



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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

Series: Elections

Interview no.: D13

Interviewee: Frances Johnson-Morris

Interviewer: Nealin Parker

Date of Interview: 21 August 2008

Location: Monrovia
Liberia

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

PARKER: This is Nealin Parker in the Ministry of Commerce Building in Monrovia, Liberia. I'm here with Miss Frances Johnson-Morris, who is the former Chairperson of the National Elections Commission in Monrovia, Liberia.

If I could just begin by asking you about your role in the 2005 elections?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *My role in the 2005 elections was very key because I was the Chairperson of the National Elections Commission that had been restructured for—*

PARKER: And maybe just a bit about your background, to give a sense of where you were coming from?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, the background is that I'm a natural born Liberian and I am a lawyer by profession. Before coming to the Elections Commission, I had held other very important positions, i.e., Transitional Chief Justice, who had presided as a Chief Justice over the Supreme Court in 1997. That court was constituted to actually decide electoral disputes if any were to arise. Fortunately, we did not have any significant case arising out of the 1997 elections, in which Charles Taylor was the clear winner.*

Before then, immediately before I came to the National Elections Commission as Chairperson, I did human rights advocacy with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, which is a very prominent—I should say the forerunner of human rights organizations in Liberia. I headed that immediately before going to the National Elections Commission.

PARKER: If we could just begin by discussing a little bit the goals and objectives of the National Elections Commission in 2005?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Okay. In 2005, the goal and objective of the National Elections Commission was obviously to—we considered, first of all, that body, the National Elections Commission, was a special body. I can say that it was one of the strategies for conflict—for the resolution of our conflicts, of our 14-year conflict. It came out of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Talks in Ghana. There, the warring factions, the political parties, civil society organizations, converged in Ghana—Accra, at the time, to try to find a solution to the civil conflicts that had brought the country on its knees, literally.*

And so, one of the ways to solve the situation was to postpone elections that were due in 2003, and to rather have elections in 2005. The parties to the agreement thought that they needed to restructure the Elections Commission itself, because as it was constituted at the time, there was not much confidence in the body by the parties. So, that's how the National Elections Commission—the Commission is constituted in the—it's established, it's created by our constitution. It is simply called the Elections Commission, but for the purpose of the 2005 elections, the parties put—they modified the name to National Elections Commission, with new members to conduct the elections.

And so, the dominant purpose of that National Elections Commission was to conduct credible elections, which the parties did not feel could be held in 2003 under the then Elections Commission (ECOM) as constituted by the Charles Taylor regime. So, that was clear that in order to solve the problem, in order to

bring an end to the crisis in a sustainable manner, credible elections needed to be held. And so, they came home and decided to restructure the Commission, nominate new persons to it. A number of persons were recommended by the various interests, various factions, including civil society. I'm told that over 40 names were recommended to the then the Transitional Chairman, Charles Gyude Bryant, because each stakeholder had their own nominees; civil society, political parties, human rights and pro-democracy groups. So, that's how the Commission was carefully restructured to ensure that it carried out that mandate.

PARKER: What would you say are the biggest challenges that arose in that election environment?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *In that election environment, some of the biggest challenges included—we had a problem with logistics, we had a problem with trying to deal with all of the international stakeholders, all of the parties. You had the International Contact Group on Liberia. We had the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). You had AU (African Union). You had EU (European Union). You had United States. You had UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia). There was a time that it was not quite clear who was to do what, because UNMIL felt, and other stakeholders felt, that elections should have been conducted by UNMIL. But we found out later that UNMIL had no mandates to conduct elections. In fact, when I was being inducted, I had read the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which is called the CPA, and I gathered, and I interpreted the CPA to mean that the National Elections Commission was to play a very important role as opposed to what was being speculated and then—and being interpreted by some of the other stakeholders that know the Elections Commission is not to play, you know, it's just to be there as a ceremonial body. We said, "No, the CPA—the agreement gives the Elections Commission the right to organize elections, to conduct voters' registration, to conduct civic education. And this, by no means, these are the essence of the conduct of elections. So how can someone say that the Elections Commission is not to, is just there, but it's UNMIL?"*

Anyway, we crossed over that hurdle, and it was determined that Elections Commission—the National Body, had to drive the process, and so, we did. And the question of the logistics, the resources to conduct the elections had to be shared among the various international stakeholders, as well as the national government. Sometimes it was difficult. Some of the support that some of the stakeholders had placed were not timely, they were not forthcoming timely enough, and we ran in risk of—sometimes we thought that maybe elections had to be postponed, because if people are not coming in with their commitments—we were very jittery at times.

