



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of
the National Academy of Public Administration,
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series: Elections
Interview no.: E4

Interviewee: Emmanuel Debrah
Interviewer: Ashley McCants
Date of Interview: 13 August 2008
Location: University of Ghana
Accra
Ghana

Innovations for Successful Societies, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice
Princeton University, 83 Prospect Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA
www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties

-
- McCANTS: This is elections interview number six with Dr. Emmanuel Debrah at the University of Ghana in Accra. It is August 13th and the interviewer is Ashley McCants. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the interview.
- DEBRAH: *You're welcome.*
- McCANTS: I always like to begin these conversations by learning a little more about a person's personal background. Can you describe your position, your involvement in elections and what your goals have been in this role?
- DEBRAH: *Okay, I was an electoral administrator working with the Electoral Commission of Ghana. I participated in the 1996 management of the elections and my particular constituency was a village in the eastern part of this country. From there I took the appointment to become a lecturer here. I have also been involved in many election studies. My Master's dissertation was focused on electoral administration. I have made several publications on elections and political parties, party politics, democratization and so forth. So I have an understanding on the issues you want to—.*
- McCANTS: Most of this interview will revolve around your work in Ghana but if you have experience working on elections in other countries, we welcome comparisons to those as well.
- DEBRAH: *Yes.*
- McCANTS: What would you say are the biggest challenges that are arising in this election environment?
- DEBRAH: *Excuse me?*
- McCANTS: What would you say are the biggest challenges arising in this election environment?
- DEBRAH: *This one?*
- McCANTS: *Yes.*
- DEBRAH: *The challenges have to do with I guess financial resources. Resources are very important for efficient management of elections. The Electoral Commission needs their resources to organize voter registration exercises and I think a couple of weeks we have seen the kind of difficulty the EC has gone through in trying to register new applicants and so forth. It has to do with the delay in the central government releasing money to the Electoral Commission to keep to their plan, to the election plan. Because money maybe was not properly released to the EC at an appropriate time, the organization had been poorly managed and I guess this is pretty bad.*
- One other challenge also has to do with the way political parties seem to, try to organize themselves to participate in this election. The election campaign had not taken off so at a high gear, but we see clashes among the political parties, each trying to get a head start on the whole process and it begins with this registration, limited registration exercise where we hear of massive fraud committed by the two leading political parties, the New Patriot Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP). So if you see the way they are organizing themselves then we have fears as to what will happen when the election machinery is ruled from September thereafter to elections.*

McCANTS: How long does the electoral process take from the first planning discussions until the end of the final count?

DEBRAH: *The electoral process commences with making of laws, rules, regulations, to govern the conduct of the elections. Then it takes another step into the delimitation process of constituencies for where the election is organized. I am trying to describe to you the whole electoral process. It is no different from what pertains in Ghana. So first it begins with rule making, laws, putting the legal framework and then once that is done then within that framework instruments for demarcating the electoral boundaries, constituencies take place. Then once this is done the Electoral Commission is clear about where elections will be held in the constituencies then it goes on to register prospective voters. Once that is done the voter registrar then prepared to take on all those eligible voters. Then the register is made complete in that process.*

Then the parties would be registered. I don't think, it is not demarcated in the way that I am describing it, it can go side-by-side with it. Parties are formed and they get registration, they also start organizing themselves to give support to the process. You also find the parties also engaging their own independent campaigns and education and so forth.

Once the voter register is made clear, election date is fixed and then individual parties would have gotten the registration consent of the EC, then begin to engage in campaigns, choosing their candidates and then going for the election as determined by the Electoral Commission. But in terms of the administration of the process, we have the EC first compiling the credible register, cleaning it with the support of the political parties as we have it now here. Then once that is done the EC decides on its own when the official timetable begins for campaigns and begins for parties to also prepare themselves. That also comes along with the picking of the day for elections. Once that date is known, parties have about six months to engage in their campaigns. Official campaigns begin six months until the polls.

So once that is done the EC will train its temporary staff. You know there are permanent staff of the EC and temporary staff members of the EC. Temporary staff, some of them are engaged in revision of the voters' register we had a couple of days back. Then it is a way to take on those who previously did not register or have now attained the voting age to add their names onto the register. So it is a continuing process where the EC also after that engages in general public education about the electoral process for citizens to become more conscious about the whole process and to participate actively in the process.

After the voter registration data had been taken there is exhibition of the register for individuals to come and check records, whether they are correct in terms of the correct spelling of their names and so forth. Once that is done the register is completely printed out for parties to have their copies for their own records. Then the campaign for the political parties also continue and the poll day comes, individuals go and cast their ballots.

McCANTS: Have there been any concerns expressed about the election schedule, the timing for each of the events, etc.?

DEBRAH: *In Ghana what is interesting is that when parties are in the opposition they find everything wrong with the whole process. And it is interesting, when the NDC was in power anything that was done was deemed to be most appropriate and*

fair and so forth. They never questioned the integrity of the Electoral Commission and the opposition party then, which are now in power, were also very skeptical about the Electoral Commission and its ability to hold credible elections. So you find one political party or the other trying to challenge aspects of the management of the electoral process. It goes to the extent of even attacking the Electoral Commission members of being complicit, of collusion and so forth. Any little technical mistake is explained to be an aspect of inefficiency or suspicion on the part of the EC to be doing something in favor of the ruling government, or the ruling government is manipulating the EC.

So challenges and suspicions become a regular phenomenon of the electoral process.

