



**STUDY TOUR OF THE 2009 INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FOR
GULF ELECTION OFFICIALS
JULY 5 – 10, 2009, JAKARTA, INDONESIA
07-29-09**



Report Summary

- The study tour was intended to introduce Gulf States' election officials to one of the frequent activities of regional associations of election officials. It was also intended to demonstrate a successful example of a democratic transition in an Islamic country with a healthy electoral system. The July 8 presidential election in Indonesia was an example of a low-tech, high-transparency election done well.
- The activity was a sample for the future regional Association of Gulf Election Officials and a follow up to the Kuwait conference held on the organization of such an association.
- Background information was provided on the Indonesian electoral system, the politics of the presidential election, and election observation. Participants met with local and international organizations engaged in the Indonesian electoral process.

- Participants were generally impressed with the conduct of the Indonesian election. Furthermore, the consensus was that the study tour was a useful activity and one worth repeating in other countries.

Background and Purpose

The program was a study tour of the July 8, 2009 presidential election in Indonesia with a group of eight election officials from Yemen, Qatar, and Bahrain. The study tour continues American University's Center for Democracy and Election Management (CDEM) support of Gulf States' election officials in their efforts to establish a regional association as a part of the Gulf States' Electoral Initiative Project. It follows several CDEM training institutes for Gulf election officials and other stakeholders and a CDEM facilitated conference in Kuwait on the organization and structure of the proposed association. The purpose of the study tour was to examine Indonesian electoral practices and to model potential activities for a regional Association of Gulf Election Officials.

Conference Preparations and Logistics

Logistical preparations were conducted from the CDEM HQ in Washington, D.C. with on-the-ground support provided by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) in Jakarta. CDEM Logistics Specialist, Ms. Nicole Hark, travelled to Indonesia a week ahead of the group to finalize preparations. Observation manual and forms were drafted in English and translated into Arabic for the participants. All participants were accredited as CDEM international election observers by the Indonesian Election Commission prior to their arrival in Indonesia. Upon arrival, their pictures were taken and official accreditation badges issued to each member.

Participants and facilitators stayed at the JW Marriot in Jakarta, Indonesia for a period of six days: July 5 through July 10. Guest speakers from domestic and international organizations and from the American Embassy in Jakarta addressed the group. Simultaneous interpretation from English to Arabic and Indonesian to Arabic (and vice versa) was provided. On Election Day, participants and CDEM facilitators observed polling and counting throughout Jakarta. They were divided into three groups and interpreters and drivers were provided for each group.

Although there were initial difficulties with simultaneous interpretation, the facilities were excellent and appreciated by the participants. Interpretation was improved by a review of election vocabulary in English and Arabic with the interpreters.

Planning Constraints and Participant Information

CDEM sought to include representatives from all Gulf states who had participated in the Kuwait conference as well as Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Invitations were sent to election officials from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen. Positive responses were received from Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Yemen. Unfortunately, the identified officials from the UAE Embassy in Jakarta, including the Ambassador, did not attend the study tour. Bahrain sent only one

official, the only person who permanently works on elections in the country. Yemen sent five election officials – four commissioners and one administrator. Qatar sent two election officials.

Speakers included CDEM election consultant, Ms. Katherine Collin, who led the training and discussion sessions, Mr. Adam Schmidt the IFES Chief of Party in Indonesia, a delegation from the largest Indonesian domestic election observation organization, the Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (KIPP), and Ms. Elise Melinger from the United States Embassy in Jakarta. Unfortunately, a planned session with a commissioner from the Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) had to be cancelled due to a last minute ruling from the Constitutional Court that impacted polling.

Study Tour Sessions

Study Tour Day 1: Monday, June 6, 2009

The goal of the first day was to familiarize study tour participants with the history and political background for the election, briefly review the politics of the campaign, and highlight some of the issues that had the potential to impact the conduct of the election. The day established the context for the study tour and established what makes Indonesia an interesting example of election administration.

CDEM Logistics Specialist, Ms. Nicole Hark, welcomed to participants on Monday morning and provided an overview of the week's activities.

The rest of the morning, Ms. Collin spoke about the history of Indonesia's democratic transition, the structure of the Indonesian election system and what election outcomes the structure promoted; the KPU structure and mandate, and Indonesian electoral complaints and dispute resolution mechanisms. The emphasis on election complaints was appropriate given that the Constitutional Court was meeting that day in an emergency session to rule on a complaint¹ lodged by two of the three presidential candidates regarding the voters' lists. This was an issue the study tour followed closely and that affected polling conduct. Questions from this session focused on the structure of the voting system, which differs for presidential and parliamentary elections, and on election dispute management.

Following lunch, Mr. Adam Schmidt and Ms. Astri Suryandari from IFES addressed the group. This session focused on the problems IFES predicted for the presidential election based on the experience of the April 2009 parliamentary elections. Two problems were highlighted: the voters' list and invalid ballots. Both issues arise from changes to the election law and procedures following the 2004 elections. The voter registry had been combined with the civil registry, but the merging was imperfect and a less accurate voters' list than in 2004 had been created. Due to the way the data is stored, mistakes and duplicates were difficult to purge. Corrections and additions were now passively initiated rather than

¹ The complaint lodged by presidential candidates Megawati Soekarnoputri and Jusuf Kalla raised the issue of voters' lists which were incomplete and not updated. The Constitutional Court subsequently decided that voters not registered on the lists were allowed to exercise their voting right by showing their identity cards.

updated by sending KPU registration staff door to door as was the case previously. The result was a list with potential problems affecting up to 20% of voters on the list as well as leaving many off the list. On ballot invalidity, there was an exceptionally high rate of invalid ballots during the parliamentary elections, and IFES expected 7 – 8% invalidity for the presidential election. The IFES representatives also reviewed the candidate pairs' backgrounds and party affiliations. Questions included the extent of the trust the public had in the KPU and questions on domestic observation.

