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PARKER: This is Nealin Parker in Sierra Leone and I am interviewing Mr. Jorge Guzman at the UN (United Nations) Electoral Technical Assistance Team, the PMU (Program Management Unit). Just to begin I wanted to thank you for taking the ninety minutes or however much time you have here today. I like to begin the conversation by learning a bit more about your personal background, so if you could say a few words about your role in the current elections and maybe your background before that, that would be great.

GUZMAN: *Well my name is Jorge Guzman as you said. I work for UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in this particular election. My role here is to be the Program Manager of the Program Management Unit. It is a special unit that administered the basket fund for the elections of 2007 and 2008. That is my role here. I have been working with the UN in several countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor, Nigeria, and Pakistan before.*

PARKER: Thank you very much. In those previous—what was your position in the previous—?

GUZMAN: *I was more in the operational side, so I was the chief of public information and voters' education, the chief of external relations.*

PARKER: Okay.

GUZMAN: *Also the general assistant for the commission in Pakistan. [end of file 1]*

PARKER: Again this is Nealin Parker with Jorge Guzman, part two. Okay, looking at the mission. Again, most of this interview will revolve around your work in Sierra Leone, but if there are some elements that make sense to bring in from your other work then please feel free to do that. Would you mind describing sort of the goals of your element of this mission?

GUZMAN: *The PMU had three main goals. One of the main goals was to administer the funds. Administering the funds is, of course, procuring all the goods and services needed for all the electoral operations. Everything that has been used in the polling stations, registration centers, vehicles and transportation, flights coming in with ballot papers, all these materials. Everything that is procured by the PMU is similar to what is called DEX, Direct Execution from UNDP. So that is one of the main roles of course—not only procuring the goods, but also administering the funds.*

Then we had to get all the budget financial reports to the different donors in different formats. Looking after the cash flow and ensuring the money is available when it is needed was another part. That is administering the basket.

The other part was to be the liaison with the different stakeholders, particularly donors. You have to deal with them. We put together the Memorandum of Understanding. We discussed with them. We had three different meetings—the steering committee meeting, the stakeholders meeting and some informal meetings to coordinate with them to decide on the different policies, to decide on specific expenses, to determine if they were authorized or not, and other things like that.

The third responsibility was interacting with the UNDP as well. I had to deal with the country office particularly. For example in this particular case I had to deal with UNIOSIL (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone) so that was like another institution somehow involved in the elections process.

We also have to staff and support what is called the Technical Assistance Team. The Technical Assistance Team is well, fifty people. The Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) you just met. But from this office we produce TORs (Terms of Reference), of course in combination with the CTA. We also liaise with the offices in New York that have the rosters. We do the contracts and payments and everything. It is to administer and support the Technical Assistance Team, in this case fifty people.

PARKER: Thank you. There are, in some settings there are international organizations that are managing the elections; in others the national body or the NEC is the one that is most in charge of administering the election. Where would you put Sierra Leone on that spectrum?

GUZMAN: *As I said, maybe the biggest framer of this is what is called DEX, that is Direct Execution from UNDP. Of course, there is always a governmental part. In this particular case we have basically three or four national institutions, the biggest one of which is NEC (National Elections Commission). But we also have the PPRC (Political Party Registration Commission) and we also have the Electoral Offenses Court. And, as part of the elections we also support the national security plan, meaning that we have to deal directly with the Sierra Leone Police and the army.*

The idea is that the Ministry of Finance from the government requests the support of the United Nations to assist in a particular process, in this case the elections, and to support the specific institutions like PPRC, Electoral Offenses Court, and the Sierra Leone Police.

Then the UN in New York decides whether or not they will assist and then they assign, in this particular case, UNDP as the main institution, but also UNIOSIL, to coordinate efforts and assist. Then, of course, most of the money comes from the donors. So there are like three main institutions or groups of institutions. There are national institutions which are supported, the donors which provide funds, and the UNDP which is the administrator of the projects and the funds as well as the link in between the national institutions and the donors. That's the frame that we use.

PARKER: What would you say are the biggest challenges that have arisen or are arising in this election, in this environment?

GUZMAN: *I don't know. We'll have to narrow it down. For example, if we talk about what I just told you, there are of course many challenges. It is how to better coordinate all these institutions. How to, for example, negotiate or compromise the requests from the national institutions, that they request from x particular interest and the request for example, from the different donors that they need certain procedures and certain logic, that they have also some interests. Then of course it is a challenge to manage all this within the procedures of the UNDP.*

Those are three completely different framers, different timing, different rhythms, different interests that have to come together. There are lots and lots of challenges as you put it, which you have to face every single day.