The public was there, looking. Citizens, everybody was anxious and sometimes taking us to task and indicting us for not being forthcoming with voter education, civic education first. And, you know, timelines were tight. We had to have the elections on October 11, 2005. Then there were challenges; there were problems with political organizations, political parties, complaints and disputes. Luckily, we had a disputes resolution mechanism in place. We—firstly, as prescribed by the Elections Law, somebody having a complaint could first come to the Commission to be adjudicated. And if that person was not happy, then the party that was dissatisfied could go to the Supreme Court. So, it was quite clear, and we had a couple of those instances where we had to—Supreme Court had to intervene to

determine some issues. Some party felt that he was not given enough opportunity maybe to process his papers. And, you know, but this is what the Supreme Court—the Supreme Court plays its role, and we play our role.

The dispute resolution mechanism is very important in an electoral context, because if people have challenges, or people have concerns, there must be a forum where they can go to get redress. And we saw that it played itself out very well during the process, yes.

PARKER: Speaking of resourcing and resources not arriving on time, what sorts of things did you do, either to get resources to come faster or to deal with the fact that resourcing was a variable problem?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, we had to talk to the stakeholders, to those who had promised. We had to talk to them. We had to tell them the importance of being timely with their assistance, with their resources—we had to hammer it down that elections were time-bound. And if anybody thought that we were going to postpone elections, there would be a breach of the violation of the CPA. We were determined. We wrestled with that; we were going to keep the timeline.*

PARKER: Do you have any other recommendations to someone who would be in your position for how to deal with internationals?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, internationals—yes, because that's a very important—usually post-conflict society are really impoverished. They don't have the kind of resources needed, because if you want to have credible, honest, and free and fair elections, you must—they are very capital intensive. You must have the resources when they are needed. You must conduct your civic education timely enough so that people get the message, so that people get interested in the process. And so, you have to talk with the—it doesn't pay to be confrontational. You must let the stakeholders know the importance and the risk we run by not doing, coming forth on time with their assistance and commitments.*

You talk to them and let them know, and inform the public about why this is not taking place now because of this and that, and make sure that also that the national government will step up to the place just in case somebody defaults and does not come through at all. The national government must be there. And our national government really came up to the challenge. Sometimes, they bailed us out while we were waiting for our internationals to come forth.

PARKER: How long did the electoral process take from first planning until the final count?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Pardon?*

PARKER: How long was the electoral process?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Okay, we started the whole real process and the work, the implementation, around early 2004. Okay, let's see, we were—no, no, by the middle of 2004, because we were inducted in April 2004. Yes, the parties to the peace talks came back in 2003—August—August 18th. They reached the agreement, and then they came, and then we were, the Transitional Chairman was installed by October 2003. And so, work came in 2004, by April. And so, from April 2004 to just about September, ending. I mean, because you always—*

up to the last minute of the conduct of the elections, there's something to be done. So, it's not that we completed our work and we're sitting down and waiting for October 11, 2005—no, we worked just up to the very end, the last day before elections.

PARKER: What was the decision process to produce the final schedule for the elections?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Okay, again, a lot of consultations. We had to have consultations, we had to have—we developed timelines for each activity from this time to this time. I remember, I think voter registration, for instance, was from April 7th to May 21st, about four weeks—four-five weeks, about that. But each item, each activity had a timeline, and that was done with consensus by the—not just the international and government, but all the stakeholders, political parties involved. We all sat down and we, you know, came up with some of these and they gave their input. Sometimes, “Oh this time is too short for this.” But, you know, after further analysis we had to make the final decision as to what was important and what was reasonable, bearing in mind the deadline.*

PARKER: Do you have any general advice to offer people in similar settings about the timing and sequencing of elections?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Okay, my advice would be that the timing and the sequencing of these activities must be made clear to all those involved; to all the stakeholders, to all political parties. And when you make a timeline, you must stick to that timeline. My experience is that we did not shift timelines. If we said from this time to this time is voter registration—that was it. We closed at that day. We did not add or subtract. People had to know ahead of time, that this is the time you have or this is the time for political party registration, for instance. By this time, you must have submitted all of your documents. You must have registered.*

You make timelines, make sure stakeholders have enough opportunity, that they have full knowledge about it, and then, you stick to that timeline. You don't shift and don't waiver about those kinds of decisions.

