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EVALUATION REPORT



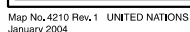
TRANSTEC
PROJECT
MANAGEMENT

UDF-ZIM-08-238 Electoral Process Training for Civil Society in Zimbabwe

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The evaluators thank all the people who supported this evaluation by contributing their time and insights. In particular, they express their gratitude to Helen Barnes at ERIS and Barbra Nyangairi at ZESN, who were instrumental in helping organize the evaluators' visit to Zimbabwe. The evaluators are also grateful to the Director and other staff of ZESN. All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Map of Zimbabwe ©UN

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I. Executive Summary

(i) Project Data

This report is the evaluation of the project “Electoral Process Training for Civil Society in Zimbabwe” implemented from October 2009 to February 2011 by the Zimbabwean non-governmental organization (NGO) Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) with support from the British NGO Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS). The project budget was US\$225,000. The project aimed at strengthening the capacity of ZESN by reinforcing the training of election observers, particularly in relation to monitoring the use of state resources in the election process and the issue of political party financing.

(ii) Evaluation Findings

The project proposal was based on a sound analysis of the 2008 elections, which highlighted the need to develop a more professional and more skilled observer force in time for the next election. The project was **relevant** in that it addressed genuine needs on the basis of an appropriate analysis of the previous electoral cycle. However, against this generally positive background, the relevance of the project was hampered by two key factors:

- The project design failed to include an element aimed at strengthening ZESN's capacity to manage large projects. Managers at ZESN had little or no spare capacity to ensure that the planned project outcomes were delivered in full.
- The project lacked a comprehensive advocacy strategy. The project focused on developing observers' skills and setting up monitoring and reporting processes: it did not provide for a specific strategy to bring the new information to the attention of the public and institutional stakeholders, relying instead on the existing ZESN media and advocacy/lobbying operation.

There is ample evidence of the **effectiveness** of the implementation of the planned activities, particularly those related to training and monitoring. ZESN observers at all levels clearly drew tangible benefits from the activities and the intended outcomes were largely delivered. However the project's effectiveness was hampered to a limited extent by the lack of human resource capacity at the ZESN headquarters to provide high levels of support to the observers and to process their reports into effective material for public use.

The project was also **efficient**. The amount of resources used was consistent with the needs and outcomes delivered. In hindsight, it appears that there would have been scope for ERIS and ZESN to apply for a larger sum, which could have helped reinforce the project management capacity within ZESN.

The project essentially delivered on most planned medium-term **impacts**. The materials developed as part of the project doubtless enhanced ZESN's training and professional capacity. There is also evidence that the observers' skills in monitoring political finance issues were enhanced. Communication channels between field-based observers and ZESN headquarters have indeed been reinforced. However the feedback loop did not systematically go back to the observers, who frequently did not know how their reports were used. Observers also noted that they lacked information about the findings made by their counterparts elsewhere in the country.

The project has gone some way towards fulfilling its long-term development objectives (to press for electoral reform and transparency), but the evaluators found that the opportunity to do so was not fully used: a more explicit and better funded strategy to process the data into analytical reports and advocacy material would have helped the project achieve more impact.

The project contributed to ZESN's **sustainability** in the sense that it helped enhance the skills of its observers and the credibility of ZESN as a whole in relation to political finance monitoring. The project itself has achieved a reasonable degree of sustainability in the sense that its benefits have outlived the project period itself. However, ZESN as an organization remains fragile and donor-dependent (it is also facing continuing security risks).

(iii) Conclusions

i. The project's relevance was enhanced by changes made in the early phase of implementation. The changes led to refocusing the project on political finance issues, which made it highly relevant and more innovative than it would otherwise have been.

ii. Despite being of high quality overall, the project would have been even more relevant if the two partners had better aligned their strategic outlooks. The difference in outlook caused misunderstandings.

iii. The relevance of the project to ZESN would have been enhanced if an organizational audit had been conducted during the design phase. This could have brought to light the need to reinforce ZESN's project management capacity.

iv. The project lacked a comprehensive advocacy strategy, and relied implicitly on the outreach work of ZESN as a whole to deliver the advocacy element of this project, leading to relatively weak dissemination of the information gathered by observers.

v. The reports based on data gathered by the observers were not always tightly edited, were often repetitive and lacked a clear introduction and actionable policy recommendations.

vi. Observers in the field were not systematically made aware of the use of the data they collected. They also lacked information about the data gathered by their counterparts in other provinces or constituencies.

vii. The project contributed to the sustainability of ZESN, both in financial terms and because it enhanced the organization's skills and knowledge base.

(iv) Recommendations

Recommendation to ERIS

i. Be explicit about expected added value of partnership. ERIS is encouraged to develop further partnerships on the model of the one it engaged into with ZESN. It is recommended that ERIS should be as explicit as possible, when dealing with potential partners, about the added value it expects to bring to the partnership and about the benefits it expects to draw from it. See conclusion (ii).

ii. Make a realistic assessment of the level of support to be provided.

The partnership between ERIS and ZESN was fruitful, but ERIS managers indicated that they devoted more energy to the partnership than they originally expected. It is recommended that this issued be carefully considered in any future partnership, including by conducting an organizational audit of the partners. See conclusions (ii) and (iii).

Recommendations to ZESN

iii. Consider seeking new partnerships. The joint project with ERIS benefited ZESN by improving its access to international expertise on the key topic of political finance. ZESN should develop further similar partnerships, provided they are based on a sound capacity building strategy and focus on satisfying clearly defined needs. See conclusion (ii).

iv. Conduct an organizational audit to see how ZESN's existing management capacity can best be used and what options exist to reinforce that capacity. See conclusion (iii).

v. Improve internal and external information flows. ZESN should ensure that observers are informed in a timely manner of the use of the data they provide, and that they also know quickly about the data gathered by their counterparts across the country. ZESN should enhance its advocacy capacity, by ensuring that the outputs of all of the organization's activities, including data obtained by observers in the field, are fed into the advocacy process. See conclusions (v) and (vii).

vi. Review the process of report production to ensure that documents are appropriately edited in a way that is consistent with the needs of target audiences. Documents longer than a few pages should come with an executive summary and all documents should include clear, targeted and implementable recommendations. See conclusions (v) and (vii).

vii. Develop a multi-year strategic plan, which can be used as a framework when seeking support from funders. ZESN should attempt to identify one or two strategic partnership donors to provide support including core funding, while other donors remain project based. ZESN should also consider dedicating more management-level resources to address fundraising issues. See conclusion (viii).