PARKER: How have you dealt with those?

GUZMAN: *The big thing is negotiation. You have to establish several moments, and even some specific mechanism, for example the steering committee meeting. The*

steering committee meeting is the body that represents the donors, the institutions and the administrators like us, UNDP. There you discuss the main decisions to take. And, of course, there are some specific documents that have to be agreed upon and that somehow mark the sense, direction and specificity of the activity that's, for example, the product. The negotiation of the project document, the negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding, those are the concrete instruments to do all this mediation. But that is the starting point.

When you have that and you have a budget, you have just started to do the process. How to discuss specifically in each one of the different moments of the electoral process how to use that, how much to use, and the quantities is another challenge. All those things are eminently being discussed and changed and negotiated with donors, with national institutions. So there are some teams and some instruments that are like the base. For example, from our point of view we have several bibles, the project, the budget, the UNDP regulations, nothing can be out of the project, out of the budget, or out of the regulations. That is from where we argue in those negotiations. But of course each one has a different set of interests.

PARKER: How would you describe the security situation?

GUZMAN: *Hold on a minute. I was saying this is one of the challenges. You were asking me challenges of the election—.*

PARKER: I did.

GUZMAN: *I was just touching on the challenges seen in the institutional negotiation or relationship. But there are many other things. Like, for example, one of the main things that you will hear a lot wherever you listen is the decision-making of the timeline. Most of the time it has nothing to do with the operational institutional conditions. Most of the time they make their decisions based on political interest and things. Then for example you are faced, as we were here, with sometimes like 60% of the time that you will really be able to do something more or less efficiently and in a good way. For example, those are basically very big challenges like that. Then there are some other challenges. We were completely lucky here, but in many other operations the cash flow is a problem. Even if the donors pledge the money, they don't always put forth the money on time.*

There are many, many other challenges like you will hear about that a lot but the role that the Technical Advisor team has is very complicated. It is not like set in stone or clear. What does the national institution expect from an advisor? It is something completely different even from person to person, from unit to unit. But, as a whole it is difficult to find a place for that role of advisor, particularly when the capacity of the institutions is not that clear. So the main two functions that you will see in the technical assistance team, that is to assist the operation of the election and to build the capacity, those two things are not always possible at the same time. Many times you end up doing more of the operation budget itself and the capacity building is not that clear. Those are for example another set of challenges that you can find.

But anyway, there are many more. But you were asking about the security?

PARKER: Would you say that the security situation played into the election or not?

GUZMAN: *Of course it was always a factor. It is always a factor when you are coming from a war situation as we are here. Post conflict situations are very tricky. It is not a black and white situation. I would say that there was some uncertainty in last year's election for the presidency because it was clear that there were rumors of some people going back to certain armed groups that were around. It was not clear what was going to be the position of the ruling party at that moment, when there was clear opposition that was going to be the main opponent in the elections. But after some incidents, there was a lot of negotiation and a lot of work done by the institution, NEC itself, the PPRC, the police, and the army. There were also negotiations between the diplomatic corps and the government. I would say that the most tense moment was in between the two elections last year, in between the first round and the runoff election for the presidency. But after that, like in this year, there are just small problems, but nothing like the threatening of the elections itself this year.*

It was expected that in some districts, some things would be disrupted, but nothing that would threaten the election as a whole or even the results of the election, from my perspective.

PARKER: In terms of the timing and sequencing, how long did the electoral process take from the first planning discussion to the release of the final count?

GUZMAN: *It depends on which one are you talking about? Are you talking about the local government election this year?*

PARKER: I was talking about local, but if you know the presidential and the general elections?

GUZMAN: *We are here all the time. Again, that's one of the things that is more complicated. The time that it actually took is ridiculous compared to the time Europe needed to actually do a more detailed process. But, in any case, it depends. We can start with the moment that the UNDP project started in 2005. The project started with the restructuring of the NEC and then it took about half a year, from the end of 2005 to the beginning of 2006. The operations in preparation for the election started more or less in February 2006, but the only process really begun was the boundary delimitation. We really actually started the first time the technical assistants team came and a real operational plan was submitted. That was around July 2006.*

Then from July 2006, to July 2008, we've done about six major operations: the voter registration, the presidential and parliamentary elections, the runoff elections. Then this year we undertook the updating of the voter registration. Then the local government election itself just concluded on the 5th of July. So it took two years to organize. I also didn't mention the ward boundary delimitations. That was another project we undertook to prepare for the local government elections. There was the boundary delimitation for the presidential and parliamentary elections. Now in these elections, the constituencies acted like the wards. Local government elections are based on wards; the parliamentary election was based on constituencies. Those two boundary delimitations were made in these two years. So that's it.

