’s strategies for 2014-2017.

However, OSF’s elections-related work has often been conducted discretely within each OSF program, foundation or office and has tended to focus on a discrete election period as opposed to the full electoral cycle. The opportunity to systematically collect, critically reflection upon, and share OSF’s vast elections-related experience, models and tools has never existed until now.

This nominated shared framework seeks to improve the integrity of elections by capitalizing on the vast but dispersed elections knowledge within the OSF network. First, it aims to increase OSF’s ability to support elections with integrity by providing a framework that is responsive to the full electoral cycle. It also proposes to catalog and disseminate existing practice while developing strategies in a focused number of upcoming elections. Important frontiers for further attention include the role of civil society organizations within election management bodies, access to elections for women and persons with disabilities, interactions between crime, rule of law, and elections, the relationship between elections and governance outcomes, and effective donor coordination. A shared framework would also enable OSF to examine and improve its elections work through the integrative lens of various instruments including grant-making, advocacy, support to governments, strategic litigation, monitoring, and civil society engagement, and through a geographically-focused lens.

Evaluating the nominated shared framework on Elections with Integrity has been the task of this Review Committee. We collectively reviewed OSF discussions and materials found on the Souk and offline, and participated in the Elections Working Group’s monthly calls. Additionally, we conducted 17 consultations with network colleagues and external partners on the proposed Shared Framework.

**Based on this review, as well as our own discussions, we have concluded that the nominated shared framework on Elections with Integrity meets all shared framework criteria and recommend that the Committee on Strategy Budget and Performance consider advancing this nominated concept to a strategy charette within the first quarter of 2014.** This report evaluates the Elections with Integrity concept against shared framework criteria, and describes several recommendations for work on this topic at a strategy charette.

## Evaluation and Recommendation

We believe that the nominated elections concept meets all the necessary criteria for a Shared Framework.

First, the concept focuses on several powerful and *distinctive insights*. The shared framework's focus on a comprehensive *electoral-cycle approach* is an insight that has been developing for some time in the field. This shared framework concept embraces this approach to re-conceptualize elections holistically, and offers OSF an opportunity to develop and connect-the-dots among its work, using this compelling conceptual model. Currently, the uneven understanding of the electoral-cycle approach across OSF and in the field often leaves change agents unable to situate their initiatives beyond an 'ad hoc' or event-based approach. This shared framework would use this re-conceptualized model of 'elections' to advance both theory and practical work on the ground.

Additionally, OSF has been testing and advocating for innovative approaches to *domestic election observation* and this work represents a distinctive approach and reconceptualization of the role of civil society in the election cycle. A third insight reflected in OSF's particular approach to elections is represented in our distinctive work on the right to vote of the most marginalized constituencies, particularly persons with disabilities.

Second, this concept focuses on an array of *specific, timely opportunities* in the field.

- One set of timely opportunities is reflected in the concept's shared proposals for real-time, on-the-ground work in a set of actual upcoming elections. Concept nominators have worked with OSF's Elections Working Group (a network-wide, voluntary community of practice on elections) to define a short list of possibilities, using a set of collectively developed set of selection criteria and a prioritization process. This 'election on elections' prioritized a set of possible elections on which to focus joint attention in the following years including upcoming elections in Ukraine, Burma, Nigeria, Malawi and Tunisia. Continuing to define the subset, and selecting the final short-list of a number of real-time elections will be a productive focus for a charette. The rationale and criteria for the five examples presented here can be found in Appendix F.
- A second set of timely opportunities is represented in the focused attention that this framework would bring to currently understudied questions and themes including the link between free and fair elections to improved government performance and legitimacy, or fragile or partisan democratic institutions. Other frontiers which represent an opportunity to distinctively contribute include the connection between elections with crime and violence, and the many facets of elections and gender. A shared framework would bring more attention and resources to these questions which could benefit OSF's work at large and the field in general. The charette could help organize attention and efforts on any of these thematic fronts.

Thirdly, OSF's rich set of relationships with different actors on the ground, regionally, and internationally enable OSF to play a **distinctive role** in the elections space. OSF is able to act as a civil society organization but also as a donor, partner to government or respected participant in leading international partnerships and institutions focused on elections. There is also broad scope within this shared framework for OSF to better understand and utilize its distinctive role as a truly operational foundation with a set of integrative tools at its disposal.