McCANTS: Do you have any general advice to offer people in similar settings about how election events should be timed and sequenced?

DEBRAH: *Well, in terms of the sequence, there is the most appropriate thing to do is to have a legal framework which explains in much detail what are the rules of the game and so forth within which parties would have to organize themselves and so forth. So that should begin the process. Once this is done, the next is to have parties, registered political parties, if they are already in existence, have to check them whether they are still active or they can contest elections or not as a way of trying to continually check their ability to contest as independent political parties.*

Once that is done, the next is to tackle the voters' role. In Africa, unlike in Europe and America where there is a continuing registration process, so when you turn 18, the voting age, your name is added on. In developing Ghana, there is a higher suspicion. It is difficult also and we don't have data to capture registration itself. So you may have many people who are not in the government database to determine their voting age. So voting age is determined by the individual. So somebody who has, in terms of size, might even be 14 years old, 16, and when he presents himself to be an eligible voter, it is difficult to challenge the person. So these are some of the things, it is difficult to get a mechanism in developing countries, Ghana, to try and check on the age of those who present themselves to be registered as voters and casting their ballot and so on and so forth. So this has been one of the contentions within our electoral process here.

Also, in Africa, the ethnic, those cities or towns at the border sites of the country cut across to the neighboring countries. So you will find some of the people from other countries trying to register and voting in the country when it is time for their election then they go back. So it is difficult to distinguish between who is not a Ghanaian on the border, a Togolese or Ivorian and so forth because the boundaries drawn by the colonial masters did not recognize ethnic distinctions between the countries that they colonized. So those things have been a problem which people turn out not to understand some of these things.

So you will find many of us in Togo and many of us in Ghana and they just crisscross the borders and it is illegitimate because their brothers are here, some of their parents are there, some of their relatives are here. So it is difficult to be more competent in administering the electoral process. So we hear some people were coming from Togo to register and when it is Togo elections you see some of these also going across, they think they belong to the two countries.

McCANTS: Can you talk a little bit about the electoral systems, how that system was chosen? Whether to use a first past the post system or a proportional representation system?

DEBRAH: *Ghana subscribes to the first past the post system. Proportional representation has not been introduced in our electoral system so the simple majority, first past the post system has been used ever since colonial times and that has become the most suitable electoral system that works in Ghana. So in the parliamentary system the simple majority is used. Anybody who gets majority votes cast in that constituency wins the parliamentary election.*

In the case of the presidential election, because the person is supposed to be the President of the entire nation, not a particular constituency, the electoral system allows for half of those who cast their ballot to have voted for the person, more than half, at least 50 plus 1 would qualify, but it is still within the first past the post system. So if the first one does not produce that result, 50 plus 1, then a second run is held for determination of the two that had the highest, the one that had the highest plus the other one that came close to the first person, so the two would contest in the second round or the runoff to determine. In that case it is expected that one person would have 50 plus 1.

MCCANTS: Can you describe some of the features of the laws that govern the conduct of elections here that you think make Ghana's electoral process distinctive and how well do you think these features have worked?

DEBRAH: *Ours may not be different from any part in Africa but the difference is the cooperation the electoral authority gets from political parties and the other actors involved to make the system work. So the electoral laws require first parties to register with the Electoral Commission and get a certificate to operate and they must have representatives in all the ten regions, administrative regions in Ghana. They must have offices, certain kind of infrastructure must be in place. Then they must have also signatures from founding members of their party who are Ghanaians and they must also submit their financial account to the Commission for verification and so forth.*

Then these are very important for parties. If you do not satisfy these requirements you may not get a certificate from the Electoral Commission. But there have been arguments by the Electoral Commission—many people have said that if we go by the rules, the laws, most parties would not be parties at all in Ghana. They have to put up—but the contention by the Electoral Commission, particularly the Chairman is that Ghana's democracy is evolving, and we must give a chance for the smaller parties that do not have enough resources, to establish their structures and so forth to carry them to come up and so forth.

So in terms of enforcing the rules on that, there has been a relaxation a little bit so we see parties that may have representation maybe in four or three regions, still having the certificate to operate. Other rules, other laws, in terms of eligibility of voters and also for candidates. [interruption]

MCCANTS: This is a continuation of the interview with Dr. Emmanuel Debrah at the University of Ghana at Accra.

DEBRAH: *I was talking about the laws, on the electoral process and so forth. I've mentioned the laws governing the registration of political parties and talking about the laws on eligibility of candidates for elections and also for voters. So in terms of voters, they've got to be a Ghanaian, your parents, one parent is a Ghanaian qualified to vote in an election. There is also process of naturalization and those things for citizenship and satisfy the requirements of citizenship in Ghana. You only register where you live, your residential area because people*

must know you within the neighborhood and the party representatives are also there to check who you are. So if you move from one neighborhood to another you may not be allowed to register, so you must register in where you live for people to identify you and then be a witness for your registration.

Beyond that individuals must also be—those who want to contest national elections like the presidency and the parliamentary election in the constituency, in the case of a constituency election you must be not necessarily hailing from that community. I believe if they work there for a couple of years you qualify to contest an election within that. So it is not about being a native of the community, but once you have stayed there for about six months plus the law allows you to contest elections. It doesn't matter whether one of your parents is a Ghanaian or not you can vote at that level and also contest at that level. But when it comes to the national, the presidency, the [interruption – end of file 2]

The national level, for the presidency, the law is so nebulous and Rawlings for example whose father is not Ghanaian and could become a President of the Republic of Ghana. So that means that nobody has reason to question that means if you have one of your parents be a Ghanaian you can still qualify to contest at the national level as the President of the Republic and so forth. You might be—in terms of parliamentary and presidential elections, the law requires that person to be of sound mind and somebody who understands the state and somebody who has no bad record in terms of criminality and so forth. These are very important and spelled out. So this could disqualify a person who does not satisfy the basic legal requirements.