PARKER: How did weather, planting seasons, laws of the country or landmark events such as redrafting the Constitution or popular pressure shape the timing and sequencing of the elections?

GUZMAN: *Weather you say?*

PARKER: Whether they did or what things were, what were the biggest elements shaping the timing of the election, you said politics earlier.

GUZMAN: *Honestly I don't know which particular interest was represented, but the decision for the local government elections apparently was made to fulfill a clear need of the new government to be able to actually implement the decentralization process. To do that, they needed the local government positions to be filled with new people. They need people for the new government. That was a decision that decided that rhythm and the craziness of this process. It was really out of any logical timeframe from the operational side.*

Then there are of course many things. The legal framework was composed alongside the process. Just to give you an example, the elections were the fifth of July. The regulation for doing the counting was approved the fourth of July. It was like that. We needed to decide on the registration. The boundary delimitation approval to do the registration, that is, to define the wards, was done in one month. You will get more details. But yes, of course, the legal development of the framework for the elections was not even written. There were no specific regulations in place for the local government elections. It was all the time like something that we didn't know if it was going to happen or not. If it didn't happen, we couldn't have done the registration for example.

That is something of course that always is there. Then there are many other things. Like, for example, for us, there was a big moment of decision when we were procuring many things for the registration and for the election from outside Sierra Leone. A good amount of things come out from the country. We received the information from the providers that more likely the day to deliver was, two weeks after we needed the goods. So there was a lot of negotiation. Then some decisions were made that affected the electoral process based on that.

For example, the duration of the registration process was decided based on how soon we could get the materials into the country. It was shortened. It was initially 21 days, then 13 days. At the end we had four days of voter registration based on the dates of procurement.

PARKER: How would you define the final process that produced the final schedule, or how was the schedule amended as the process moved forward?

GUZMAN: *That's what I'm telling you. Something that you will learn, I'm sure it is a lesson learned, that the budget is something completely alive. You are deciding that in every single moment. I would say the same with the final process. I mean I would say that the shorter the period is, there is more likelihood that small elements like procurement, legal issues, even, recruitment procedures affect the timeline of the election. If you have two years and you have a more established independent elections commission and you have solid institutions, of course you can have fixed dates and nothing will change that. The only thing that didn't change here was the date of the election and that was a big problem. That's what never changed, the date of the elections. But all the other processes have to change.*

Just to give you another example—if you go into the books, you will say “Oh the you have to start the civic education campaign at least this many weeks.” But when you don't have the information because it has been decided in the last two days before the event and not recorded, you cannot do it. You just have to wait until it actually happens.

PARKER: Okay. Did election disputes delay the certification of either the local elections or the general elections?

GUZMAN: *Not in my opinion. The legal record will show that it was just the date and that's clear. It was clearly explained to the political parties and everybody. So it happened when it had to happen.*

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

GUZMAN: *I think it is more or less obvious. Of course if you have more time it is better. If you include in the decision of the timeline somebody who really knows about operations and really knows about procurement, that would be much better than if you just have a bunch of politicians or political party leaders deciding. It would definitely would be a smoother process.*

PARKER: With the election management bodies, would you describe how the election management body was established or did it exist prior to the presidential election?

GUZMAN: *I already mentioned that this project started with the complete restructuring of the National Elections Commission. The PPRC never existed before, so it was the first time that it came into being. [end of tape 2]*

PARKER: Again this is the continuation of the interview with Jorge Guzman. Would you describe the election management body as it was designed? How many members did it have and what were the eligibility requirements and who made the appointments? If you don't know it's not a problem.

GUZMAN: *Well, yes, the project participated and was part of the restructuring, as I said. I don't know how many core staff there are now, but lets say 100 or so. Out of these, only two people were from the first National Electoral Commission from 2004. All the rest, including the commissioners, were new. The commissioners were appointed by the government, but for all the rest of the positions, there were open announcements of vacancies for all the posts. We took part in the interview panels and the chair listing and everything. Every single post for the core team was chosen on merit, through a very detailed selection process.*

Then there are some ad hoc staff who they are also selected through detailed selection processes. Then there are the occasional staff for the registration process and the polling, which numbers up to 38,000 people. Those are hired only for three or four days or one week. So there are different kinds of positions available. But the core of the electoral staff of the NEC was selected through very open and transparent procedures based on their CV's, chair listing, interviews, and exams.