PARKER: Describing how the NEC (National Elections Commission) was established, what other options or models were considered in the negotiations to create—or to re—to overhaul the NEC?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Basically, the decision to overhaul the NEC was done in Accra between the political parties and the warlords, and all those who went. So we didn't have much to do with—they felt that they could not have free and fair elections with the system that was then in place, with the composition of the Commission as it was then. So what drove the decision, all the considerations? I'm not sure.*

PARKER: How would you now—or after the restructuring—describe the relationship of the NEC to the government? Generally people feel election management bodies should be independent, but there are different ways of establishing that independence. What are some?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, one thing I can say about the National Elections Commission, we were truly independent. And I've said that to people in the society over and over. I say if there is one thing that can be said about the former Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, he never one day interfered in our*

decisions at the Elections Commission. He never one day called me in to say, "Oh, you know, this and that, can you see how you can maybe extend this time or do something?" He stayed out of it. He stayed out of the activities, out of the decisions of the National Elections Commission. I'm not sure about what happened in the past, but this one, he really—because maybe he did not have a stake. He was an incumbent, but he was not running. Maybe if he was running, he would have been different, I'm not sure, but he did not. He simply kept out of the affairs of the National Elections Commission.

PARKER: How would a NEC—how would you recommend to others that they establish their independence under other circumstances, or even the current NEC that will have an incumbent who has a party that may run?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, during the election—during that period, we did some reforms—electoral reform. And one of the reforms was that the Commission must be financially independent. So, we created a provision in the Electoral Law to say that the Elections Commission must have financial autonomy. That means they draft their budget, it is taken to the National Legislature, and the National Legislature approves it, and they get their allotment directly from the Budget Bureau, and the money is put in their own account. They don't have to run to the Finance Ministry every day, up and down, following vouchers and maybe encountering the temptation of somebody saying, "Oh, you know, you got to do this before I give here."*

That was cut off because we made sure we provided for that; financial autonomy and the body, the commissioners, must be independent themselves. They must resist any interference. There was a time when, in the initial stage of the National Elections Commission, when we took over and we were trying to restructure, and tried to streamline the workforce in the Elections Commission. And there were some attempts by the then Legislature to try to question us and call us to the Legislature and question our decision to set people down and reduce the workforce, and we resisted that. And I wrote them a memorandum to tell them that this was inconsistent with the mandate of the National Elections Commission and with the intent of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which maintained the independence and the autonomy of the Elections Commission. So, I told them we could not be coming here every day to come and answer why we put people down. This is not within our prerogative to do so, so you must resist interference.

PARKER: Is there a NEC code of conduct?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *A NEC code of conduct? I think because we developed a number of codes of conduct I know for political parties. I think there's a code of conduct for NEC, yes.*

PARKER: What role did that code of conduct play, if any?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, I don't remember anybody challenging any of our—well, okay, political parties and politicians will always attack the Commission no matter how credible people try to be. Because there were times they said, "This person is a member of this political party." And that's one of the rules, you cannot be a member of a political party and sit on an election body, electoral body; you cannot. We try to uphold that, but what our constitution says and Electoral Law*

says that if somebody is a member of a political party, because it's almost impossible to say that we will find people who have never been a member of a political party. I happen to be in that category because I have never been a member of a political party because I served at the Judiciary for many years, and that's one of their prohibitions, you cannot be a judge and be in politics.

For me, it was clear. But there were some people who had been members of political parties, but the law requires that you give up your membership to that institution as soon as you are announced as a member, that is, you are appointed to the Commission. We kept to those rules; those people who were former members of political parties—they renounced their membership to those parties, and they were published in the papers for everyone to see. So that is something you cannot be. You cannot have political leanings if you're going to be on the Commission, and if you have, you must renounce and be sincere about it, and let people know and see.

PARKER: Transparency is a very important part of elections.

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Of course.*

PARKER: I'm especially interested in the ways that people try to maintain transparency in the NEC, here.