Finally, a shared framework approach to elections offers OSF strong potential **benefits** by strengthening good practices and incentivizing and catalyzing broader collaboration across diverse network colleagues, as well as with external actors. These efforts would not be likely be feasible without shared framework engagement and support. In addition, the methodologies and processes used in this shared framework to organize, collect, and effectively share the currently dispersed elections expertise will help inform wider OSF efforts to share and manage knowledge.

### **Challenges, Considerations, and Outstanding Questions**

There are a few challenges and considerations that should be taken into account when considering the approval and implementation of elections shared framework, including the following:

- Many elements determine the integrity of elections, and OSF's objectives can be undermined or influenced by factors outside of the network's sphere of influence. Therefore OSF's attribution will not necessarily be linear or guaranteed.
- OSF's global reputation and engagement on elections could adversely influence effective work on elections or cause difficulties for grantees working on elections.
- The volatile nature of the electoral process will certainly influence and could also interfere with OSF's ability to successfully undertake projects in the target countries. As such, proposed projects should remain flexible and sensitive to political or social changes in target countries.
- There is a balance to strike between the need to harmonize OSF's understanding of and approaches to elections, and the imperative in the on-the-ground work to remain locally driven and relevant. Our consultations emphasized the importance of explicitly designing an approach that accommodates diverse local contexts and facilitates support that addresses the unique features in those contexts.

### **Recommendations for the Charette**

- Messaging will be important in this shared framework so that local voices, priorities and contexts don't get lost in the face of overarching goals. In short, an elections shared framework should prioritize respect for the voices, agency and priorities of the people most affected. The charette should focus on how to frame and operationalize these considerations.
- A strategy charette is an opportunity to coordinate and align work in the selected on-the-ground elections including defining short-, medium-, and long-term goals and objectives, clarifying roles of participating programs and foundations, and sketching preliminary work plans and timelines.
- A charette could also help organize internal interest on the set of understudied thematic areas, and identify areas of interdisciplinary experimentation including approaches that combine multiple instruments or tools such as conflict management and mediation with electoral processes.
- Finally, the charette could be used to generate knowledge on the electoral cycle concept for participants and map an approach to the information gathering and 'knowledge management' aspect of this shared framework.

## **Conclusion**

By drawing upon our global network of networks, OSF can make a distinctive contribution to free and fair elections. As a Review Committee, we believe the Elections with Integrity concept has sufficiently met all necessary shared framework criteria and encourage the Committee of Strategy, Budget and Performance to consider approving the concept for a strategy charette in early 2014.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Elections with Integrity Concept Note (Nominators: Mort Halperin, Jerry Fowler and Jonas Rolett), June 20, 2013.

*Concept Title:* Beyond Free and Fair: Promoting Elections with Integrity

*Nominators:*

Mort Halperin (+1.202.721.5601/ Morton.halperin@opensocietyfoundations.org)

Jerry Fowler (+1.202.721.5679/jerry.fowler@opensocietyfoundations.org)

Jonas Rolett (+1.202.721.5612/Jonas.rolett@opensocietyfoundations.org)

*What? (200 words or less)*

1. The opportunity: What is the opportunity this concept represents (one sentence)?

This concept presents the opportunity to enhance Open Society engagement on elections by taking advantage of the large body of expertise and experience that currently is spread among a variety of foundations and programs.

2. Goals and strategies: What is this concept trying to achieve? What are some of the initial strategies you envision for getting there?

An election with integrity is one that is based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality and is professional, impartial, and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle. This concept will seek to improve the integrity of elections in targeted countries. Open Society has long worked on elections through its local foundations, particularly by supporting a broad spectrum of activities implemented by local partners. We will seek to build on this work by cataloguing and disseminating existing practice and developing strategies for a more comprehensive approach, including by engaging throughout the entire electoral cycle in targeted countries. Among the strategies we envision for achieving this are

- creating and sustaining a platform for network-wide knowledge sharing, strategizing and coordination;
- participating in the proposed Kofi Annan-led international forum if it is established;
- making network resources available to share existing knowledge, build network capacity and assist in election work;
- supporting domestic civil society throughout the electoral cycle;
- promoting cooperation between international and domestic groups;
- advocating with international actors engaged in election support, such as the U.S., EU and AU, including by amplifying the voices of domestic monitoring groups and promoting the enforcement of regional normative frameworks;
- promoting cooperation among domestic election monitors; and
- enhancing civil society's relationship with election management bodies.