MCCANTS: How would you describe the relationship of the Electoral Commission to the government? Generally people feel that the Election Management Body should be independent of political party interests or the party in power and there may be different ways to build this independence. What steps were taken to create independence here?

DEBRAH: *First the legal framework which the EC uses the laws, establishing the commission, guarantees its autonomy and isolation from government in terms of the way the provision is made in terms of entrenched provision that cannot easily be amended to achieve any political or give advantage to the government or majority in parliament or so forth, the party in parliament, it is not possible. There are also checks and balances in the process of appointment of the members of the EC. There is a Council of State which is to be likened to the upper house in the US. It is not like that but it can be likened in that context because it is partly elected, partly appointed institution of eminent men and women including traditional rulers, membership in the Council State. The President appoints the chairman of the commission in consultation with members of the Council State. There is an advisory body and the President can kind of advise the whole thing.*

Because of the need to build consensus they is bound to listen to the advice and hold consultation to choose a credible one, sort of the person who will have wide support and acceptance. So once that is done he'll present him. The person must go through parliamentary scrutiny and investigation and interview or just the—he appears before the parliamentary committee. Anybody who has any case against that person arising from lack of neutrality, independence, and so forth could bring it against him at that stage and so forth.

So once all these processes are taken and he goes through that and the parliament endorses him, he get his—he swears an oath of office to take to be neutral and so forth. So first the law guarantees the independence of the EC.

What makes it more important is that the law, the provision is entrenched, it is an entrenched clause in the Constitution. Just to not be manipulated by any party.

Then in terms of the practicality of it the autonomy should include financial autonomy, but the Electoral Commission is treated as any state institution whose budget is controlled by the central government. The defense of the budget before the house, the parliament is also not done by the Commission itself but by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. They present the budget and defend it and so forth. So it gives a sense that the EC lacks autonomy when it comes to budgetary matters. But once the government approves the EC budget it has the powers and authority to administer its own affairs in terms of how to administer, distribute the budget and so forth.

There hasn't been any kind of indication that the government has manipulated the EC by cutting its budget to the extent that it is not able to work and is using it as a way to manipulate the EC. We haven't had any situation like that but it is possible through delays. Once the government has approved the budget then it takes the administrative process to give the budget to the EC. Once delays occur it is a way of sabotaging the process. I don't know if that is a deliberate way of doing it but as a social scientist it is one way that the government can put changes on the EC and so forth and can hamper its capability and so forth.

There have been comments by opposition and so forth about how the EC has acted in the past, even current registration exercise where the EC had to postpone the revision of the voters' register several times. The conclusion was government was not giving the money to do that but the EC always refused that, refused that allegation that they had money but the problem had been with the materials acquisition from Britain or something. But my point is that if the money had been given you on time, then you should have followed the program or plan of action and wouldn't have to have shortages of material in one center and so forth. These are challenging situations that need further investigation and so forth.

Of course when the EC tells you government has not sabotaged, then you take it as that, but you analyze it within the context of the delays and all the shortages and so forth can hinder process.

MCCANTS: If you were providing advice to somebody in another country about how to build an independent Electoral Commission, what particular challenges would you tell them to be alert to?

DEBRAH: *Basically about finances, funding of election activities. This is a huge challenge to the EC, it poses huge challenges to the EC because of its ability to organize credible elections depends on the availability of resources, to prosecute its business and activities. You see—and here in Ghana there have been cases where even registration assistants had demonstrated against the EC and threatened boycotting the whole process. If that happens, and it has to do with money, they complain that the allowances are meager, they were not going to take it and so forth. This would throw the Electoral Commission out of gear, the timetable would be-. This had even raised citizens' apprehensions and concerns about keeping to timetable once this is not done. So you had to extend the voters' registration.*

I guess the reason why I send anyone through this is that maybe one - lots of money. It has to do with money. They have to pay their registration assistants

and so forth. I could also say that money challenge, I would advise further countries, they have to do with the boldness of the members of the Commission.

There is one thing having laws that guarantee your independence and one can exercise that and assert your independence. The credibility of the election is measured in terms of how bold the EC is in terms of resistant – because there will be political pressures. You saw in Nigeria where the parties nearly rejected the elections outcome in 2007 because the Commission member, the chairman was seen to be not being independent and ignoring all the concerns the opposition presents has been very dangerous and so forth. So the boldness on the part of the Commission member to assert their independence in the face of even perceived interference becomes critical for the integrity of the process.

MCCANTS: What kinds of financial accountability structures are in place for election officials and has there been a problem with the use of resources for personal purposes or unrelated purposes?

DEBRAH: *This one, issues of that have not come to the public domain but I guess for the EC the auditors, central government auditors, internal auditors that monitor the disbursement of resources. Also for the international financial donors they have their own checking mechanisms to audit the financial resources they give to the EC. To that standard, we have not received any kind of report from them, the national community, damning the EC about some of these things so we assume that things have been pretty well organized and so forth. The auditor report, we have an auditory general that audits accounts of all government agencies including the independent institutions of state, democratic institutions. I have not come across any of their reports criminalizing the EC of financial impropriety and so forth and has never come to the public domain.*

MCCANTS: Elections are expensive and costs can vary greatly in different places. Do you have any ideas on how to make the election process less expensive?