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, I think that is very key to free and fair elections. We tried to be transparent by making the process participatory and inclusive—consulting with stakeholders at all levels on decisions taken. And having them also work along with us, especially when we come to key things like electoral districting. We called them in and we all sat down and derived a formula to be used to demarcate electoral districts. In that way, you can maintain transparency, and transparency was maintained through that process. People came. In fact, some of the parties volunteered to give us a formula about how to do this, and we all worked together and accepted the formula. And that's how we did it, by demarcating the districts in accordance with this or that population.*

When you involve people in decision-making, you can uphold your transparency and your credibility. I think we did that very well. We consulted a whole lot. There were times that political parties got tired with consultation, they said, "Oh, we've got our work to do. You go ahead and do your work."

PARKER: Was the budget ever subject to public debate?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *The election budget? I'm not sure it was subject, but everybody knew the budget. It was published that this is the amount that the election is going to need, and people had access to that at the legislature, because it had to be—people had to know what it took to conduct the elections, and that was published. That was public knowledge. In fact, when we first did the first formulation, people critiqued it. Some people said it was too much etc. And then we—our international partners—were the technicians. They had done elections in other places and they knew what it took. Literally every item—a pencil, the cost of it, paper—everything was spelled out. And so, when the budget was finally announced, I think it stood at 18 or 19 million at the time, yes. Everybody knew what the budget was intended for. How many workers you needed. How much the compensation for them. Just everything from paper to pencil was stated.*

PARKER: Could you tell me about a particular success of the NEC in the election of 2005?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *The particular success of the elections that I like to refer to is the opportunity given to all political parties, stakeholders, and the kind of interest that the elections generated. I think people got interested in the elections because of the way we informed the public about the process. The way we encouraged people to come out and vote, because we told them the importance of voting and the disadvantage of not voting. Because you're not going to have a voice, whoever wins, if you don't participate; well, you're going to be bound by the decision that will be made.*

And a particular success was the overwhelming turnout of people—family. Initially, they were kind of reluctant, but when we spoke to them we educated them on the needs of—we had projected about 3.5 million people that were eligible to vote. I think we got 3.2, which was marvelous in our view. 3.2 came out to register to vote. The registration was really a great success. I was incredibly overwhelmed by the way people came out and actually registered to cast their vote.

PARKER: How did your leadership, or the leadership of other partners of yours, play a role in this elections?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Let me speak to my own leadership. I think I have the fortitude and the will, the credibility. I think people respected my leadership because, even those that would criticize, they knew deep down I had built a reputation for integrity in my society, in whatever, wherever, positions, assignments I had been given. I had been very forceful, focused, direct, and sincere about what I was doing—because nobody could say I was member of this or that. And so, I think that helped as much as the logistics and the resources, and this and that, but they had to believe in the leadership of somebody. And I think that people, even my critics I would say, know deep down that the Chairman of the Elections Commission of 2005 was somebody who had a reputation for credibility, integrity. So, I think that helped, and also, my other able commissioners. You know, we all—we came from backgrounds—human rights advocates, peacemakers, for instance, pro-democracy activists. James Fromayan, Mary Brownell, these were names that people knew and they respected over the years.*

We had a former President of the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia. These were people who had been proven. I think that helped, notwithstanding a few distracters, but I think that's what drove the process. I hate to say things about myself, but I have to say that, really, today, people—everyday, people commend me. They commend me for my role during the elections. In the society, whomever I meet—and that's the only thing they remember me for. Notwithstanding my human rights advocacy, the courts where I was at for those many years, but they remember me for the elections. And somebody said, in fact, an opposition—one of those major opposition, the CDC (Congress for Democratic Change), one of the officials met me one time, he said, "I'm sorry that you had to leave the Commission." And I said, "Wow, you can say that now." So it shows that when people are really honest and sincere about what they are doing, it shows, and you can take the decisions you take and do the things you do without any fear of criticism because you know what you are doing.

What I focus on is the public interest. I don't care about individual interests and things. What I do, I do in the interest of the public. That is the guiding principle that I take everywhere I go—that the public interest is above and superior to individual interest, with me to say to society "We have to have these elections to make sure that we bring an end to war and don't revert to war, so we have to do it to the best of our ability and in the most credible and transparent manner that we can." And I think we succeeded in doing that, I think we did.