PARKER: How would you describe the relationship of the National Elections Commission to the government? Generally people feel the election management body should be independent of the political party interests and the party in power, but there are different ways to ensure this independence. What steps were taken to create this kind of independence in Sierra Leone?

GUZMAN: *That was one of the main reasons of the restructuring of NEC. Apparently in the elections of 2002 and 2004, there was no independent electoral commission as such. In that election the body was composed of those from other institutions*

lobbying for specific interests. One of the big recommendations of the donors, the government itself, and the political parties was that the National Electoral Commission should be reformed to become an independent body. It is now an independent body. I am sure you will talk to people that will say it is one of the most prestigious institutions today in Sierra Leone. It is evident that it is actually independent from the parties, from the government, from any other interests.

As Madam Chair put it when she was announcing the 2007 elections she said something that shows somehow the character of the NEC. She said that she couldn't guarantee that there was not fraud in elections, but she could guarantee that the system in place was designed in such a manner that the fraud will be discovered and of course disqualified and with no harmful effects on the clarity and transparency of the results. The results will clearly show the will of the people. That integrity highlights the character and the independence of the electoral commission. I would say it is true, and it was proven true for the people. People really trust this National Electoral Commission and particularly the chairperson.

PARKER: What are the elements of the system that ensured that those things would be discovered?

GUZMAN: *That's part of the technical advisors' job. All the procedures, all the details, and how to proceed in every single situation is made explicit. Procedures and clear guidelines on how to operate are made known. Everything is transparent and clear. Possible challenges are considered ahead of time, such as what happens if there is more than 95% of vote and it has to be reviewed. Everything is detailed in the procedures.*

PARKER: When they were doing this restructuring were there other models considered or were there—?

GUZMAN: *I'm sure there were many other models offered from the perspective of the electoral assistance division in New York and the UNDP. There was a clear proposal for an independent body and of course any advisor who comes from the UN is independent from the parties, from the government and from the donors. Sometimes it has to be emphasized that it is really independent. There was an evaluation of the formal processes and it was clear that that was one of the main considerations. So I think it was obvious for everybody.*

PARKER: Is there a code of conduct for the National Electoral Commission?

GUZMAN: *There are several codes of conducts. For example one of the main codes of conduct was a code of conduct for political parties. That was made by the PPRC, the Political Party Registration Commission. There is a media code of conduct that was also negotiated, not only by NEC but some other governmental and international institutions. All this of course related to the elections. The NEC has internal regulations. If you are caught doing this or that, you will be expelled. As a matter of fact, several of the polling staff were fired after some misbehavior of breaking the internal code of neutrality and objectivity. Professionalism was broken. So yes there is a code of conduct.*

PARKER: Transparency and appearance of fairness are very important in elections, as you know. I'm especially interested in the ways in which people try to maintain transparency in electoral management. Were the meetings of the election management body public or decisions published and was the budget subject to public debate, things like that. What were elements of transparency?

GUZMAN: *As I said, part of the support of the UN team is establishing clear procedures and regulations. Those procedures and regulations are communicated to main stakeholders, to the political parties, to the media persons, and to the national and international observers. We did lots of briefing with everybody, and to the media particularly. They don't take that into consideration many times, but they have been given all the regulations and they should know what the process is.*

Also in the particularly complex moments of announcing the nomination of candidates and the results, everything is made public. The results are given regularly. Almost every day there was a press conference discussing everything that was going on, as well as the regulations and procedures for the most sensitive moments of the elections like registration, the nomination of candidates, and the counting and tallying of votes. All those moments are open to the public, open to the electoral observers, and open to the international observers. So it can be very easily followed up by whoever is interested.

So transparency is achieved through both the clear implementations of procedures as well as the distribution of those procedures for all those stakeholders. That's transparency. The first is that you have the media conference and things. But basically you can be transparent if you have clear procedures. Those procedures are known by the public, which will then be interested in their results.

PARKER: What other agencies or organizations were also involved in the electoral process and were these groups insulated from partisan influence or interference in your view?

