

## **Key considerations and challenges for public outreach and media relations**

### *Considerations*

- Efforts should be made to develop a free and impartial state media that allows access to a spectrum of political viewpoints through legislative reforms for balanced coverage and/or assistance to improve information technology systems.
- The national EMB should be encouraged to strengthen its public and media outreach and provide regular updates, with donor support as necessary.
- Agreement on common messages to be conveyed by the donor community should be encouraged, and donor impartiality should be maintained at all times.
- The CO should be transparent in its provision of support to the electoral process, providing the media with factual information on a regular basis.
- The media reporting on the electoral process should be monitored on a regular basis as part of the electoral assistance activities.
- Activities focused on the training of journalists should be encouraged, where relevant.
- Support may be provided to the EMB to set up an election results center that gives the media and political parties access to the processed results on timely and transparent basis. This may include the creation of a Web site where results are posted and made accessible to the media and public. At the same time, however, this can be a massive undertaking, depending on the country and electoral system. A results centre has to operate under tight time frames, there is only one opportunity to get it right, and results compilation systems tend to be complex, thereby requiring significant testing.

### *Challenges*

- It can be difficult at times to ensure that the international donor community conveys similar messages. This is usually relatively easier within the context of a technical assistance project, when donors are generally pursuing the same goals. It is less easy in the context of observation missions, where it is not always possible or sometimes desirable to harmonize messages.
- While national or programmatic efforts may be made to balance media coverage of political parties during election periods — for example, through equal or equitable access by all parties to state media for the campaign period — coverage may be particularly unbalanced in non-election periods when it is not bound by electoral-related provision.
- There may be parts of the country, in particular rural areas, which are cut off from traditional media sources and are therefore particularly hard to reach.