DEBRAH: *In Ghana if registration of voters could be done in a continuous affair, continuing affair so that as soon as you turn 18 you could walk to the EC office to register. You can turn in your evidence of eligibility in terms of birth certificate or any kind of school records indicating your birthday and so forth because most people go to school at early stage, at the kindergarten stage, two years and so forth. They give good date of birth when they come in. So that could be used as evidence of their date of birth, that would be fine. So we don't have to spend money having a period of registration where the Commission would have to be bothered with how to get resources to open centers at all centers closer to citizens to get their data collected.*

One way we can cut resources is also by encouraging civil society organizations to partner the EC to spread the education message because the EC again has to find resources to engage in periodic voter registration campaigns, education voter information and so forth. All these things are costly, but if churches, civil society organizations can take it up and all year round try to educate people on their democratic rights, citizenship and all that. It becomes less of a burden on the EC to have to look for huge sums of money to engage in periodic campaigns.

MCCANTS: You mentioned earlier that you worked for the Electoral Commission during the previous election and I'd like to draw a little on your experience in that capacity. Can you tell me how were the staff members or the poll workers recruited?

DEBRAH: *I told you we have permanent and non-permanent staff. The permanent staff are recruited on their academic qualifications and they go for interviews and they are screened like any other public agency screens new entrants into the area. In Ghana we have the Public Service Commission that is responsible for recruiting for government institutions. They are present at the recruitment exercise and they supervise it with the Electoral Commission only giving technical advice to those to be recruited.*

So once you are recruited you go through a general process in fact your kids and other investigations about your background check in terms of whether you are partisan and so forth. After that you are taking through a training program. In the past because of paucity of resources it was ignored but from '94 when donors started becoming interested and they have provided resources to train those who are recruited new and so forth. There has also been a continuing training exercise for those who are working with the Commission.

For those who are non-permanent staff there is a session that trains them in the art of electoral registration, to understand the electoral process and also for them to try as much as possible to minimize the degree to which they can be partisan because it is difficult to weed out anything, but they go through the process, even oath swearing before a high court judge to afford integrity of the process and not to do anything that would undermine it.

Once you take that oath before a high court judge you become liable as not to do this. So these are a little bit some of the ways you recruit.

MCCANTS: What kinds of skills were you looking for in your recruitment and what skills did you find were in short supply?

DEBRAH: *In terms of getting work with the EC?*

MCCANTS: Yes.

DEBRAH: *The skills?*

MCCANTS: Yes.

DEBRAH: *Well the EC might not, because if I'm going to work there you might not have any skills in terms of—but there are units in the EC, some are accountants and so forth. So depending on your—you can get to another unit. But in terms of the electoral administration, the EC might not look for any special skills. Prior experience in election management and so forth, because if you look at the African democratic history, most have more military regimes until 1992 coming up, they have continuing democratic process. They had intermittent military intervention. So we haven't had no experience within the electoral issues and so forth. But it is presumed that once you have first degree in any of the social sciences and you go through the training, you should be able to engage in efficient administration because the in-service training or on-the-job training you'll get before you organize yourself very well, prepares to pay you. As you go without any experience you work under the experienced ones who have been in, you have supervisors who help you to understand the issues and so forth and you can pick it up from that.*

MCCANTS: How were staff members who worked some distance from headquarters monitored for compliance with rules and protocols?

DEBRAH: Every region has a director and every district has a district officer who also works under the director of the region. The region has a coordinator and it monitors the operations of those officials under him. From time to time he also holds meetings, regular consultation with all of them. He personally visits the district, visits each one of the offices to ensure that they are doing the right thing. When there is any major exercise, the region director brings all the district officers together in the regions to undergo training and to brief them about the rules and so forth.

They in turn go back to their district to also hold discussions, consultation with those who are working in the district offices. Also if there are new changes, there are changes that they have to observe, these things are brought to their attention. They go through exercises to perfect it before these things - our work begins.

MCCANTS: Often there are difficulties in boundary delimitation or districting prior to an election. Can you describe how the boundary delimitation process has worked in Ghana and who is responsible for the termination of—?

DEBRAH: We consider many factors which guide those who are doing it in terms of language, in terms of traditional boundaries and administrative boundaries. The administrative boundary is different from the electoral boundary, the district boundaries. So they take into consideration the culture of the people and then they take into consideration the traditional demarcations existing before the demarcation is done. So they consider who is responsible for this traditional area. They consult with traditional authorities to understand the need to draw the boundaries, not to disadvantage one particular traditional authority. That would bring clashes between them because the demarcation ought to be synchronized with the traditional lines of authority. Also, in terms of linguistics and other cultural characteristics are considered so much, customs and many other things which are very much upheld by the people. So all this is taking into consult. It is demarcated to make sure that things will not get out of, would create problems for those settlements.

MCCANTS: Now who is responsible for the determination of the boundary?

DEBRAH: The Electoral Commission does it and the law grants that power to the EC. It tells, sets out the modalities for doing it.

MCCANTS: Were delimitation issues contentious or disruptive in preparation for this election?