GUZMAN: *Throughout the project of managing the basket fund, we are basically dealing with something that we call the core electoral activities. The core electoral activities include everything that has to be done by the national electoral or management bodies. But there are many other very important supplementary things to deal with, like political parties, observers, political party agents, and NGOs. There are other institutions. In the case of Sierra Leone, there were two big projects. One was from DFID (Department for International Development) and another one was from USAID (United States Agency for International Development) through NDI (National Democratic Institute) and through IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems). They were the ones working with media, women, national observers, and international observers.*

How independent they are, I don't know. Honestly I don't know if DFID or USAID have particular interests. But what I have seen is that they support the most prestigious NGOs in the country like the women's NGOs. But I haven't actually seen or heard of an NGO that is attached to a political party.

PARKER: Beyond the kind of codification of procedures and things like that do you have any advice about how to address the challenges of independence and transparency either based on your experience in selection or in other contexts? Are there any special innovations or features of the electoral management body here that you think work well and might be useful to be adopted or adapted to other countries.

GUZMAN: *The independence and the professionalism of the body is very important. The election management bodies have two or three main parts. One is the commission itself. The commission is what makes the political and legal decisions and establishes the rules of the game. That part of course has to be*

made up of people with a lot of prestige and I don't know why but they tend to be lawyers or judges or people like that for some reason, though it is not always that clear.

But the other big part is the secretariat, which is the operational part of the elections. They have to be professionals. What we are trying to implement through joint efforts with many international agencies is to make the electoral staff professionals of elections. That will guarantee that there is a separation of responsibilities between the commission and the operations. I would like to have a more independent secretariat, with more independence from the commission. In my point of view, the commission has been too involved in the details of the operations here, and most of the time they get involved without clear knowledge of the implications of the operational decisions. This is not helpful with transparency and independence.

Here there is a structure that the commission is formed on a regional basis, but it has changed a little this year. I must say the new commission is trying to be more a national commission, but still they are pretty regional. There is a southern commissioner and a northern commissioner, and they go and get involved in what I would consider is completely the field of the secretariat. They shouldn't be involved there. They should be involved in the decisions, the procedures, and the regulations, and leave the rest to others to implement. That would be helpful for them to not involve themselves there.

Of course there are many things such as the independent budget, which should not be so dependent on the will of the government at any given moment. Establishing this independence will help a lot. Some others say that the appointment of the commissioners themselves will help. In some countries they try to make these appointments completely independent of the parties, though in other countries they do the complete opposite. They put people from all the different parties together, trying to maintain neutrality by the confluence of all of the different interests. There are different ways to approach it.

But I would say really that the most important thing is whatever the composition ends up being, whatever procedures and regulations are decided upon, everything has to be clear, public and open to scrutiny. That's what makes transparency possible.

PARKER: How did leadership of the EMB, the election management body here, play a role in the elections?

GUZMAN: *In this particular case, it played a very positive role. The image of Madam Chair is a very positive image and of course it added to the credibility and acceptance of the results for sure. The appearance of neutrality in key operations is there, and that's very important. It is not only actual neutrality, but also the appearance and plausibility of neutrality that matters. Somehow people believe the operations are neutral—a detailed analysis of precisely how this happened would be an interesting case study.*

It was more or less proved that two out of five commissioners in the last election were clearly partisans from the government. However it was made public and official, and the neutrality of the election was even reinforced by the fact that they were subjected themselves to inquiries about their status. It highlighted the transparency of the process that even within the commission, two of the commissioners were kept away by the system itself. So it was interesting. That could have broken the system, but we put out the fire completely in contrast to

any other commission. That shows somehow the strength of the image of the lady. In many other countries people would be saying questioning our neutrality, as two of the people involved clearly have partisan interests. Yet it was actually another step in the process of establishing credibility of the commission itself.

PARKER: Finances and costs? What was the budget I guess all told for this election? You've already spoken actually about the sources of revenue, so for this election and then also the presidential election.

GUZMAN: *As for the presidential election cost, there are two relevant issues. First, the elections process involves cooperation within government and with the donors. For the presidential parliamentary election, more or less 25% of the cost was assumed by the government and the rest by the donors' basket fund. This time around it is a little less even, as the government will meet 13% of the costs and the rest will be from the donors.*

The amount of money spent last year was more or less 32 million dollars, with about six or seven million being put forth by the government. We don't have the exact amount. If you want the exact figures I can get them, but roughly 24 million dollars came from the basket fund. This time around it is again about 3.2 million from the government and about 17 million from the donors.

