


Foreword

In the late 1980s and the 1990s many countries organized multiparty elections for the first time. The main challenges that faced those elections could be described as lack of experience and a knowledge gap. While there was a strong commitment to making sure that electoral administrations act independently, many newly established electoral management bodies were largely unprepared, and did not possess the necessary experience, knowledge and resources to deliver and guarantee credible elections. There was no common methodology available for designing or financing election administration; nor did electoral institutions and practitioners have access to best practices, practical experience and comparative lessons.

The holding of successive competitive elections over the years enabled electoral administrators in much of the world to accumulate valuable experience that they are now starting to share with each other. The challenges of the earlier decades are thus no longer the main problem. Instead, election managers currently face the formidable challenge of ensuring that stakeholders have trust in the electoral process and perceive electoral administrations as credible institutions. Stakeholder confidence, and especially the trust of the public and of political parties in the electoral process and the way in which it is administered, are crucial not only for the electoral exercise itself, but for the credibility of the government that results.

This new *IDEA Electoral Management Design Handbook* attempts to address some of these challenges from a practical point of view, by bringing together global field experiences in electoral administration, and by presenting best-practice solutions in a non-prescriptive and user-friendly way. It looks at the different models of electoral administration and the management design issues that may have an impact on confidence in and the scope for independent action by election administrators. In doing so, it takes into account the entire electoral cycle, not only the highly visible time close to polling, and it highlights the importance of post-election audit and evaluation.

This Handbook also emphasizes the need for electoral administrations to be effective, sustainable and professional. It provides useful tools to help guide the process of detailed planning of the basic requirements of the organizational and financial aspects that are essential if elections are to be free, fair and credible and run efficiently. It is intended to be a practical tool for all those who are seeking professional guidance to establish, reform and/or consolidate genuinely autonomous, neutral and professional electoral administration for the long term. I have no doubt that this IDEA Handbook will be of huge value for election administrators and electoral stakeholders around the world.



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