DEBRAH: There have been cases where lines drawn have been disputed and it has to do with traditional authorities. You see this village is part of my jurisdiction but you have drawn the line to cut it out from me. I want it to be part of my jurisdiction and so forth. These, from time to time you find complaints and so forth. So when the opportunity comes for re-demarcation, redrawing of the boundaries, all these things are taken into consideration to prevent any kind of confusion in management. Parliamentary elections are deemed to be elections where the community chooses their leader to represent them, so that's where the problem occurs. So if you do not have a properly demarcated area, boundary, then the problem occurs with the community about who is representing us, is he part of us? We don't know him. He is not within our community. So that is why the drawings would always take into consideration the overall traditional setup.

MCCANTS: What controls have been developed to prevent multiple or false registrations?

DEBRAH: *The EC has devised mechanisms by which the voters are provided with photo ID cards. An innovation was made in 2004 in which voters' photographs were also on the voters' roll. So in addition there is backup information, paper work, that contains the name of your parents, your home house address. Where there is a disputed kind of issue like that the original report is consulted to address some of these.*

So if you came and said you were Emmanuel Debrah and somebody disputed that you are not that person, even when you are voting, the presiding officer could consult the original and quiz you a little bit. If you are Emmanuel Debrah who are your parents, what is the name of your father, your mother, and cross check with that. Once you satisfy that requirement it is presumed that you are the right person. But to forestall that your photograph now matches with your information on the voters' roll. So you come and the person—but unfortunately, if it is black and white sometimes it is difficult to figure out who the person is. So there could be a working out towards making more colored to make it more easier for identification.

MCCANTS: How is the integrity of registration lists safeguarded after they are compiled. What steps are taken to prevent tampering?

DEBRAH: *There is a period called revision, exhibition, at which those who have died over the years, the EC appeals, only appeal, to relatives, to turn up to cancel their name from the register, fill out a form. Sometimes it is through affidavit or bring evidence of death, registration card or certificate to get that person's name expunged. So it can only be done when there is a legal support for it. So this is the way to cleanse the register of ghost names from it and also to ask for the—. Today, I guess when you are registering they put indelible ink on your finger so if you register today here it takes about two weeks or three weeks or one month for that to get off. So during that period it means you cannot go to another village to register because that indelible mark will be still marking to identify you as having registered in one place or the other. But these things can be abused.*

There were cases where even the indelible ink was not indelible ink at all, it was gentian violet. So people were using devices to clean it. So where it is not indelible then it poses problems, multiple registrations could occur and so forth.

MCCANTS: What obstacles have been encountered in conducting voter registration?

DEBRAH: *Minors trying to register, foreigners trying to register, I pointed out. These are the basis for which political parties will engage in conflict over the registration. Each party wants to present as many candidates as possible to register in order to get their votes. So in an attempt to do so the [Indecipherable] and minors, they go to villages, mobilize them, distance, put vehicles at their disposal convey them to centers and so forth. And opposition, other parties would think that they know some of them to be minors might challenge them and those things create conflict situations. So minors registering and also as I told you the border counties. Ghana shares border with Togo, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso. It is difficult to distinguish between nationals of these counties around the borders. So we find them crisscrossing to engage in. So this has not been dealt with and it continues to be a great challenge.*

MCCANTS: So how is the Electoral Commission addressing those challenges?

DEBRAH: *The borders issue is pretty difficult even though party representatives are there also to make sure that those who came to register were known because the parties are also engaging in those fraud. It becomes extremely difficult for them to scrutinize in an objective way who this person is and who has come to register and so forth. That is why in many cases when elections are being held in Ghana the government will appeal to the governments of the other neighboring countries to close their borders so that nobody will come from their country into there. So that if you're not here, it means that you are not a citizen, you can't come back.*

MCCANTS: What, are there any kind of ballot security measures put in place at polling stations to inhibit vote fraud by election officials?

DEBRAH: *There is a transparent, for security transparent ballot boxes and there is a seal. Once you take, the officer takes the ballot papers, they are put in the box and there is a seal and the number is recorded to the officer and to the assistant who is carrying it and this is made known to the party agents. So when the officer brings to the center or the party agent goes out to make sure that the seal is not broken, to make sure that none of the ballot papers have been taken away anywhere. So once that is done that is sure security.*

Then the security agent or personnel at like police or prison officer or custom officer who will be present in terms to provide the physical security of the ballot so that nobody will come from anywhere to pick it and run away with it and go and stuff it and bring it. So there is a person there to protect the integrity of the ballots at all times from the day time and even the whole thing begins from the printing of the ballot at the printing press where party agents are constantly there to protect it. Every day the number of ballots, the serial numbers are taken and it goes through every process until the day of declaration of the results. So there are always agents of the parties representing the parties at all stages of the process to ensure from the print to the collation and declaration.

MCCANTS: How well do you think these security measures work and would there be any elements that you would recommend to others?

DEBRAH: *It works, it works at the national level and higher places, like where the ballot paper has been printed because where qualified, party representatives are there who understand the issues and understand the process. But when it comes to the rural areas some of the parties we recruit people cannot even read and right. So their understanding of the electoral process is very limited. So if somebody is cheating the process it is difficult for him to intervene and act. So as long as they continue to present—and some of the parties do not have support at all so they will lean on anybody who might pose as a part of the party who might not necessarily be a support of the party. Then he goes and does not promote the interests of the party but something else, to collude in fact to undermine the process.*

MCCANTS: Are the ballots counted at the polling stations or shipped to a regional center?