PARKER: I would call that a great success. You mentioned the budget and you mentioned some of the issues of trying to get finances in a timely manner. Do you have any ideas of how to make the electoral process less expensive to conduct next time?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, we believe that we had taught that if people do continuous registration as a way—continuous registration, as people become eligible to vote every year or every month, they appear and they do and the Elections Commission records them and registers them, rather than waiting for elections year—and then you want to register 3.5 million people, it's difficult. Because we did not have that kind of system in place. We didn't have the records when we came to elections, so we had to do a registration for practically everybody anew. But if you do continuous registration every year, as people turn 18 they can go to the Elections Commission in their district or county and register. I think it would be a lot easier and less expensive because that involves a lot of logistics.*

PARKER: In terms of staffing, how were staff members recruited for the NEC?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *How were staff members recruited? Yes, like I told you, we had a lot of international partners. The voters, the poll workers—many of them—we made announcements. UNMIL was basically in charge of that, going and making announcements for poll workers to come. In fact, the poll workers actually signed an agreement with the peacemakers, with the UNMIL, because they were paying them directly. That was their part of contribution, to pay all election workers—poll workers, not election workers, poll workers. And so, the announcement was made, it went from county to county, announcements were made. People would come and sign up, they would come, they took tests to be vetted, and they had a certain criteria set. Of course, we all developed the criteria. At least, you must be a high school graduate to be able to participate in this process.*

We developed a criterion for qualification to work as a poll worker together. And then, they signed the agreement eventually with these people to...

PARKER: Was the staff size adequate for this election, in your opinion?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *In my opinion, it was. I think we had, what, 18,000 people working; 18,000 if my memory serves me right, yes. At least five persons to a polling station: you had a Registrar, you had the Assistant Registrar, and then you had the Recorders. I think we had about five to each polling station, and we had about 3,500 of them.*

PARKER: Were there any kinds of skills or any area that had a short supply of staff?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Let's see. Actually when many of these people were recruited, most of the workers had to go through a little training. They were trained by our partners.*

So, they were trained how to mark a ballot. They were trained in various skills in the various areas of the election—electioneering.

PARKER: And in your view, how adequate was the training that the partners—and by partners you mean UNMIL and IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems)?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Yes, IFES, all the board. I think it was relatively adequate because—I say this because we did not have very huge—the margin of error was very minimal. So this means that the training went—it was effective. It was adequate enough, because there were not a lot of spoiled ballots. The margin of error was very minimal.*

PARKER: How were staff members who worked some distance from headquarters monitored?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *We had commissioners. The commissioners were divided; they were given regions. The country was divided into regions. For instance, I had oversight responsibility for Montserrado County and Margibi County. I would make tours. On Election Day, I would go around. Where they were having training, I would go to supervise and see whether everything was being done in accordance with the rules. So, seven commissioners in place were divided into seven regions. Each commissioner had oversight; at least two counties per person.*

PARKER: What steps were taken to protect poll workers and any NEC staff from threats during the election and before?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, UNMIL was in charge of security. And we agreed that an UNMIL person or police officers would be around the precinct. Not in it, but around, a little distance away, to make sure they tackle any issue, any instance of violence or anybody who wants to come and disrupt the process. I don't remember receiving any report that some poll worker was manhandled or brutalized by—one or two instances of some ex-combatants disrupting election in Nimba County. In Nimba County because they have a lot of fighters there, but that was taken care of by UNMIL. They threatened that no election would be held here if we do not get our pay, if we—just scare tactics.*

PARKER: Speaking of payment, how were field staff paid?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *How?*

PARKER: How were field staff paid?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *The field staff? They were paid—how much were they paid?*

PARKER: How were they paid is the question?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Oh, how were they paid? Oh, okay. They were paid so that after they completed their work and they carried their records, they would sign—an UNMIL person would be there; they had a place where they would go and sign up for their payment and then move off.*

PARKER: How did you protect field staff, not from threats, but from the influence of other groups, like political parties, for example?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, again, we had to depend upon those who had oversight responsibility. And we asked people to bring complaints to us if they found any of the workers in activities that would undermine the integrity of the process that was for sure. And we consistently talked to—we called them and had meetings with them. I would basically preach to them about the need to safeguard the integrity of their particular elections. I told all of them, “You know where we are coming from. We are coming from a very difficult period. It would mess these elections up if any acts on your part would impinge upon the integrity of the thing there, you know what that’s going to mean for us.” We called upon them to try to not get involved in those kinds of things. There are many people to monitor actually, 18,000 workers, all of them. But I think, basically, many of them did their jobs. It was not perfect, but again, like you said, it was at least 80%.*