*Why? (300 words or less)*

1. OSF Value: Why should OSF work on this? What is our distinctive advantage(s) on this issue?

Elections with integrity are an essential component of vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Open Society has a unique capacity in this area because we have foundations and partners at national levels, we have strong contacts with government officials

and election groups at the international level, we are not viewed by other actors as competing for funding and we have convening power both internationally and nationally.

2. Why Now? What is the importance of this effort to the world now (one sentence)?

Virtually every country on earth has had at least one election since 2000, and whether those elections are conducted with integrity – and perhaps even more important, whether they are seen by a country's own citizens to have integrity – has a profound impact on the evolution of an open society.

3. Why Shared Framework? How does your concept lend itself to a shared framework formulation? In other words, what is the added value of addressing this issue by using a shared framework approach?

This concept was the most widely mentioned in proposed strategies of all shared frameworks under consideration. It lends itself to a shared framework approach for three reasons. First, there is a lot of experience and expertise spread throughout Open Society that can benefit foundations facing elections if it is more systematically shared than it has been in the past. Second, for a number of elections, Open Society engagement will be enhanced by a structure that, well in advance, identifies its importance and facilitates collaboration amongst the foundation, interested thematic programs, advocacy offices and colleagues with relevant experience and expertise. Third, elections inevitably touch on a wide array of Open Society concerns, such as access to information or the rights of marginalized populations, yet our engagement on those related issues often has been “stove-piped.”

*How? (200 words or less)*

1. Internal and External Actors Engaged: What are some internal OSF entities (programs, offices, instruments/tools) and external actors you envision would be relevant to the concept strategy and why?

Many of the foundations and geographic programs are active on elections in their areas, such as the Africa foundations, the Southeast Asia Initiative, the Nepal/Bhutan Initiative, the Middle East and North Africa Initiative, the Albania foundation, the Indonesian foundation and U.S. Programs. A number of thematic programs also engage on elections in ways relevant to their mandate, including AfriMAP, Beyond Borders, the Human Rights Initiative, the International Women's Program, the Think Tank Fund and the Information Program. The advocacy offices in Washington and Brussels are also active, given the importance of the U.S. and the EU in funding and influencing electoral processes. External actors include domestic and regional civil society groups; national governments, including national election management bodies; political parties; international NGOs such as the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES); regional organizations such as the OSCE, AU and ASEAN; and international intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, International IDEA and the Community of Democracies.

*Outstanding Questions?* What are some issues or questions to which further attention could help inform this concept/process?

Issues to which further attention could help inform this concept include:

- understanding better the obstacles to effective coordination and cooperation amongst international and domestic monitors and developing strategies for overcoming those obstacles;
- understanding better how to overcome obstacles to elections with integrity, such as biased or ineffective election management bodies or political parties that are undemocratic or poorly functioning;
- understanding better the effective, safe and appropriate use of technology, particularly in monitoring, developing ways to efficiently disseminate products and practices, and achieving accessibility;

- understanding at a more granular level what has and has not worked in previous engagements on elections and why;
- developing a clearer understanding of what it means to engage throughout the entire electoral cycle; and
- identifying where exclusion – particularly of marginalized groups such as women, persons with disabilities and minorities – takes place.

*Results? (200 words or less)*

1. If this effort moves forward, what would success look like at the end of four years? Describe specific results or products that might be achieved.

At the end of four years, we will have identified a number of elections for targeted engagement and improved their integrity by some combination of the following, depending on the context: engaging proactively throughout the entire electoral cycle; enhancing coordination and cooperation amongst domestic and international monitors; enhancing coordination and cooperation amongst domestic monitoring groups; improving the ability of domestic civil society to interact with the election management body; promoting effective, safe and appropriate use of new technology; improving the electoral process, including its accessibility; eliminating exclusionary practices; and making it possible for local actors to benefit from the experience of actors in other countries and regions.

2. Risk Analysis/External Challenges: What might prevent this effort from working in the way you foresee?

Ultimately, the integrity of elections depends on many factors and actors outside the control of Open Societies. Even the most strategic, well informed and best designed engagement may fail to improve the integrity of the election or to avoid the negative consequences of an election that lacks integrity. Even intermediate goals, such as improving communication and coordination amongst domestic and international monitors, can be undermined by factors that are beyond Open Society's ability to influence, such as competition among groups. In some contexts, OSF's global reputation can make it difficult to be effective on elections or can cause difficulties for grantees working on elections.