Recommendation to UNDEF

viii. Consider having an explicit "inception stage" at the beginning of projects. ERIS and ZESN made significant adjustments to the project design on the occasion of a launch strategy meeting. This allowed the organizations to take stock of changed circumstances since the project was originally designed. This was a welcome step, which enhanced the relevance of the project as it was implemented. UNDEF should consider encouraging grantees to adopt this practice, thus instituting an "inception phase" in the first few weeks of projects. This would give implementers and opportunity to review the project logical framework, while ensuring that they do not unnecessarily delay the start of actual activities.

II. Introduction and development context

(i) Project and evaluation objectives

This report is the evaluation of the project “Electoral Process Training for Civil Society in Zimbabwe” implemented from October 2009 to February 2011 by Zimbabwean non-governmental organization (NGO) Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) with support from British NGO Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS). The UNDEF grant amount was US\$250,000, with USD 25,000 retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation activities and USD 225,000 for the total project costs. The project aimed at strengthening the capacity of ZESN by reinforcing the training of election observers, particularly in relation to monitoring the use of state resources in the election process and the issue of political party financing.

(ii) Evaluation methodology

Two international experts carried out the evaluation. The methodology of the evaluation is set out in the Operational Manual governing the UNDEF-Transtec framework agreement, with brief additions in the evaluation Launch Note. In accordance with the agreed process, a set of project documents was provided to the evaluators in September 2011 (see list of documents consulted in Annex 2). On that basis, they prepared the Launch Note ZIM-08-238 setting out issues to be considered during the evaluation.

This evaluation did not present any particular methodological challenge, and the evaluators were able to follow the standard methodology without problems. In comparison with other UNDF-funded project, there was an unusually large body of written information available in addition to standard project documentation and reports. This included the wide range of publications produced by ZESN during the project period, as well as training course material. A large amount of public documents giving contextual information about Zimbabwe was also used.

Prior to their visit, the evaluators noted that the security of informants would be a paramount consideration. They noted that they would work with ERIS and ZESN to ensure that none of the people met (especially the long-term election observers [LTOs], who live and work on their own in sometimes remote constituencies) suffers negative consequences as a result of meeting the evaluators¹. The security concerns were addressed by holding meetings in secure locations (ZESN offices in Harare and ZESN member NGO premises in Chinhoyi), in conditions of reasonable confidentiality.

The evaluators prepared their visit to Harare by holding a meeting with the Director of ERIS in London, who had been involved in the planning and implementation of the project since its inception. They also contacted by email or phone the key international trainers involved in the project. The visit to Harare took place from 3 to 7 October inclusive; it included meetings with:

¹ LTOs live and work in or near the constituencies they monitor. They keep track of political developments and of election-related issues such as the use of government assets by candidates. Their monitoring work is particularly crucial in-between election periods, when other (short-term) observers are not in the field. Recording election-related information or simply suggesting an interest in it may expose a person to threats, intimidation and worse. LTOs are aware of the danger and those met have indicated that they do not even inform relatives about their work. In this context it was essential to ensure that meeting the evaluators did not cause them to face increased risks.

- ZESN managers: Director, Program Coordinator;
- Chairperson of ZESN Board, who is also head of Zimrights, one of the main Zimbabwean human rights NGOs;
- Project manager and one of the three field coordinators;
- Thirteen long-term observers (LTOs) and other ZESN members who participated in training sessions under the project; and
- Representatives of intergovernmental organizations (UN and EU) dealing with governance and other election-related issues.

Although the sample of LTOs met was relatively small (6% of the total number of people trained), it was reasonably representative of the LTO population: meetings took place in Harare with LTOs based there, and in Chinhoyi with LTOs based in that province (Mashonaland West) and the province of Manicaland. Six of the LTOs met (46%) were women. The full list of people met is in Annex 3.

Each of the issues of concern listed in the Launch Note was discussed with relevant stakeholders: issues of project design, activities, management, human and financial resources and capacity building were discussed with ERIS and ZESN managers; issues of security with managers and LTOs in particular, and coordination with representatives of international organizations.

(iii) Development context

Independence

Zimbabwe became independent in April 1980, in accordance with the Lancaster House Agreement of December 1979, signed between Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front Party representing the white ruling minority and the two major African parties: ZANU-PF led by Robert Mugabe and ZAPU-PF led by Joshua Nkomo. The agreement set out the country's new Constitution and provided for an end to the civil war that had been lasting since 1971.

The Constitution reserved 20% of parliamentary seats to the white minority but otherwise ensured that the government was reflective of majority vote. However

negotiations on land redistribution were difficult. It was agreed that compulsory land redistribution would take place for at least ten years and that land would be purchased from willing sellers at market prices; the United Kingdom committed to support the process financially. However by 2000, 75% of the land was still owned by 4% of the population. Land reform has continued ever since to fuel tensions across the country.

In this context, opposition to President Mugabe and ZANU-PF grew and gave rise to the establishment of a new political party in 1999, the Movement for Democratic change

SOME FACTS ABOUT ZIMBABWE

Independence day	18 April 1980
Population – 2009 (World Bank)	12.5m
HIV prevalence – 2009 (UNICEF)	14.3%
Life expectancy – 2009 (UNICEF)	46
Child mortality – 2009 (UNICEF)	90/1,000
Inflation level – 2008 (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency)	100,580%
Unemployment rate – 2009 (CIA world fact book)	90%
HDI ranking – 2010 (UNDP)	167 out of 167

(MDC), led by Morgan Tsvangirai, former Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). In 2000, Robert Mugabe suffered his first defeat since taking power in 1987: the constitutional reform he put forward was voted down, largely as a result of the polarization of society in relation to the expropriation of white farmers with no indemnity.