PARKER: In the NEC, the leadership is, as we mentioned before, very important. But the human resources generally are very important. How is it that you maintained and promoted qualified or good staff? Do you have any recommendations?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *You have to pay them well. This process—that we say transparency and credibility is so important, if the elections are not credible, then the whole exercise will have been in vain. So what you do to motivate them? Our workers were paid more than the ordinary civil servants. They were paid in hard currency, US (United States) dollars, whereas other people were paid in Liberian dollars. People were making 250 US dollars, 400 dollars, just to make sure that they were not tempted by—so they must be paid well, yes.*

PARKER: Speaking about donors and working with the UN, are there two or three mistakes that you commonly observe in the way that donor countries or international organizations act with relation to local personnel?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Yes, one of the first ones I can—they always assume that the local personnel have no capacity, have no intelligence, so to speak, and don’t have the competence to do anything—and that they bring in everything. They bring in competence and they bring in expertise, whereas, there is local expertise. In the 2005 elections, we proved that; we had local expertise. This idea of, “there’s nothing here, everything, they don’t know anything,” it’s something that is, that should be discouraged. When you come, you seek out the—however minimum, get those that are competent and have some expertise and use them. Why would somebody want to come to a country and bring lawyers, as if to say there’s no code system? If there’s a code system that means there are lawyers. So, you look for the good ones and try to use them, and don’t assume that you know everything, because, first of all, this is a new context to you, a new environment. When you come in, you have to learn the context in which the people here operate, the environment. You have to know about it.*

They assume that there is no capacity. They assume that they impose strange practices on the local people. They assume that there’s a one-size-fits-all solution to every post-conflict situation, which is not true, because there are different cultures. You don’t assume that. You have to come—every solution, every thing must be context specific. And you don’t assume that because you did

this in East Timor or somewhere, so the same solution will fit here. You don't assume that, that's dangerous, yes.

PARKER: In your line of work, is there any aspect of UN policy or management, or donor policy or management that you think works better now than it used to?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Come again? Say that again.*

PARKER: Is there anything about the way that the UN operates that you think—or donors operate that you think is better now than it was before?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Yes, I guess because we have almost—we are out of the woods, so to speak, and things are back, things are returning to normal, things are working again. And so, right now, I think they are more willing to sit and listen than before. They are more willing to sit now and listen, and work along, and ask the population, and ask the people, what their needs are, rather than assuming that they know their needs.*

PARKER: If you could offer your successors—oh, I asked that one previously. What are the biggest challenges you think the elections management body will face when the country must conduct elections on its own?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Well, the biggest challenge would be the finances, the resources. Because, like I've indicated, election business is very expensive. That would be the first challenge that we have. Right now, the National Elections Commission, they're conducting bye-elections literally on their own, and they've been successful. I think that they will manage, but the resources will be the biggest challenge that they will face. Because if they want to have the same kind of elections of 2005, they got to have all of those things in place that we had—equipment to do voter registration. They will have to have the resources to do adequate education—voter education, public education, printing of ballots. Those things are expensive.*

PARKER: What technical assistance or other support that you received would you say was most helpful, and why?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: *Okay, what technical assistance we received that was most important? The technical assistance that was very important, of course, was the equipment and materials for the conduct of the election itself—the physical materials. Rules—we could develop rules. We did that together, jointly. But when it came to procurement, procurement of the logistics to actually do the process itself, that was very useful, very important. We got all of our logistics on time. When it came to the elections, we got the ballots printed on time. We got the vehicles; mobility was available to take them to the various counties on time—by helicopter, by whatever means needed. That was in place. And that is very critical—to have all of your needs—election materials and the kind of equipment you need. You need vehicles; you need all of these things to travel throughout the country to deliver on time.*

PARKER: And a final question, if you were providing advice to someone in your position, working in similar circumstances elsewhere, what would you tell them?

JOHNSON-MORRIS: I would tell them that you need to plan. Plan well and plan properly. Do a lot of consultations with stakeholders. Take decisions and be firm, don't waiver about decisions that you take. And what else? I would tell them make sure that your character is above reproach, to have the moral authority to preside over this election. Work on your character and your integrity.

PARKER: Thank you very much for your time.

JOHNSON-MORRIS: You're welcome.