## **Appendix B: Criteria for Approved Shared Frameworks**

In order to be approved, nominated Shared Framework must meet the same criteria as an OSF Concept or Initiative: taking advantage of a specific opportunity, enabling OSF to fulfill a distinctive role, and proceeding from a powerful insight. Additionally, collaborations that rise to the level of a Shared Framework must re-conceptualize a problem in a way that generates a compelling solution that can only be collectively achieved. A Shared Framework engages multiple OSF and external actors to re-conceive a complex problem in a new way.



## **Appendix C: List of Review Committee Consultations**

Pascal Kambale (AfriMAP)  
Amir Osman (AfRO)  
Sarah Pray (AfRO)  
Ibrahima Kane (AfRO AU Programme)  
Udo Ilo (OSIWA)  
Adrian Moraru (Institute for Public Policies Romani)  
Jelena Berkovic (GONG Croatia)  
Dragan Zelic (GONG Croatia)  
Irman Lanti (TIFA)  
Mickael Hoelman (TIFA)  
Herry Adi (TIFA)  
Martin Hala (Nepal Alliance for Social Dialogue)  
Hari Sharma (Nepal Alliance for Social Dialogue)  
Mathias Hounkpe (OSIWA)  
Glen Mpani (OSISA)  
Chidi Odinkalu (Justice Initiative)  
Mugambi Kiai (OSIEA/Kenya)

## **Appendix D: List of Review Committee Consultation Questions**

1. What is your work on elections?
  - a. What aspects of elections have you focused on?
  - b. How would you characterize your work within an electoral cycle framework?
  - c. What “tools” did you employ in this work (grant making, support to government, advocacy, etc.)
  - d. How do you see the categories or phases of an electoral cycle framework?
  - e. What have been your key objectives and expected outcomes of the elections work?
  - f. Where in your elections work do you feel you’ve made the most critical impact?
  - g. What has been OSF’s distinctive value-added in these areas?
  - h. What aspects of this work would be useful/ transferrable to other OSF colleagues working on elections?
2. What are the burning questions you feel are not being covered in OSF’s existing elections work?
  - a. Do these questions/issues have broader relevance for the wider network?
  - b. Can OSF play a distinctive role in addressing these gaps?
3. In your view, what are the really critical, top-priority elections coming up in the next 2-3 years?
  - a. Is there sufficient time/space for OSF to contribute something distinctive in these elections?
  - b. What models, expertise or tools exist within OSF that could be engaged to impact those elections?
  - c. How could foundations, regional offices, programs etc. bring in their questions, produce research, develop plans, make grants, collect data to support work in these scenarios?
4. From your perspective, what would a shared framework and ensuing OSF strategy on elections look like? What should it prioritize?

## **Appendix E: Criteria for Nomination of Target Countries (Elections Working Group)**

1. Whether the local foundation or regional program is engaging with the electoral process and believes that a network focus would be beneficial;
2. Whether the current electoral cycle is expected to be consequential for the development of democracy in the country;
3. Whether the integrity or credibility of the electoral process is likely to be contested (but not so lacking as to make engagement futile) or, in the case of a country that recently held an election, issues of integrity and credibility should be addressed in the post-election and early pre-election periods;
4. Whether there are significant issues relating to political participation by marginalized populations;
5. Whether there is or will be international and/or regional involvement in the electoral process, such as through technical assistance or through the presence of international monitors; and
6. Whether there is a history of assessments or analysis in which international and domestic groups contradict each other.

## **Appendix F: Criteria and Rationale for Proposed Countries**

### **Burma**

*Relevant criteria:* “Whether the local foundation or regional program is engaging with the electoral process and believes that a network focus would be beneficial”; “Whether the current electoral cycle is expected to be consequential for the development of democracy in the country”; “Whether the integrity or credibility of the electoral process is likely to be contested”; “Whether there are significant issues relating to political participation by marginalized populations”; “Whether there is or will be international and/or regional involvement in the electoral process, such as through technical assistance.