However, in 2002 Mugabe won the presidential elections with 56.2% to the MDC's 41.9%. His campaign was based on land reform and expropriation. Despite the recognition of the elections by African observers and by the SADC, the international community observers assessed that elections were not "free and fair" and took place in an atmosphere of violence. As a result of this assessment the international community adopted a series of sanctions against ZANU-PF leaders, most of which are still in force.

Weakened by the international community and internal oppositions, Mugabe took a series of restrictive measures, the most important of which was "Operation Restore Order". Launched in May 2005 its ostensible objective was to clear slums, but in reality it aimed at disrupting poor areas of the country where opposition was strong. A UN Special Envoy who assessed the scope and impact of operation estimated that some 700,000 people nationwide lost their home, their source of livelihood, or both. As of September 2007, housing construction fell far short of demand, and there were reports that beneficiaries were mostly civil servants and ruling party loyalists, not the displaced.

The 2008 elections and their aftermath

At the presidential and general election held in March 2008 the MDC-T won a parliamentary majority and control over most municipal governments. The electoral commission also announced that Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC-T candidate, had led the presidential contest, securing 47.8% of the vote, ahead of President Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF, who polled 43.2%. Tsvangirai claimed the right to be recognized as the

winner of the presidential election without running through a second round. As a result of intimidation on MDC activists and ordinary citizens, and of Mugabe's control of security forces, Tsvangirai boycotted the second round. Tensions were high between the two rounds of the election: as of early June 2008, at least 50 Zimbabweans had been killed, at least 2,000 injured, and over displaced as a result of widespread politically motivated violence. Mugabe won the run-off unopposed with 90.2% of the vote, though the vote was "marred by violence, intimidation and displacements impinging the credibility of the result" according to SADC observers.

"[During the 2008 elections] many people passed away: people were forced to attend meetings, to stay overnight. If they wanted to move they were beaten. In the media we heard that all was peaceful and that people were waiting for the results, but we had to carry ZANU-PF membership cards or risked being beaten. In the countryside, young people were given 5\$USD to beat people".

Young lady, working as LTO for ZESN

South African President Thabo Mbeki, at the behest of SADC and the international community, was designated to serve as mediator between Robert Mugabe's government and the MDC. After several months of negotiation a government of national unity was created in February 2009 with Tsvangirai as Prime minister, 17 ministers from ZANU-PF and 15 from the MDC. A "Global Political Agreement" was signed, providing the framework for a common government program. This was set as a temporary arrangement, with the explicit intention of moving toward a long-term political solution by ending violence, stabilizing the economy, drafting a new Constitution and conducting legitimate elections.

UNDEF added value

Due to uncertainty on the timing of the next elections and on the outcome of the Constitution drafting process, the international community has been providing assistance to support reforms that may contribute to free and fair electoral processes. Most of the current assistance in this field is therefore focused on projects concerning reforms of the judicial system, the police and the Constitution.

"I did not know about political finance. What I discovered is that political parties use state money for their own aims. But I cannot circulate this information publicly or it will put me at risk"

Young lady who received the training on monitoring political finance

UNDEF itself contributed to this effort under its first round of funding, supporting the "Constituency Development Program" (UDF-ZIM-06-125) implemented by the Public Affairs and Parliamentary Support Trust and UNDP from March 2007 to December 2008. Using a similar approach, the European Commission is currently funding a capacity-building project for the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission (ZEC), seconded by UNDP as implementing agency. The Electoral Resource Center (ERC) was established in January 2010 with support from the USA's National Democratic Institute, thus bringing to three the number of local entities working on

elections in Zimbabwe (ZEC, ZESN and ERC).

However the UNDEF-funded ZESN-ERIS project is the only initiative helping to train election observers. This project provided them with practical tools such as monitoring forms, techniques to report on abuses, advice on security, etc. However it is likely that, once the date of the next elections is set, other donors will also support training for election observers, probably using ZESN as a channel, as well as the newly created ERC.

III. Project strategy

(i) Project approach and strategy

Initial design

ZESN and ERIS designed the project strategy, with interviewees suggesting that ERIS took a lead role in the initial design phase while ZESN assumed a greater role in the first few months of implementation. Written in the months following the 2008 general and presidential elections, the proposal was focused on rebuilding capacity. This was justified by the situation prevailing at the time: the 2008 elections had been marred by very high levels of political violence – including the deliberate and sometimes deadly targeting of election observers and those alleged to help them. In addition, Zimbabwe was gripped by unprecedented hyper-inflation, caused in part by frenetic pre-election government spending aimed at securing activist, voter and local political support.

In this context the need for the “reconstruction of ZESN’s election watchdog human resource base” appeared as key to the continued effectiveness of the organization. The approach taken by the project was therefore to “regenerate” the pool of individuals at provincial level who are trained and available for election observation” and to set up a “framework for advice and guidance” on election observation, provision of public information, as well as electoral and constitutional reform.

Changes at initial stage

In the event, however, the project assumed a narrower identity, partly because the “reconstruction” need was less acute than had been assumed at the time the project was designed, and also because that need had started to be met by ZESN with support from other sources. As a result, the issue by the time the project started was not so much to rebuild the human resource base than to enhance its technical and advocacy capacity.

Training therefore assumed an even more central role in the project than was the case originally. In addition it became clear early on that the project could achieve the most significant added value by focusing on the issues of political finance and of electoral use of state resources by candidates.

Irrespective of these changes, the project objectives defined in the project document remained the same – to contribute to momentum towards democratic elections in Zimbabwe, through:

- “Increased pressure for and public awareness of electoral reform due to sustained presence of Electoral Resource Officers (EROs) as information conduits across the country”; and
- “Increased pressure for electoral transparency and integrity through creation of a domestic observer force at the provincial and local levels that is ready and available for deployment”.

Another change was essentially dictated by the uncertainty about the timing of the next round of elections. At the time of the project design, ZESN and ERIS worked on the assumption that the elections would take place in late 2010 or early 2011, while providing for postponement of part of the project if elections were to take place a few months later in 2011. As the project was initiated, uncertainty grew about the timing of the elections and it

became increasingly unlikely that they would take place within 2011 or in early 2012.² One result of that situation was that, instead of training Short-Term Observers, the project prioritized Long-Term Observers (LTOs) for training, in addition to EROs, because these were already on the ground.