At the end of the day, Ms. Elise Melinger, in charge of local politics, political parties, and elections with the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta spoke to the study tour participants. She discussed U.S. support of the transition process in Indonesia generally and electoral support specifically. She also reviewed the campaign period and talked about the candidate's campaigns. Discussion returned to the Constitutional Court hearings and the problems with the voter registry. Questions to Ms. Melinger focused on the United States' support to emerging democracies around the world and whether the U.S. would remain engaged in democratization at previous levels.

Study Tour Day 2: July 7, 2009

The goals for this day were to review generally the purpose and methodology of election observation, to discuss the differences between an international observation mission and a study tour, and to train on polling and counting procedures and CDEM observation forms.

Ms. Katherine Collin began the day with background on international observation. This session included reference to principles enumerated in the Copenhagen Commitments² and reviewing gross standards by which an election might be judged, including local tradition, practice, and legal frameworks. Emphasis was also given to the importance of accurate and verifiable observation. This led into the review of the observation form and polling and counting procedures.

In the afternoon, KIPP members, Mr. Mochtar Sindang, Chairman, Mr. Paskah Irianto, the Vice General Secretary, Mr. Standar Kia, Member of the Board of Directors, and Ms. Lestari Nurhajati, Head of the Education Division had a lively discussion with the group. KIPP is the largest domestic observation group in Indonesia founded in 1996. KIPP has observed every election since the fall of the Suharto regime and was active in promoting democratization. The presentation focused on the history of activism of the group's leaders as well as on their organization. It was a fascinating exchange on the process of democratization between Indonesian activists and elite government administrators from the Gulf. Questions included the impact of the Constitutional Court ruling that Indonesians would not have to be on the voters' list in order to vote in the next day's election.

² A set of criteria which lay the framework for free and fair elections agreed upon in Copenhagen in June 1990, by the representatives of the OSCE participating states.

The day concluded by assigning individuals to three groups for election observation and mapping polling locations across Jakarta where each group would observe the election the following day. KIPP representatives assisted in the mapping of interesting areas to visit during the election.

Study Tour Day 3: July 8, 2009

Election Day

Three groups of three individuals observed the elections, accredited to CDEM. Each group was asked to visit four polling stations and to see opening, closing, and counting of ballots. Polling hours are short in Indonesia, from 8am to 1pm, making observation a comparatively short day. Participants were asked to fill in an observation form for each polling station visited. Drivers and interpreters were provided for each group. The groups left at 6:30am in order to be in place to see the preparations for opening. One group was given polling locations in central Jakarta to observe, another in west Jakarta, and the third in north Jakarta. Groups saw a variety of socio-economic areas, including slum areas, as well as ethnic minority neighborhoods such as Chinese. Each group began observation with the polling station of a candidate. Every group saw at least four polling stations during the day, and one group visited ten polling stations. Each group also saw opening, closing, and counting. Counting was relatively quick, with groups observing stations where voter turnout was 300 to 400 voters. All the participants had finished observation by 4 pm on Election Day.

Study Tour Day 4: July 9, 2009

The purpose of the day was to discuss the information gathered during the election observation and identify what was done well and what could be improved upon. In addition, a discussion of the progress made and next steps on a future, regional Association of Gulf Election Officials was held. By morning of this day, early election results were in the news indicating that the incumbent, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, had received a sufficient percentage to win an outright victory without going to a second round of voting.

The group generally had taken the observation process very seriously. Every participant had filled in all the observation forms and all had lengthy comments on what he or she had seen. Generally, participants praised the smooth and open process and stated that polling was well run. Critiques included the low turnout per station, the short polling hours, and the lack of ballot paper security features (although ballot security features and stuffing of ballot boxes seemed to be less of a concern in Indonesia than voters' list problems). Differences between Indonesia and the Gulf states in procedures in handling the voters' list were remarked upon. A discussion was held about security features of the ballot paper, quality of ink, and the voters' list, and it was recommended that security features should be tailored to a country's specific risks. Participants also remarked on the level of trust the public seemed to have in the electoral process and the calm, organized manner of the general public at the polling stations.

Finally, a discussion was held on the formation of a future, regional Association of Gulf Election Officials. Participants from Qatar and Bahrain informed the group that requests to form the association and work through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) structure were lodged with the appropriate authorities in their respective governments. The Yemeni electoral commission had already received approval to form and participate in such a structure. CDEM facilitators were informed that the ensuing bureaucratic process would take upwards of two years. In the meantime, the group suggested that CDEM could be helpful to the process by sending a letter to the GCC giving background on the project and expressing support for the formation of the Association as a part of the GCC. Another activity would also be helpful so that officials could point to on-going collaboration.

Yemen's elections have been postponed to the spring of 2011, when Qatar's elections are also scheduled to take place. Bahrain's next elections are scheduled for the winter of 2010. This means that most Gulf election officials have until the end of the year before beginning preparations for the next round of elections. The group suggested another study tour or other activity after the end of Ramadan (20 September, 2009) and before the end of the year. They repeated their earlier desire for a study tour to a country using high tech equipment (voting machines, optical scanner counting machines, or on-line voting).