PARKER: You actually mentioned this before, but what kind of financial accountability structures were in place? You mentioned transparency but I guess if you could be more specific about it.

GUZMAN: *This is completely different. For this it is the UNDP framer of operations that sets the rules of the game. There are lots of checks and balances. That is what sometimes slows down the process. But from the financial point of view, there is a budget and procedures for every single decision. We have four different thresholds. The PMU only has the capacity to make decisions on amounts up to 2500 dollars, and even then we need to have three different competitors or bidders for any given product. For higher amounts up to 30,000 dollars, those decisions are made through another process, which has to be an open bidding. For decisions about amounts over 30,000 dollars, they have to go to a special committee in the country office. More than 100,000 dollars has to go to the national committee and the headquarters committee of procurement to be decided upon.*

So there is a clear definition of roles. The same person cannot be responsible for more than one step of the whole process. If I do the requisition, somebody else has to approve the purchase and somebody else has to pay. It is a very systematic, cumbersome bureaucratic process, but it is absolutely transparent. Everything is public.

Access is restricted, but once you are within the system, you can access others in the system and obtain extensive information from projects all over the world. You can follow every purchase order, from who authorized it, when it was paid, how it was paid, to whom it was paid, and many other details.

PARKER: I remember this process from when I was working on the elections in Liberia and it was a wonderful process because it did leave this paper train behind. But sometimes it was difficult to move everything forward as quickly as it needed to be and then maintain the integrity of that checks and balances system. Do you have recommendations for how to deal with that?

GUZMAN: *The most important thing is to be included in the formulation of the plan, so you can ensure that adequate time is allowed for all those processes. People just arbitrarily assign timelines without thinking about how long it takes to get things. And they want beautiful things, which are difficult to get. Like for example, maybe they visited somewhere and would love to copy the foreign system they saw of having two photographs in the voter registration, one in the card and another. But they don't know that just finding out where those items are produced, what technology is needed, and how to implement the procedure is a process of months. So that is one of the main recommendations.*

Many people are still not really conversant with the ATLAS system, as it is really complex. Tasks are still being completed twice, which is inefficient. There is now an electronic system, yet all the paperwork is still being done. The same operations are being repeated for many processes, which may be because we still don't trust the electronic process that much. For example, for audit processes you still need the original signed paper. But I can imagine that there will come a point when they will find more precise ways of auditing the processes without the paper trail. It makes the process increasingly complicated, as ten signatures are needed just to pay one check. Just to include one movement and one purchaser requires about fifteen different clicks within the system. As I mentioned, being involved in the planning will help, but more training will also definitely simplify things. We are always interested in training more people from the technical side so they understand at least the basics of administration. They need to that know there is a national system in place, and be able to work within it. They complain about the complexity of our UNDP system, but if you go and look at the national procurement procedures it is an even more complicated system than the UNDP and they just don't notice that. Anyway, these things will help.

PARKER: What steps did officials take to correct misappropriation of funds?

GUZMAN: *Fortunately I can say that there has been no misappropriation of funds here. There are, nevertheless a lot of things that are very complicated to track down. I will add that if you find in the world a decent way to control the field expenditure for example, you will win a lot.*

PARKER: I'll let you know if I can do that.

GUZMAN: *Definitely you can tell that there is some misuse, like when you have three days to deliver all the materials to different places in bad road conditions, and the drivers are refusing to work unless they get more fuel, and they stop at the nearest station and they claim they spent all the money filling the tank but you can't tell because the odometer has been damaged. There are many instances where they claimed that something that cost five dollars is reported to UNDP as costing ten dollars, there is no way around that. You know it is overpriced. You know for sure. We know for example that if we open a bid for printing materials, that three or four guys who have the printers here will talk amongst themselves and set a price. But from our perspective it is mostly efficient. We ordered all the secret things like tamper evident envelopes, and there is a price.*

Of course it is more complicated when the culture enforces misappropriation. But as I mentioned there are things like fuel and spare parts that cost money which cannot always be accounted for. I think it is the same in the US if you take a car to the garage. They have to do this and change this and that. When you have 350 cars running in the country, of course the repair people are going to take advantage. It is a challenge to make the system clearer and

PARKER: Speaking of which, elections are expensive, and the costs vary greatly across settings. Do you have any ideas on how to make the electoral process less expensive to conduct the next time?