*Rationale:* President Thein Sein, who is overseeing the country's shift from isolation to integration, will not seek a second term following the general elections scheduled for late 2015. 2014 will see attempts at the reform of the controversial 2008 constitution. Beyond an advocacy role that pushes for a level playing field among political entities, Open Society’s role could also involve the training of citizen organizations to monitor the 2015 elections (including media) in an impartial and systematic fashion.

### **Malawi**

*Relevant criteria:* “Whether the local foundation or regional program is engaging with the electoral process and believes that a network focus would be beneficial”; “Whether there is or will be international and/or regional involvement in the electoral process, such as through technical assistance or through the presence of international monitors.”

*Rationale:* OSF network engagement could complement OSISA’s efforts; in addition the network could engage with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as a way of supporting a local regional body and strengthen its own election monitoring capacities as well as with the SADC-Electoral Network of CSOs operating in Malawi. As elections are in the first half of 2014, OSF could draw lessons on short term initiatives.

## **Nigeria**

*Relevant criteria:* “Whether the local foundation or regional program is engaging with the electoral process and believes that a network focus would be beneficial”; “Whether the current electoral cycle is expected to be consequential for the development of democracy in the country”; “Whether the integrity or credibility of the electoral process is likely to be contested”; “Whether there is or will be international and/or regional involvement in the electoral process, such as through technical assistance.”

*Rationale:* After years of military rule Nigeria’s transition remains fragile. Strategically it is important that elections in Nigeria are conducted properly for both the sub-region and the continent. Nigeria is a critical player in ECOWAS and the AU so a discredited election in that country will undermine ECOWAS and AU’s effort to promote democracy. OSIWA is engaging with the electoral process through support to the EMB and to CSOs (in order to improve participation and transparency of the process). Chances are high that elections will be contested: politicians and ordinary citizens show doubt about the credibility of the EMB, there is a lot of fighting going on within and between major political parties ahead of the elections and the security issues in a relatively large part of the country are possible threat to the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. There are already and will definitely be international and regional involvement in the electoral process (through technical assistance and observation)

## **Tunisia**

*Relevant criteria:* “Whether the local foundation or regional program is engaging with the electoral process and believes that a network focus would be beneficial”; “Whether the current electoral cycle is expected to be consequential for the development of democracy in the country.”

*Rationale:* Tunisia’s second elections since the revolution will be a major turning point— a test of the commitment of parties to a democratic process, paving the way for a new phase in the transition. Since the last election there has been considerable political fragmentation, particularly among progressives. The political environment is now heavily polarized with an increased security threat and risk of election related violence. There is also a concern that without sufficient political will from the incumbents, elections could be stalled.

## **Ukraine**

*Relevant criteria:* “Whether the current electoral cycle is expected to be consequential for the development of democracy in the country”; “Whether the integrity or credibility of the electoral process is likely to be contested (but not so lacking as to make engagement futile)”; “Whether there is or will be international and/or regional involvement in the electoral process, such as through the presence of international monitors”; “Whether there is a history of assessments or analysis in which international and domestic groups contradict each other.”

*Rationale:* Although the situation in Ukraine remains in flux, President Yanukovich appears set to retain power and run for the second term in 2015. Given his abysmal public approval ratings, even among the base in the industrial south-east and east of Ukraine, Yanukovich would have to resort to large-scale fraud, intimidation, and potentially violence to secure victory. A compromised election would result in a huge setback for the open society values OSF deeply cares about. It would likely lead to a vigorous, Putin-style attack on civil society, elimination of any independent media, and a clampdown on all public freedoms. Russia would use the failure of Ukraine to democratize to hamper the European integration of

Moldova, keep Belarus in its fold, isolate Georgia, and continue bullying Armenia. Open Society has an opportunity to engage local stakeholders and international donors to craft and implement an action plan that would empower local actors, bring sustained international attention to the event and its aftermath, and deliver messages to the Ukrainian elite to avert a violent post-election response.

The first round of the next Ukraine presidential elections has been set for 26 February 2015, a bit more than a year from now. While it is not clear whether Vitali Klitschko will be allowed to challenge the incumbent due to residency requirements, the elections promise to be decisive for the trajectory of Ukraine's path towards Europe. Likewise, it has the potential of becoming extremely divisive as the integrity of the process will be subject to contestation, whatever the result, with a high likelihood of electoral violence in the pre- and post-election period.