Joint EC-UNDP Thematic Workshop on Sustainability in Electoral Administration: Adequate Resourcing for Credible Elections
COMPARATIVE COST OF THE THREE CATEGORIES OF EMBs
(Independent, governmental, mixed model)
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A STORY FROM THE MOUTH OF THE HORSE

• UNDP STUDY 2000
  - Electoral authorities labelled as EMB
  - Cost data brought to debate (Mexico 1999)
  - IDEA handbook on EMBs followed

• UNDP CORE study 2006
  - A cost assessment methodology proposed
  - Very limited database (34 countries: 32% stable and 68% emerging democracies)
THE EVIDENCE FROM 2000 REINFORCED IN 2006

- Key variables explaining electoral costs
  - Previous experience at elections independently of region or economic development
  - Permanence/professionalism of electoral administration
- Key factors on cost effectiveness
  - Continuous voter register
  - Integrated strategic and operational planning
  - Permanent professional staff
THE EVIDENCE (2) A SPURIOUS RELATIONSHIP?

• From the 2000 study: 48 countries mid 1990’s; cost per elector in US $ of the year
  
• Independent (35 countries) Average $6.37. Range: Bangladesh $0.2 - Cambodia $45.5.

• Mixed model (6 countries) Average $2.83. Range: Netherlands $1.0 – Norway $4.8.

• Governmental (7 countries) Average $1.97. Range: UK $0.8 – Switzerland $5.4
The evidence (3)

• Variation of average cost between:
  • Governmental and independent EMB model: $4.41
  • Widely state apparatuses and challenging at state building $4.04
  • Stable and post-conflict democracies all countries $8.41
    - In countries with widely spread state apparatuses $4.01
    - In countries with challenging at state building $10.79
Methodological challenges on shading cost areas

- Indirect and diffused costs assessment
- Political parties and campaign funding and expense
- International electoral assistance and support, official and informal
- Integrity costs in post-conflict scenarios (security, infrastructures, displaced populations)
Concluding remarks (1)

• EMB model matters, but nos as much as:
• State building of national institutions, local government structures and a professional civil service.
• Public trust in government and among the electoral contenders.
• Rising standards and popular demands about quality of elections (IT use, transmission of results)
Concluding remarks (2)

• Independently of EMB model, election costs might keep increasing like the cost of other public services at democratic governance (e.g. Physical infrastructures, health or education).

• Why could it be different?

• Le be reminded that the highest cost is with warfare, followed by authoritarian rule. And we do not like either of those.