DEBRAH: *Sure, as soon as the reform in 1994 ballots have been counted immediately when the polls ended and right there party agents will sign the result declared and a copy is given to each agent to be given to the party for their own independent tabulation.*

MCCANTS: What responsibilities does the Electoral Commission have for regulating political parties?

DEBRAH: I've told you that the registration of political parties lies with the EC. It is the EC that ensure that a party has satisfied all the requirements before it issues a certificate to operate and obeys the rules about how to hold primaries, how to hold national congresses and so forth so any party that does not comply with these rules could be disqualified on technical ground by the EC.

MCCANTS: Does the EC administer penalties?

DEBRAH: Yes, it can refuse to give you a certificate if you have not met their requirements and that is it. If you are grieved, the EC administers these, enforces these rules. If you are grieved about the interpretation or application of the rules then you seek remedies of the court, you allow the court to come in.

MCCANTS: Were there any rules in place that required political parties to register the dates, the times and the places of campaign rallies?

DEBRAH: Come again?

MCCANTS: Were there any rules that required parties to register the dates and the times of campaign rallies?

DEBRAH: I guess what is required is, not to the EC, but to submit their program to the police. The police within the area that they are visiting. The police will ensure that while one rally is going on another party will not have concurrent rally to avoid clashes. So it is only for security purposes, to regulate security and also because the police lack the personnel to protect parties that are holding campaigns at the same time in the town. [interruption, end of file 3]

MCCANTS: What are the main methods that political party leaders use to try to reach potential voters and do you think that these methods have any particular advantages or disadvantages for the quality of the election?

DEBRAH: In terms of voter education?

MCCANTS: Convincing voters to support their candidates.

DEBRAH: Traditionally they have been visiting the constituencies to talk to the people and also they train volunteers who also go from door to door to convince supporters and nonsupporters alike to vote for their parties. They also use the mass media to reach out to the team of supporters and to convince through their platforms and to advocate better alternative way of running the country. Besides that they hold big rallies and they advertise it and then they go there to explain their policies and programs to the people and so forth. Ads are one important means of reaching out and making contacts with the people, holding rallies in those communities. Also they have volunteers and their supporters, their agent supporters who are also campaigning in the village and so forth. We hear also of the parties, some of them use money to influence, to get them to support them. Patronage, through patronage it is possible. Through ethnic affinity and also through, they appeal to ethnic groups to support them. They say "home-boy" coming, don't have to get a foreigner. Once you get a home boy at the national front all your programs and issues affecting you are addressed in a prompt manner and so forth.

So apart from that, these are some of the nuances that they can find within the whole process of campaigning and entice people to vote.

MCCANTS: Can you tell me more about how the Electoral Commission or others that conduct the election use the media to educate voters and how effective you think their campaign is?

DEBRAH: *The EC is always cautious about resources in terms of media ads but I know as part of their resources central government wants to offer political parties, the EC arranges with the State Broadcasting Corporation by which each, the EC and the other parties to submit their programs to be aired free of charge so on and so forth. The EC also uses its regional and district offices. They have public address system erected on their vehicles and they go around the community educating people, announcing dates for registration, directing them to registration tests. They also use pictorial materials in terms of posters, dramatizing what the EC wants to do for voter registration. There are pictures indicating, inviting people to register and so forth and also through television ads and so forth.*

MCCANTS: How effective do you think their campaign is in helping people to understand what to do?

DEBRAH: *In developing countries such as Ghana where most people cannot read and write they use jingles, radio jingles, they use drama and Sundays and certain days the drama groups will try to present some of these in a dramatic form to capture the issues the EC wants to convey to the people in that kind of situation to elicit the people's support and to mobilize them to come along with the EC to do that. So that had worked to some extent and most people have been moved by some of these things to engage in and participate in the process.*

MCCANTS: Do political campaigns use the media to disseminate propaganda or to use inflammatory language and if so, how does the Electoral Commission respond to that?

DEBRAH: *They use both, insults is one of features of the electoral process. They also use good language, talk about issues, but issues might degenerate, if issues are petty, insults take ascendancy over those matters. That is the means to actuate and out maneuver that opening and so forth. The EC has a lot to do to stop some of these kind of things and so forth. Pretty much because, EC tends to focus more on the management process than how parties are engaging in campaigns and I have not seen the EC sanctioning any political party on account of filthy language or even removing opponent's posters, campaign material from the public and so forth, tearing them apart and so forth. The EC has always tried to use a dialogue to address some of this rather than use sanctions.*

MCCANTS: What are the types of disputes that generally arise in these elections?

DEBRAH: *One complaint is that one party has removed my banner, my ad, from the street or destroyed my campaign materials that are posted for public consumption and so forth. Also you hear that some of the campaign vehicles have been vandalized by other political parties because they don't want their opponents to come to their strongholds and so forth. Supporters of the parties have also engaged in scuffles and sometimes open fights arising out of inflammatory language they have used against the candidates of choice and so forth. These are serious things that come to the public domain, but as I told you the EC has never been bothered about some of these things as long as it is not something that undermines the administration of the elections.*

MCCANTS: So can you describe the adjudication process by which these disputes can be resolved?

