Joint EC-UNDP Thematic Workshop on Sustainability in Electoral Administration:

Adequate Resourcing for Credible Elections

Sustainability in polling

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction

- Cost drivers for polling day(s)

- EMB models and their impact on polling costs

- Sustainability of polling costs

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Introduction

- **Sustainability of polling day operations** is grounded in the **electoral cycle approach** to electoral support/management

- Focused on **value for money, including cost-effectiveness** from one election to the next, this presentation highlights **cost drivers** to be considered when building polling day operation systems.

- What is key here is keeping the cost low, e.g. through the use (and reuse) of local resource.

Cost drivers - polling day operations (1)

Key cost drivers in polling operations include:

1. Electoral systems (# of rounds; by-elections)

2. Legally-bound timeframes and procedures (Egypt)

3. Political context (in Kenya, mistrust led to the introduction of biometric identification of voters at polling stations to minimise electoral fraud). **Electoral integrity** comes with a cost

4. Level of infrastructural development

Cost drivers - polling day operations (2)

5. General governance culture (e.g. pervasiveness of corruption)

6. **Literacy** and **numeracy** levels (lengthy time of voting may necessitate larger number of polling stations)

7. Electoral **planning** and **procurement** (local versus foreign)

8. Adequate lead time before the polls (late release of funds to the EMB). The shorter the lead time the higher (and unsustainable) the cost

9. Technology used in the polling process

10. Size of the country

EMBs models and impact on polling costs (1)

- 3 EMB models are the government, independent and mixed models impacting on polling costs in several ways:

- The **Government model** tends to rely more on government's personnel and systems even for operational work. As a result, many costs are absorbed or hidden within the normal government's recurrent costs and not linked to polling.

EMBs models and impact on polling costs (2)

- The **Independent model** tends to be prone to bearing more costs by the EMB itself, including the setting up of its sub-national offices and operations . This does not exclude sharing of costs in some instance with the government , e.g. shared data of voter register and civil register (SA) or EMB provided government's warehouses

- The **Mixed model** tends to have shared costs such as parallel deployment of personnel during elections affecting polling costs e.g. CENA (Senegal) and CENI (Mali) monitor elections and the Ministries of Interior conducts the polls in both countries

Sustainability of polling costs

Polling costs can be sustained by looking carefully at:

- **Polling staff costs**

- **Voting venues**

- **Ballot boxes and ballot papers**

- **Deployment of material (logistics)**

- **Technologies**

- **Communications**

- **Etc**

Polling staff costs

- Polling operations systems and methods must take into account the **quality and quantity of local skills**

- High/medium tech would not have worked in South Sudan in 2011). Low skills base requires simple systems.

- **Skills transfer** is central to ensuring sustainable polling operations

- Use of state employees like **teachers** has proved to be effective and cost-effective in many countries unless there are accusations of partisanship against them.

Voting venues

- **Permanent buildings**: primary schools are appropriated because have the right size and layout, are well distributed through the country and are taken in charge by the government

- **Temporary structures** (tents) or mobile voting stations can also be used in some contexts but they may be inappropriate under the rain.

- The choice of **lighting** must be made based on cost-effectiveness, quality of light and hazard (generators, diesel, candles, lamps, batteries, solar lamps, etc)

- In Rwanda voting ends around 15:00. By 17:30 operations at most polling stations are completed.

Acquisition and deployment of material

- Acquisition of materials (ballot papers, ballot boxes, polling booths, etc) requires transparent procurement procedures. It is important that most materials are reusable. **Storage space** will then have to be provided.

- Where **roads and other basic infrastructures** are in bad state, acquisition, production and deployment of materials must be done well in time based on realistic timelines and calendars

- This will help avoid the often prohibitive **airlifting**.

- **Armed forces transport** facilities can be cost-effective and efficient unless the army has a poor political image.

Technologies

- In polling operations, technologies are needed, inter alia, for
  - Counting of votes
  - Aggregation of results at various levels
  - Transmission of results
- Equipment and systems used for polling operations should ideally serve for non-electoral purposes as well
- International supplier driven acquisition of high-cost and unsustainable IT "solutions" must be assessed against the need to build local capabilities.

Communications

- Limited telecommunication networks (telephone and fax)

- Mobile phone (calls, SMS and emails)

- Private companies (mining companies or farms in remote areas)

- Armed forces communications networks but may be problematic in some contexts depending on the perception about the political affiliation of the army

Conclusion

- Each country has its **own peculiar needs and circumstances** and hence the polling costs tend to vary widely. For example, recruiting teachers as polling staff because it is cheaper in one country may be problematic in countries where teachers are perceived as politically aligned.

- It can however be argued that by paying attention to a number of **cost drivers**, one can gradually make the cost of polling operations **cost-effective** and **sustainable** and get **value for money.**

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