The project started in October 2009 with a joint ZESN-ERIS strategy session, during which needs were reviewed. The first of two courses on election observation for EROs was planned and took place in December 2009. It is on the occasion of this course that the decision was taken by the two organizations to focus further training on the issue of campaign finance monitoring, including the use of state assets by election candidates.

According to ERIS and ZESN staff, there were three main reasons for this issue to be made a priority:

- Although more general training on election observation was still needed and provided, both organizations, and observers themselves, were seeking to develop more innovative and cutting-edge training.
- As the government was shared between both main parties contesting the elections (Zanu-PF and MDC), it was possible to address the use of state assets without appearing one-sided.
- Monitoring of political finance and use of state assets is typically a long-term task, which may be carried out irrespective of the timing of elections. It therefore made sense to make it a priority in the prevailing context of uncertainty about the electoral calendar.

Another reason for prioritizing this issue was that ERIS had access to expertise not available at the time to ZESN. As a result of its work in other countries, ERIS could identify senior experts specializing in political finance issues who also had training experience. This input added value to the collaboration between the two organizations.

Implementers' strategies

ZESN and ERIS had markedly different strategic outlooks on the project. ERIS representatives indicated that they viewed the project as an opportunity to contribute international expertise to ZESN and to reinforce its monitoring and advocacy capacity. For ZESN the project's added value was in the provision of training and capacity building at Observer level, as well as in the development of policy papers and in-house training skills. Both visions overlapped when it came to training and policy outputs. However ERIS was clearly hoping to contribute to high-level ZESN strategy whereas ZESN saw the project primarily as technical assistance to field officers.

In the event, the two organizations were largely successful in reaching their common strategic objectives on training and policy papers. However, a number of operational difficulties occurred in the course of project implementation, which staff on both sides ascribed to staff turnover, excessive workload and logistical challenges related to communications and security concerns. While these challenges were real, the evaluators found that they were compounded by the lack of strategic dialogue between the two organizations and by the fragility of the project management structure. These issues are discussed in Chapter IV below.

² President Mugabe was reported in September 2011 to have decided to call elections in March 2012. Prime Minister Tsvangirai responded that a referendum on the new constitutions (whose drafting process is not yet complete) should precede general and presidential elections. Uncertainty continues to prevail at the time of writing.

(ii) Logical framework

Project activities	Intended outcomes	Medium-term impacts	Long-term development objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of training course materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation laid for sustainable high quality domestic election observation using innovative techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of ZESN capacity to recruit, train and maintain an observer force at all levels 	<p>To work towards democratic elections in Zimbabwe through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased pressure for and public awareness of electoral reform through presence of observers in the field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of training sessions for EROs, STOs and LTOs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of observers' skills in monitoring political finance 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of pilot monitoring systems on political finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EROs, LTOs and STOs in position to raise public awareness about ZESN's election observation work and how it can deter fraud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of integrated communication processes linking field and centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased pressure for electoral transparency and integrity resulting from observers' work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of monitoring reports on political finance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in ZESN's reporting and advocacy capacity on political finance and electoral processes 	

The table above provides a summary of the project logic, based on the original logical framework and on the reports submitted by ERIS, including changes which occurred in the course of implementation.

The table shows that activities were centred around two key tasks: training (including the development of training materials) and monitoring of political finance at local level (including the production of reports). These tasks were intertwined in the sense that the course materials also provided the conceptual framework and the reporting templates that were used in the monitoring process.

The project included a training-of-trainers dimension to help ZESN continue developing its observer force beyond the project period. The monitoring dimension was based on templates developed by the consultant who designed the training on political finance. Based on the templates, observers were encouraged to pass relevant information to ZESN's Headquarters, which was to compile the data into reports disseminated to online readers and used in printed publications.

These twin tasks were to contribute to pressure on the authorities to hold democratic elections, by increasing transparency and using the "observer force" (project document phrase) as a deterrent against misuse of government assets for electoral purposes. The project document and logframe did not include activities or outcomes relating to enhancing ZESN's management capacity.

IV. Evaluation findings

The following findings stem from the evidence gathered by the evaluators.

(i) Relevance

The project proposal was based on a sound analysis of the 2008 elections, which highlighted the need to develop a more professional and more skilled observer force in time for the next election. The project was designed to build effectively on the strengths of ZESN (its credibility, nationwide reach and access to the resources of its member NGOs) while addressing the gaps that appeared in 2008, particularly in relation to the availability of expertise at local and provincial level. The project was therefore relevant in that it addressed genuine needs on the basis of an appropriate analysis of the previous electoral cycle.

The project was also relevant in that it proposed a realistic set of activities, clearly linked to achievable objectives of increasing public pressure for free and fair elections and producing more information about actual developments in the field. The project design further contributed to its relevance, by making good use of the comparative advantages of both ERIS and ZESN: the strengths of ZESN listed above were complemented by the capacity of ERIS to provide international expertise and innovative approaches based on its worldwide experience.

However, against this generally positive background, the relevance of the project was hampered by two key factors:

- The project design failed to include an element aimed at strengthening ZESN's capacity to manage large projects. The expected training and monitoring outcomes were geared to the local and provincial levels, where indeed they were needed. But this approach was based on the assumption that the ZESN Headquarters had the skills and resources needed to supervise the work of skilled observers, and the project design had not been preceded by an analysis of the institutional capacity of ZESN. In the event the design proved to be over-optimistic: the senior levels of ZESN, while made up of highly skilled, motivated and effective people, were also very thinly staffed. This meant that the ZESN Headquarters managers had little or no spare capacity to ensure that the planned project outcomes (not just the activities) were delivered in full.

