

## Transliteration with Niall McCann, UNDP

00:00

Q (Yvonne): Hi. I am Yvonne Goudie and I am here today talking to Niall McCann. Niall, can we start asking what your position and role is currently?

00:17

A (Niall): Currently, I am the lead electoral advisor for UN Development Program (UNDP) which is the major implementing arm of the UN's system to assist member states in organizing credible and fair elections.

00:32

Q (Yvonne): Great. So the topic today is talking about this idea of costing elections and the publication that in the past was known as CORE, but we just want to talk generally about the ideas and methods used for costing elections, figuring out the costs of elections and comparing the costs. Can you tell me a little bit about how that is being done?

00:57

A (Niall): The challenge here even that we are constantly trying to face as an international community, is working with national government bodies and when present their national budgets for organizing elections, we have got two challenges. One is being able to compare across countries so that we can try and come up with some understanding of whether budget X for country X (with that type of population, size of a geographical area and number of voters), how does that relate to a country in a different context in another continent perhaps? How do the two budgets compare? Because I think international partners need to have some degree as of whether the budgets that are presented to them by national partner are a) credible and b) possible, for partners to support. That is one of the main reasons why we did it and why we have been following this project.

The second reason is to actually assist the country itself, to come up with a credible budget. Sometimes it's very difficult for example for national EMBs to be able to put a price on something like the contribution of school teachers that end up working in poll stations or indeed, and more practically, calculate just how much it's going to cost them to subsidize sending the police or the army all over the country to deliver materials for example. So helping countries to actually put credible budgets together was the second main reason of why we try to do this type of work.

02:32

Q (Yvonne): It's really helpful for EMBs to know these sorts of methods of comparing costs of elections. Can you tell me a little bit about this project itself and what it aims to do?

02:45

A (Niall): We hired a consultant a number of years ago, very well-known colleague Domenico Tuccinardi, and we asked him to basically come up with a methodology to allow all types of electoral costs to be grouped together and to put definitions on them in a way that they could be internationally understood, across different borders and contexts. For example, when we talk about training cost for polling staff, we have to

understand exactly what we are talking about here. Are we talking about renting locations so that polling staff can be gathered and trained? Are we talking about the daily stipend that might be given to a polling officer to attend such training? Are we talking about, if it is civil servants or teachers that are being “lent” to the EMB to actually implement the election, is it the daily supplemental fee that the electoral commission might pay to the ministry of education? Trying to categorize these and put definitions on them that will allow different countries assign and affect the same understanding to when they are putting their financial figure and what they mean with for example training costs. That was ultimately what we wanted to do.

So we came up with this methodology where we divided all of the main electoral costs under four different sections. Voter registration costs, Electoral Day operation costs, voter and civic education costs and election results management costs. We felt that those were the four main areas of interest for EMBs all over the world where they would want to be able to see similar costs in different countries and see how that helped them.

*The interview was carried out in September 2019*

*This transcript has been lightly edited to enhance readability and clarity without changing the sense of the points made by the discussants.*

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