DEBRAH: *The EC has education mechanism within this establishment. First there is a registration review committee and that committee is at both the national and regional level cascading to the grassroots level and the district level. So this review committee receives challenges advanced by those who think that those who came to present themselves for registration were not eligible. If you suspect that he was not qualified you file an objection form to object to his registration. After that it goes to a review committee which is made up of the EC representative of that region or the district, a police officer, a social welfare officer, and representatives of the political parties. They review by taking information from the parties involved, the person who challenged and the person who was challenged.*

He has to defend his challenge and provide evidence that the person he challenged was not eligible or the person must also defend himself through other means to convince the committee. Once the committee is satisfied with anything, it makes its ruling. If someone was unduly challenged, his application was—he was given the proper status as a voter. If somebody was registered and was merit for a challenge, he was also disqualified. Sometimes, if it is serious the person is prosecuted. I have had occasions in my own experience where I took one person to court for underage registration and I became the prosecutor also of the court. But the court asked me to strike down the name from the register because it was still in the process of getting that through. The person was disqualified. I can't remember the kind of sanction the court imposed. It should be imprisonment but sometimes the court can temper mercy with justice and then, or justice with mercy, to allow the person to go and warn them not to do that. If it was a minor, very minor 11 years or 12 years.

MCCANTS: How well do you think the dispute resolution system works?

DEBRAH: *It works, I think I've explained part of it. These are internal mechanisms, the one I have explained. The higher mechanism is offered by the courts where a case might go to the court, if somebody is aggrieved by the outcome of the election, the results, they can challenge it at the court and it can go to the Supreme Court, even to the point of going to the Supreme Court. All these things are happen. The problem is the slowness of the process, the cumbersomeness of the process. It discourages people from going forth. So that's why they would always try to fight to get the right thing done rather than getting it into the court. So you see parties engaging in scuffles, conflict, acrimonies and so forth to undue the other because they think that even if you have to wait for the court to decide it might take several years to get it done.*

MCCANTS: So what then would you recommend that other places consider?

DEBRAH: *There should be a separate court like we have in Ghana, we have the Commercial Court that deals with traffic offenses. That would be like Mexico. In Mexico there is a special court, it is called the Electoral Court, set apart from the traditional court to deal with cases of electoral nature to ensure the integrity of the electoral process is protected and people's confidence in the process is not withered in any form. So a similar model like the Mexico case could be adopted and so forth, like we set apart from the traditional court, a fast-track approach to deal with cases of any electoral matters.*

MCCANTS: With regard to civic and voter education, were there any groups of people who have proven particularly hard to reach with information and what steps are taken to remedy that problem.

DEBRAH: *Not really, I guess everybody, every party, every individual has the right to do that and we haven't heard of any case where there have been one group has proven that apart from, as I said party supporters trying to take away campaign ads and [Indecipherable] from their communities and so forth because they are dominant there, but it would be difficult to know who did it. They did it undercover and so forth. They haven't had an open campaign in that sort of situation in Ghana.*

MCCANTS: What steps have been taken to enfranchise marginalized populations such as the disabled or women?

DEBRAH: *In Ghana we have not had a blind, Braille voting, where the blind can feel it and vote. They are always helped by their friends and relations who go to the polling station to vote. We can't guarantee the secrecy and whether their preferences were considered or something. But it had to be special dispensation for them, but I heard the EC talking about a Braille voting for 2008 and for them to have the community doing it by themselves and so forth. But once in Ghana the physically challenged people are helped by their friends to go and do, their relations, and once he is willing he will be helped to do that.*

MCCANTS: Can you describe the use of election monitors and the goals for monitoring that have been established in the elections?

DEBRAH: *We have domestic election monitoring groups, coalitions of civil society organizations and churches, mosques, all kinds of religious groups that monitor local elections. They train their own members or volunteers and just bring them to several centers across the country. Then they have their own check lists and they also get support from the Electoral Commission to training done as part of the standard electoral process. They are able to monitor and present reports. Other civil organizations like CDD (Center for Democratic Development) also are engaged in independent monitoring process. IEE, Institute of Economic Affairs, engages in also independent monitoring process and maybe issues quarterly report or monthly report to the general public and after election they make a more comprehensive report for better consideration.*

MCCANTS: How do decision makers determine how many monitors or observers are needed? [interruption end of file 4].

DEBRAH: *As long as that agency appears credible and it applies to the EC, the EC will not put limitations on the number or so forth. Once an organized, credible, independent body, it applies first to the EC for authorization to do the monitoring. So the EC would give authorization to the body if it is satisfied as a credible body. But as to the number, it might not have any limitation. I have not heard of any limitations on the number of monitors. But of course there are local and foreign monitoring groups that come always to monitor Ghana elections. The EC will have to rely on what—in terms of its credibility.*

MCCANTS: Who is informed about the location of the observers in advance of polling day?

DEBRAH: *Come again? In terms of who?*

MCCANTS: Is anyone informed about where the observers will be placed?

DEBRAH: *They determine where they want to train their people and then they only inform the EC that we are sending these people to this, they give them a list indicating*

where they are posting them. Just to announce to the EC. They wear an EC badge with authentication from the EC to indicate that they were given the opportunity to do what they are doing.

MCCANTS: Are there any steps taken to prevent observers from being bought off in advance or threatened on polling day?

DEBRAH: *Not really. They always work, there is always collaboration with the EC and political parties to do that. You know in Africa our position is always unsure that you get monitors to be there so it is not always a problem.*

MCCANTS: Is there any advice you would offer to others about the use and management of domestic or international observers?