An example of project activity: the March 2010 workshop for EROs

The aim of the workshop was to build ERO capacity, addressing advocacy as well and political finance issues, with a gender mainstreaming approach. The four-day workshop covered the following issues:

- Review of ZESN political finance monitoring methodology, using case studies from South Africa, Kenya, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Georgia, and developing a checklist for monitoring abuse of state resources and campaign spending.
- Facilitating public debates. EROs are tasked with disseminating information provided by ZESN headquarters, as well as compiling information from the field. The session included discussion of a guide on the facilitation of public debates and practical exercises such as role-play.
- Mainstreaming gender. The focus was on devising ways to ensure that more women participate in elections, particularly in view of the imbalance between men and women with regards to access to financial resources.

In practice, almost all operational responsibilities – not just to supervise, but also to undertake a range of activities – fell on the project coordinator at ZESN, who also had responsibilities other than the project, including involvement in election observation missions in other countries. It made sense for ZESN to assign these additional responsibilities to the project coordinator, because she had the right skills and was likely to enrich ZESN with lessons learned from her experience abroad. But when the coordinator was not fully available, even for brief periods, the project risked stalling. There was also a risk that staff turnover could cause delays, which did happen early in 2010 when the original project coordinator resigned.

- Another factor hampering the relevance of the project was that it lacked a comprehensive advocacy strategy. The project focused on developing observers' skills and setting up monitoring and reporting processes: it did not provide for a specific strategy to bring the new information to the attention of the public and institutional stakeholders. Instead, the project implicitly relied on the existing ZESN media and advocacy/lobbying operation, which itself lacked the resources to act effectively and in a timely manner on the information received (see section on effectiveness).
- It is also to be noted that the project was remarkably short: it was originally meant to last just 12 months – extended by almost five months because of staff turnover and of ZESN's involvement in consultations on the new Constitution, which took up staff time. According to ERIS and ZESN, the short timeframe was dictated by budget constraints and by the assumption that training and monitoring tasks had to be completed quickly, so that the observer force was ready in case the elections took place in 2011. While the project period was sufficient to deliver the planned training, a longer timeframe would possibly have allowed more follow-up to the training and perhaps more advocacy capacity-building.

Because of these factors, the relevance of the project was reduced. The resources needed to deliver the outcomes and the medium-term impacts were not all available to a sufficient degree. It is possible to identify two reasons for the project design's failure fully to take management resource needs into consideration:



A workshop organized by EROs, August 2010 ©ZESN

- The two NGOs that designed the project were based far apart and did not have a record of working together. ERIS and ZESN had a positive image of each other but they had not actually cooperated on a project before. As a result they did not have direct experience of each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- The needs assessment that the two organizations conducted took the form of a strategy discussion focused on the field level and on the achievement of advocacy outcomes. It did not include an organizational audit or other similar steps that may have identified any need to reinforce management resources.
- As mentioned in Chapter III above, the two organizations did not entirely share the same strategic outlook on the project and did not have identical expectations of its outcomes. Very broadly, ERIS was more focused on methodology and innovation, while ZESN was more interested in field-level technical assistance.

(ii) Effectiveness

There is ample evidence of the effective implementation of the planned activities, particularly those related to training and monitoring. If one area of weakness may be identified, it concerns the dissemination of monitoring information. Here is an overview of effectiveness for each area of activity listed in the summary logical framework of Chapter III:

- **Development of training course materials.** This area of work has undoubtedly been fulfilled – indeed this has been done beyond expectations. The course materials on political finance are comprehensive: they cover international norms on election monitoring, as well as domestic and other applicable laws and principles in Zimbabwe. The training materials cover issues that go beyond the sole pre-election and election periods, and extend to the day-to-day monitoring of the use of state assets by elected officials and election candidates.

Experts identified and briefed by ERIS and ZESN developed the training materials and conducted several training sessions. The fact that the international experts

were invited more than once ensured that they were able to help review the methodologies developed initially and to adapt them to the Zimbabwean situation in a participatory way, listening to the feedback of EROs and LTOs. These experts brought international experience to bear on the challenges facing Zimbabwe.

- **Implementation of training sessions.** This was by far (in terms of resource used) the most important set of activities under the project. Training activities have included:
 - Training of 20 EROs, December 2009;
 - Second workshop for EROs, March 2010, on political finance, public awareness-raising, early warning of election-related violence, and gender mainstreaming;
 - Review sessions on the political finance monitoring materials, with 33 LTOs (June 2010);
 - Training course on political finance for 225 STOs (eight one-day sessions, between September and November 2010);

The participants evaluated each training sessions, providing very positive feedback – a view reiterated by the participants who met the evaluators. However several LTOs noted that they had little support from ZESN after they returned to their local area. Some LTOs who had produced monitoring reports in accordance with guidance received during the training sessions noted that they did not know how ZESN processed their reports. (Only three field officers managed all the LTOs under the supervision of the project coordinator; they could not devote much time to each LTO. This capacity issue is discussed below.)

- **Establishment of pilot monitoring systems on political finance.** This set of activities was also largely implemented as planned. Key milestones were:
 - Strategic planning session on political finance (February 2010) with the three field officers, ZESN Headquarter staff, ERIS manager and the consultant expert on political finance. The session led to the development of a monitoring methodology;
 - Deployment of 17 EROs and 33 LTOs for a month-long pilot monitoring project. The initial approach, using only the EROs to look at the provincial level, proved insufficient. Broadening the monitoring to the local level through the 33 LTOs helped fill monitoring gaps, according to the project final report;
 - Review session on the pilot project with the 17 EROs (October 2010).

Feedback from interviewees indicates that the monitoring tools were highly appreciated and generally relevant. The project proved effective at seeking and making use of feedback from the field, as demonstrated by the decision to add LTOs to a pilot originally limited to EROs.

- **Production of monitoring reports on political finance.** EROs and LTOs implemented this element, producing reports based on the training template and providing information about the electoral use of state resources in a range of localities. ZESN compiled these reports into syntheses that were published or emailed to interested parties.

According to ZESN, the monitoring reports were of good quality, reflecting the training received. However the syntheses compiled by ZESN on the basis of the monitoring reports did not always meet the quality standards expected by some recipients, such as foreign diplomats and UN officials. Some readers of these

syntheses, sent by email, noted that they lacked clarity and were not edited in a way that avoided repetitions. They also noted that the syntheses lacked clear conclusions and clear policy recommendations that could be used by the international community and the media.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the project was excellent overall, and EROS, LTOs and STOs clearly drew tangible benefits from the activities. The intended outcomes were largely delivered. However the project's effectiveness was hampered to a limited extent by the lack of human resource capacity at the ZESN headquarters to provide high levels of support to the observers and to process their reports into effective material for public use.