GUZMAN: *Well maybe this is a very academic response, but less expensive compared with what? Less expensive compared with how much a missile costs? That's not expensive. Less expensive compared to what? Some people say that money would be better put into schools or whatever. It depends on the evaluation that you do. What I would say is elections are not democracy, definitely not, but they are an important step to democracy. Democracy is good for development in general. So I would say it is an investment.*

Of course you can make some things more efficient. What we tried to do is to focus on sustainability. Unfortunately donors don't help much with this initiative. We need to introduce into the system the technology and long-term processes that the country can maintain. That is more important for me than the actual cost of the elections.

You know there are private and even national institutions trying to promote the electronic vote. You know electronic voting requires a lot of maintenance that governments are not necessarily able to keep up with. I would say that the main focus of the discussion is not to make it less expensive but more sustainable, more appropriate to the context of the country.

Where are we?

PARKER: We are at elections logistics, which means we have two sections left and then we're done.

GUZMAN: *Okay, go on.*

PARKER: If you don't have time just let me know.

GUZMAN: *If we finish now maybe we—.*

PARKER: Thank you. Elections logistics. In the conduct of voting as well as in prior stages in the administration of the election, several types of logistical challenges arise. I would value your observation about these. We may talk further about security shortly, but here it is mainly communications and transportation. How are the communications between headquarters and the sub-national organizations, or the district levels organized?

GUZMAN: *I will make a comment here. There are different processes going on. There is procurement, and there is logistics. One of the main things that affects the operations is procurement. It is clear that UNDP headquarters considers procurement as the main link between the planning and the operation itself. Because it is already handling many things, civic and voter education are not among its responsibilities.*

PARKER: Unfortunately the procurement is embedded in each one of these.

GUZMAN: *Yes it is a part of each one of those. In civic education, you have to procure the posters and things like that. Of course procurement and logistics are linked in our scheme. Procurement begins with the process of defining needs. Let's say it lays out the specifications, such as how many, what type, which color,*

transparency, weight, everything. It arrives at the stage where production occurs. Here there are already grey areas with logistics when you consider how the way in which products are packed and put into pallets affects how much it costs to transport them. But for most of the processes, our role as in charge of procurement extends to the point where the plane arrives at the airport. Then logistics starts. There those in charge of logistics go unload the materials, set up distribution, and arrange for storage in the warehouse.

Again logistics starts even in the moment when you give instructions to the producers on how to pack the things. For example, we bought the polling kit all together in one unit and it came all together. So then on the logistics side you have to send instructions to the producer about how to label each one of the boxes in such a way that when they arrive here they can be easily sent on to their final destinations. That's already logistics, since the very beginning. And then later on you have to deal with transportation and ensuring allocation of the proper things to the proper places. For example in this case we had 413 different ballot papers. Each ballot paper had to get to a specific place. So distribution requires dealing with logistics.

Then of course there's the retrieval, which most people do not believe is important. They just finish the election. However, effective retrieval and storage of equipment is necessary for sustainability, so that in future elections money is not wasted on buying things which have already been purchased but have been misplaced. So from the very beginning to the end, the process involves logistics.

One of the main problems in this type of country is transportation. This time around we used vehicles from NEC, from the army, from the police, and from PAE (Pacific Architect Engineering), as well as rented vehicles and UN vehicles. All those vehicles combined becomes a nightmare. You need to have at least one person, or a whole team, just devoted to the management of the fleet.

PARKER: How many cars did you have?

GUZMAN: *At the end, we had somewhere around 350 in operation, including trucks, pickups and four-wheel drive vehicles.*

PARKER: Did you have UN helicopters or other transportation?

GUZMAN: *Yes, of course. Several places here were only accessible by helicopter, so we took several flights.*

PARKER: How would you recommend that Sierra Leone do an election next time, let's say that they were doing it on their own without the UN infrastructure that exists right now?

GUZMAN: *It's important for the context to be understood. Hopefully you will have the picture by now. We are coming from a situation with 17,000 people involved in this election along with helicopters and vehicles, and dropping down to about 150 people and very little assistance.*

Let's return to the issue of sustainability. We should try to make better use of existing resources. For example, some of the places where we traveled to by helicopter can be accessed by boat, such as Bonthe and other parts. But for some other places, reaching them is very time consuming unless we build better roads. There is no other way around it. The only way we will reach some areas is by taking the time to get there, even if it is with a donkey.