DEBRAH: *People are becoming more at ease with domestic observers because they know the terrain, most of them have been locals and they are able to detect what goes on there more than international observers who come in three days. They lack proper understanding, language barriers and so forth and they visit a few centers in the capital and regions and they make conclusions. But elections, much of the work is in the rural areas and they just go to a few centers and make conclusions and they report within three or four days. This is not most appropriate.*

So if more local observers with credibility could be allowed to do that, that would enhance the integrity of the process better than external.

MCCANTS: Sometimes foreign assistance can create its own set of problems and affect the ability of people to do their jobs well. Are there two or three mistakes that you have commonly observed in the way that donors or international organizations make with respect to relationship with partner country personnel?

DEBRAH: *As far as I'm concerned the international community are here to provide support for the smooth electoral process. If they have interests it is pretty difficult to make this interest demonstrated in any form. The complaint of the ruling government at the time of 1996 in Ghana was that the donors were more sympathetic towards the opposition's concerns. So when the opposition raised several objections and issues with the electoral process the willingness on the part of the international donors made the whole process more transparent to satisfy the opposition's concerns. So you see we have this situation happening, it might be true or not so it is difficult to put any hard fact on it because the international organization donors provided support for Ghana's electoral forum which happened to have coincided with the opposition's concerns, then they would have just barge into the opposition and so forth and they were against the government. So these are petty little things that you are likely to find but they have no substance and as long as they are providing something to support the process, and they are not manipulating the institution that manages the election, you cannot make any conclusions of that nature.*

MCCANTS: Are there any other countries whose experiences you have found particularly instructive and what would you say was useful in those examples?

DEBRAH: *Apart from proportional representation we have the electoral system, in terms of election administration as I said Ghana's one has become a model such that Ghana's electoral officers are always hired to provide support to most countries in Africa, South Africa, Nigeria. It was the Electoral Commission of Ghana that had to teach them in the most ideal way of doing in as had worked in Ghana. But if the proportional representation system were to be introduced as part of our*

process it would enhance our electoral system particularly it would minimize the extent to which ethnic voting occurs, regionalism, women, now while in their arguments about having become their running mate and get into positions and so forth and trying to bring advantage and so forth. That argument is that in terms of democracy there is nothing like providing special kind of thing for other people. These are some of the arguments some of the parties provide.

We are equal more or less, establish ourselves on equal grounds, but they also forget that some are disadvantaged by their own behavior and practices in the traditional system and so forth. So I guess proportional representation could offer one way to mitigate some of the acrimonies that are witnessed in our electoral process.

MCCANTS: Is there anything about Ghana's history or context that you think would limit the ability of others to borrow lessons from here?

DEBRAH: *A lot. The periodic meeting between the Electoral Commission members and then political parties and civil society organizations representatives including donors and periodic meetings, monthly meetings to discuss issues about the electoral process have been very instructive and very decisive for integrity building, integrity for the process. Parties' inputs at such meetings have always guided the Electoral Commission. Even though it is an independent institution, it is also encouraged to fashion up policy and programs that factor the consent of the political parties to ensure participation and consensus around the process, also to mitigate any sort of tension and so forth there are about some of these things.*

MCCANTS: What questions or issues surrounding election management need reconsideration or further research and evaluation?

DEBRAH: *Well, I guess in terms of, as I said, if aspect of the compilation of the electoral process, the voters' rule because it begins the whole process of running the election machinery into action. So if there is a process by which the EC could, well I'll come to the election, I'm talking about something that could be done to address a particular issue within the electoral process. This has to do with the registration because it did not have a proper mechanism of registering those who turn 18 at any moment of electoral history. Individuals would have to convince registers that they are 18, they are—or they traveled in the previous registration. Some don't have even passports. So these things create a problem of double registration and underage registration.*

It would interest you to know that every time EC comes out with about 10,000—is it 10 million of registered voters, but during voting day turn out has always been around 6 million. So is it possible that 4 million Ghanaians who turn out to register will not come also to vote? That is the question. See it is not like maybe in advanced communities where as soon as you're 18 you're automatically registered. Here the individual presented himself in a queue to register so what has happened that within six months four million people will not turn out to vote. So it gives a sense that the registration process is tainted with some kind of a fraud, not committed by the EC but by the parties. So if you register double, on election day you cannot vote twice so you go, you are unable to vote where you made an impersonation somewhere. You can only vote once, now your picture is on the ID so it is difficult. If the indelible marks is not properly positioned or done, the person can vote twice.

In terms of research, much has been done in the area of election management and so forth but in terms of electoral delimitation not much has been done in the area of demarcation of electoral constituencies. Juxtaposing this with the parliamentary distribution of candidates. I know of one Fulbright Scholar who was here who tried to do something, Dan Smith, trying to see how people had been under represented. He said that in certain constituencies somebody could win, in terms of simple majority with 4000 votes and somebody would lose with 62,000 votes elsewhere. So a person who lost, he has 62 votes and he lost and somebody had 4000 votes and had a constituency and he won. So this caused a need for redemarcation. So it shouldn't be recognized in terms of those old traditional way of demarcating the constituency as a guide but this time population must also be the basic factor, rather than the landmarks, the geography, the culture of the people and so forth because in the urban metropolitan areas, which are densely populated, you have to consider proportioning the constituencies to cater for citizen representation after all.

Parliamentary lessons about representation, it is not about ethnic or cultural representation and so forth, population, citizen representation. So these people are under represented in a particular constituency then it affects the extent to which their views are carried into policy decisions.

MCCANTS: Thank you very much.

DEBRAH: You're welcome.