The ZESN organizational chart reproduced below explains in part why there were capacity constraints at the central level:

- The project coordinator was also ZESN's Monitoring and Observation Manager. The project budget only funded 50% of her position despite her being nominally involved in the project on a full time basis (however she confirmed to the evaluators that she spent a significant amount of her time on non-project duties, including stints abroad on election observation missions).
- The project coordinator did not have a program assistant, though she managed the three field officers (all based outside Harare), who in turn supervised and assisted the observers at all levels.
- While the project coordinator nominally had a claim on the time of the field officers, she could not in practice demand much assistance from them in terms of research and writing, partly because they were extremely busy supporting their observers, partly also because they were not trained to process research and monitoring reports.
- The other managers working alongside the project coordinator all had heavy workloads of their own, and had no formal role in the project (though they occasionally provided support when requested). The same went for the program coordinator (who in any case was on sabbatical leave in 2009-10 during most of the project period).

It is clear, therefore, that the project lacked management support capacity at the central level. The project would have been more effective if the coordinator had had some assistance to work on the monitoring and reporting side – either with a program assistant or by sharing this task with one of the other managers. ERIS indicated to the evaluators that it had to devote more support to the partnership than it originally expected. One reason for this may have been the degree to which ZESN's management was stretched.

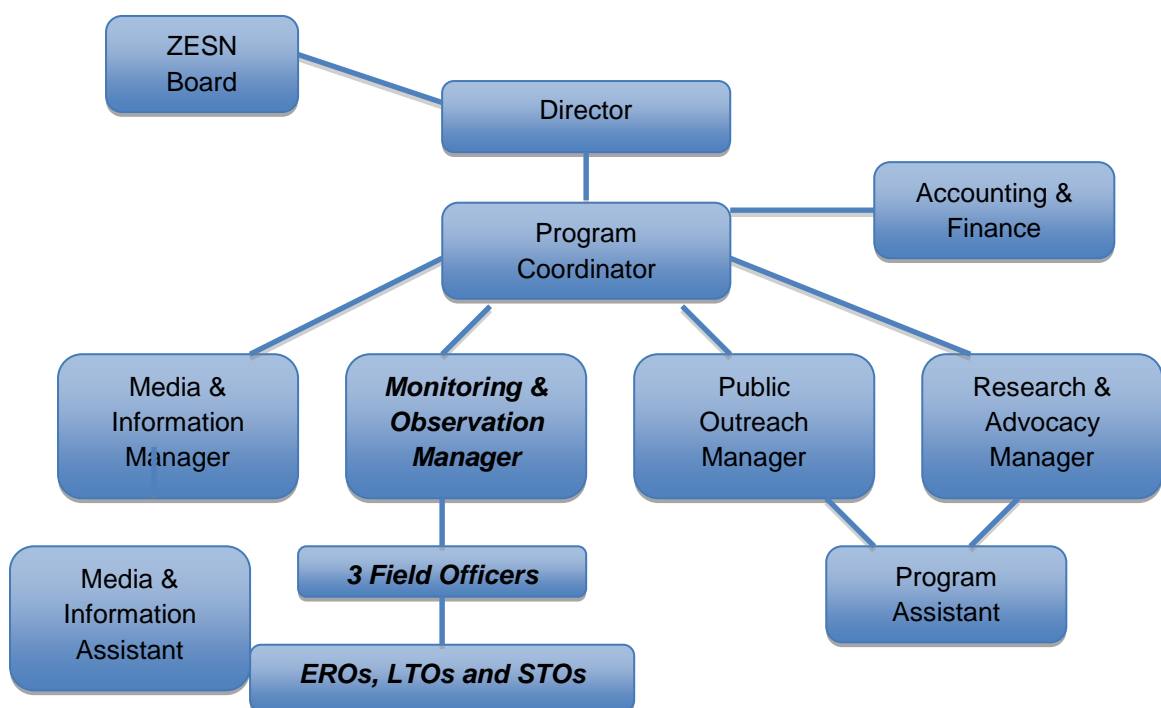
In practice, the effectiveness of the project was achieved through “sheer force”, with ZESN staff doing uncounted amounts of overtime. As committed as they were, however, the staff could not ensure the effectiveness of all aspects of the project, particularly the public advocacy and lobbying elements needed to deliver the long-term project objectives.

(iii) Efficiency

The project activities took place within budget, and a no-cost extension was granted by UNDEF. The project budget was reasonable in the sense that none of the planned costs were excessive or irrelevant to the objectives. Significant areas of spending included the following:

- International experts: these were paid reasonable consulting fees (US\$650/day) in view of prevailing rates. This cost represented about 17% of the project's operating budget of US\$225,000.

- ZESN staff costs. Again, these were reasonable (12% of operating budget). Salary costs were only budgeted for the proportion of staff time spent on the project, taking into account a 50/50 sharing between ZESN and the project budget.
- Training costs represented over 52% of the overall budget. This was justified by the high cost of transportation and accommodation in Zimbabwe. One consideration for the selection of training venues was security: this led, among other logistical factors, to the decision to conduct virtually all the training sessions in Harare, making it difficult to reduce costs.
- Costs attributable solely to ERIS' input (ERIS project management fee, travel and per diem for ERIS manager) represented about 10% of the project budget. This was appropriate in view of the strategic input provided by ERIS, which included supporting the development of the political finance monitoring methodology.



ZESN organizational chart – the positions marked in *bold italics* are those of the staff who implemented the project.

In this context, the amount of resources used was consistent with the needs and outcomes delivered. In hindsight, it appears that there would have been scope for ERIS and ZESN to apply for a larger sum, which could have helped reinforce the project management capacity within ZESN.

(iv) Impact

The project essentially delivered on the planned medium-term impacts, at least in relation to training and monitoring:

- The materials developed as part of the project doubtless enhanced ZESN's training and professional capacity. The same goes for the training-of-trainers element, which also contributed to the organization's capacity to acquire and disseminate expertise on election observation and political finance monitoring.
- Similarly, there is ample evidence that the observers' skills in monitoring political finance issues were enhanced. The abundance of monitoring reports, and observers' input passed on to ZESN by EROs and field officers demonstrate their enhanced capacity to use the monitoring tools developed by the project.

However the picture in relation to communication processes and advocacy, though positive, is more nuanced:

- Communication channels between field-based observers and ZESN headquarters have indeed been reinforced, as evidenced by the production and transmission of monitoring reports and their processing into analyses disseminated by ZESN. However the feedback loop did not systematically go back to the observers:
 - They frequently did not know how their reports were used (few of them have easy access to email, and it is not clear that all of ZESN's syntheses were emailed to the observers);
 - Observers also noted that they lacked information about the findings made by their counterparts elsewhere in the country. There is currently no provision to share monitoring reports among observers. This may in part be justified by security concerns, and by the email access issue mentioned above. However this shows that observers, field officers and headquarter staff work in a "vertical" reporting framework, which does not prioritize sharing of information among peers.
- ZESN's reporting and advocacy capacity on political finance was also enhanced, thanks to the systematic monitoring tools developed for the training and to the effective use of these tools. However the processing by ZESN of the data thus obtained was insufficiently analytical, and did not lead to the production of regular, high-quality monitoring reports. As mentioned above, the key reason for this weakness was the lack of capacity at headquarters level.

In this context, the project can be said to have gone some way towards fulfilling its long-term development objectives (to press for electoral reform and transparency), but the evaluators found that the opportunity to do so was not fully used: a more explicit and better funded strategy to process the data into analytical reports and advocacy material would have helped the project achieve more.

(v) Sustainability

The project contributed to ZESN's sustainability in the sense that it helped enhance the skills of its observers and the credibility of ZESN as a whole in relation to political finance monitoring. The project was also welcomed by ZESN as a "counter-cyclical" source of funding: ZESN representatives say that the organization receives major donor funding when elections take place but that support tends to lag in years without elections. The project, taking place as it did in a period without elections, contributed to ZESN's capacity development:

- It helped keep on board staff who might otherwise not have been able to stay;

- It ensured ZESN was able to recruit and train an observer force in a timely manner ahead of the next round of elections.

Some of the donor representatives whom the evaluators met were suggesting that ZESN's sustainability could be increased if it had a more integrated approach to fundraising – including by informing its donors about support received from other sources. ZESN has recently started a process it calls “basket funding”, which seeks to integrate its various projects into one document. This process is not yet complete and the funding is still obtained from donors on a project basis. Due to the different requirements of different donors, it is not likely that ZESN will be able to move away from project funding entirely – this would not necessarily be a good thing in any case. However it may be appropriate for ZESN to develop a mixed model, with some donors engaging in a longer-term strategic partnership that includes some core funding, while others support individual projects.

The project itself has achieved a reasonable degree of sustainability in the sense that its benefits have outlived the project period itself. However, ZESN as an organization remains fragile and donor-dependent (it is also facing continuing security risks). A more integrated fundraising strategy based on multi-year programming rather than single projects is probably achievable at this point, ZESN having achieved a high level of credibility with donors. Work on political finance should be part of any such programming exercise.

V. Conclusions

The conclusions presented here are based on the findings set out in the previous section and on the contextual information presented in section II.

i. The project was relevant to the needs of ZESN and the situation in Zimbabwe. Its relevance was enhanced by changes made in the early phase of implementation: ZESN and ERIS, on the occasion of a strategy meeting at the launch of the project, took into account changes in the country and in ZESN's situation that had taken place since the project's initial design. The changes led to refocusing the project on political finance issues, which made it highly relevant and more innovative than it would otherwise have been. This conclusion follows from chapter III (i) and the findings on relevance and effectiveness.

ii. Despite being of high quality overall, the project would have been even more relevant if the two partners had better aligned their strategic outlooks. The difference in outlook caused misunderstanding and implementation difficulties that could have been avoided, particularly in relation to management-level communications between the two organizations. See chapter III (i).

iii. The relevance of the project to ZESN would have been enhanced if an assessment of ZESN's management capacity had been carried out. Such an organizational audit could have brought to light the relative lack of resources at project management level and responded to it, either through additional budgetary provisions in the project, or by allocating management responsibilities differently within the existing team. See chapters III (ii) and the findings on relevance.

iv. The project was effective, in that most of the planned activities took place and were implemented to a high standard. Observers drew tangible benefits from the project. However it lacked a comprehensive advocacy strategy, and relied implicitly on the outreach work of ZESN as a whole to deliver the advocacy element of this project. The lack of resources at central level in ZESN hampered the effectiveness of this approach, leading to relatively weak dissemination of the information gathered by observers. See the findings on relevance and effectiveness.

v. The quality of the synthetic reports based on data gathered by the observers was not optimal. The reports were not always tightly edited, were often repetitive and lacked a clear introduction and actionable policy recommendations. See the findings on effectiveness.

vi. The project's efficiency was satisfactory, it produced value for money and resources allocation was appropriate. See the findings on efficiency.

vii. The project delivered on most of the expected short-term impacts. However the communication loop was incomplete, in that observers in the field were not systematically made aware of the use of the data they collected. They also lacked information about the data gathered by their counterparts in other provinces or constituencies. See chapter on the findings on impact.

viii. The project contributed to the sustainability of ZESN, both in financial terms and because it enhanced the organization's skills and knowledge base. In that sense, the fact that the project took place between two elections was helpful. However the sustainability of the project would have been enhanced if it had been part of an integrated funding process, which would make funding more predictable and therefore reduce the risk of fluctuations in income.



Journalists at a ZESN public outreach session, January 2010. ©ZESN

VI. Recommendations

In this section, recommendations are addressed separately to ERIS, ZESN and UNDEF. The recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions set out above.

Recommendation to ERIS

i. Be explicit about expected added value of partnership. ERIS is encouraged to develop further partnerships on the model of the one it engaged into with ZESN. It is recommended that ERIS should be as explicit as possible, when dealing with potential partners, about the added value it expects to bring to the partnership and about the benefits it expects to draw from it. See conclusion (ii).

ii. Make a realistic assessment of the level of support to be provided. The partnership between ERIS and ZESN was fruitful, but ERIS managers indicated that they devoted more energy to the partnership than they originally expected. It is recommended that this issue be carefully considered in any future partnership, including by conducting an organizational audit of the partners. See conclusions (ii) and (iii).

Recommendations to ZESN

iii. Consider seeking new partnerships. The joint project with ERIS benefited ZESN by improving its access to international expertise on the key topic of political finance. ZESN should develop further similar partnerships, provided they are based on a sound capacity building strategy and focus on satisfying clearly defined needs. See conclusion (ii).

iv. Conduct an organizational audit to see how ZESN's existing management capacity can best be used and what options exist to reinforce that capacity. See conclusion (iii).

v. Improve internal and external information flows. ZESN should ensure that observers are informed in a timely manner of the use of the data they provide, and that they also know quickly about the data gathered by their counterparts across the country. ZESN's should enhanced its advocacy capacity, by ensuring that the outputs of all of the organization's activities, including data obtained by observers in the field, are fed into the advocacy process. See conclusions (v) and (vii).

vi. Review the process of report production to ensure that documents are appropriately edited in a way that is consistent with the needs of target audiences. Documents longer than a few pages should come with an executive summary and all documents should include clear, targeted and implementable recommendations. See conclusions (v) and (vii).

vii. Develop a multi-year strategic plan, which can be used as a framework when seeking support from funders. ZESN should attempt to identify one or two strategic

partnership donors to provide support including core funding, while other donors remain project based. ZESN should also consider dedicating more management-level resources to address fundraising issues. See conclusion (viii).

Recommendation to UNDEF

viii. Consider having an explicit “inception stage” at the beginning of projects. ERIS and ZESN made significant adjustments to the project design on the occasion of a launch strategy meeting. This allowed the organizations to take stock of changed circumstances since the project was originally designed. This was a welcome step, which enhanced the relevance of the project as it was implemented. UNDEF should consider encouraging grantees to adopt this practice, thus instituting an “inception phase” in the first few weeks of projects. This would give implementers an opportunity to review the project logical framework, while ensuring that they do not unnecessarily delay the start of actual activities.

VII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

This evaluation has shown that projects based on a partnership between organizations based in two different countries (one developed) may be relevant and effective. This was the case here, and it is clear that ZESN drew significant benefits from the partnership in terms of capacity building and expertise on political finance.

Such partnerships, however, should be based on explicit and shared strategic outlooks on the part of both partners, and should be predicated on sustained communication between them. The lapses in communications were an issue in this project, which occasionally interfered with implementation. But the potential is there, for such partnership to bring significant benefits to both sides.

UNDEF may also be interested to note the effective way in which the partners revised the project’s design at the start of the implementation period, to take account of changed circumstances since the original proposal had been drawn up. That strategic review exercise at the start of the project helped make the project more relevant and the activities more effective. It is a good practice that should be encouraged.

VIII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Human Development Report 2010 – the real wealth of Nations : pathways to Human Development, UNDP

Mugabe, Robert Gabriel “Souillure” or not “souillure”, édition l’Harmattan, René Jacques Lique

Zimbabwe Parliament website www.parlzim-gov.zw

2010 Millenium Development Goals – status report Zimbabwe, Ministry of Labor and social services and UNDP.

World bank website <http://web.worldbank.org>

Zimbabwe: The Road to Reform or Another Dead End? – The international Crisis Group, 27 April 2011

Project documentation:

PO Additional Note ZIM238

UDF-ZIM-08-238_PD

UDF-ZIM-08-238_MTR

3RFNR_UNDEF-ZIM-08-238_Final report

Annexe1_workshop programme ZESN-ERIS

Annexe2_Political Parties Finance Monitoring Workshop Report Feb 2010

Annexe3_EROS Training Workshop_Programme

Annexe4_Agenda CAFOT_STO training

Agenda for Political Finance Seminar

Instructions for Trainers CAFOT

Intro to political finance CAFOT

Political Party Finance Monitoring-the Experience of CAPF in Kenya-Masime

Political Parties Financing

Political Party Funding in South Africa March 2010

Position Paper on the Funding of Pol. Parties

ZESN gender mainstreaming presentation

ZESN methodology development

Zimbabwe political finance monitoring project Guidelines

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

Name	Position
Helen BARNES	Executive Director - ERIS
Magnus OHMAN	IFES trainer on monitoring political finance
Barbra NYANGAIRI	Monitoring and Observation Programme Officer
Rindai CHIPFUNDE VAVA	ZESN National Director
Victor KAHARI	ZESN Finance Officer
Kirstine PRIMDAL	UNDP Crisis prevention, humanitarian relief and recovery
Wadzamai MADOMBWE	UNDP Programme Officer - Governance
Ellen KANDORORO	ZESN Media and information Officer
Focus group – 3 persons anonymous at participants request	Long term observers who benefited from the training on monitoring political finance.
Isabelle RIBOT	Attaché - Crisis response & Democratic Governance – European Union
Mary Jane NCUBE	Executive Director at Transparency International
Solomon BOBOSIBUNU	ZESN Field Officer
Isaag CHAMONYONGA	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Cluedza KOKERU	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Godwin GUTSA	Trainer in Chinoyi Province
Travor CHIWANGA	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Gloria ZIYAMBE	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Simon GARAHUSHOMA	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Sikumbuzo SIBANDA	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Karen GUAZA	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Takesure MUSIWA	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Jena NUNUAYI	Long term observer in Chinoyi Province
Tinoziva BERE	ZESN Board Chairperson
Grace FAVREL	Africa and Middle East Programme Manager

Annex 4 : Acronyms

ERC	Electoral Resource Center
ERIS	Electoral Reform International Services
ERO	Election Resource Officer
EU	European Union
LTO	Long-Term Observer
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STO	Short-Term Observer
UN	United Nations
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Election Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Elections Support Network