There are some basic things that cannot be produced locally, and better decisions can be made about transporting them. For instance there is no need to give everybody a standard boat and screen. You can alleviate the burden of the loads of goods that you have to transport. Posters and things can be produced locally. The key things are sustainability and better planning, because if you have less time you have to improvise more and you need more costly tools to do things in a short amount of time. When you need something urgently the only way to get it is by using a helicopter, a special flight, or a charter flight. But if you plan ahead, you can bring it by boat, which is cheaper, and it will arrive on time.

PARKER: I guess speaking of that, what kind of mapping services were available to people who were planning logistics?

GUZMAN: *Here there is a very professional institution called Statistics Sierra Leone and another similar institution that both produce extremely detailed maps.*

PARKER: And in terms of other documents or procedures that were put in place that would help somebody who was doing the procurement next time around, are those available? Are those things institutionalized? Are they located in Sierra Leone?

GUZMAN: *Within the UN or the UNDP system, the coordination of DEX (Direct Execution) or NEX (National Execution) projects is very important. An evaluation of the country is carried out and maybe it is found that institutional structure and capacity have improved and/or corruption has decreased. So the decision is made that the country can manage its own resources, and then money is given to them and they are made accountable from trench to trench and things like that.*

When we are operating within a DEX project, everything is managed by us here at the UNDP. The tricky thing is how to make the country able to take control of the money. But the decision to switch control rests on the evaluation of the country itself, and its capacity to handle the finances. When the country reaches that level, its leaders will have to operate under the National Procurement Act and also the UNDP regulations. However it should be noted that within the National Execution type of project, that is not the case. The process of passing from one type of project to the other is interesting. It will help if training was improved and the guidelines and regulations of procurement procedures were really made clear.

So far we know that they just don't really understand what the UNDP regulations require of us and of them. They would love to make decisions on cars, or other flashy issues involving money. But there will come a time when they will have to manage themselves.

PARKER: You actually covered the rest of the questions in here in your answers so I'll go to the final section which is the donors and the UN host country personnel.

GUZMAN: Yes.

PARKER: In this 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? And what happened to make these things better or conversely are the relationships poorer than they used to be?

GUZMAN: *There are some changes happening from my perspective. The roles of the UN and the donors are alive again, and are shifting a lot. One of the main things that you find now, particularly in elections, is that some donors, especially from the European Union, are becoming more and more involved. [interruption, end of tape 3].*

PARKER: **Nealin Parker with Jorge Guzman.**

GUZMAN: *One of the key aspects of this new relationship is that the EU nations want to be more than just donors—they want to be a substantial part of the decision making on the elections. How to interpret that role is the key issue. We need to figure out how they can become an integral part of the process and be of assistance with their knowledge and their experience, and yet not micro-manage or become a stumbling block in a process that is already complicated. That's the main concern. I think we had a very good relationship with them. They have been very supportive. For example, I just said yesterday in one of our stakeholders meetings that there has not been a single moment in the two years I've been here when cash flow was a problem. They always come through, and that's amazing. That doesn't happen in many countries. So that worked perfectly.*

Maybe because they are committed to the idea, they remained committed to the elections and they put in the money, even though in many cases the operational plan was not as accurate as their own headquarters usually demands it to be. They were flexible with the PPRC. We started from nothing. We started putting together the thing. There was no operational plan and no assistance. The process was being constructed as we moved along. So they were quite flexible on that, understanding doing something is better than nothing. But increasingly some of them want to become more involved in making the decisions and then you will have several actors there. There are the donors, the UNDP as administrator, and the technical assistance team. So the relationship between the technical assistance team and the donors and the country office is not always smooth. Who decides how to manage those relationships is an important consideration, and the issue could lead to misunderstandings.

For example, let's consider the decision of who to hire as a consultant. The national institution says they need some support in this area. With elections in the UN system there is the electoral assistance division in New York, which provides candidates for the position because they have to have some say on who is on the roster. But once they provide the candidates there are many ways to go.

You can do the selections within the country, but some donors want to intervene. How they intervene varies. In some missions, the donors are able to provide some expert from the European Commission or DFID or whoever, thus bypassing the roster. Then they want their guys to get all the support. They want to be part of the panel that interviews whatever it is. These issues are always being discussed. I think it is a completely different situation in each one of the countries. What I can tell you is that right now one of the main concerns to find better ways to deal with this. There are several models in practice. There is strong cooperation between UNDP and the EU, but at the same time when I took on the EAD (Electoral Assistance Division) role, UNDP was the main institution. They are some alarming developments happening now, in my opinion. Just providing the roster but not actually having a say in the policy itself is not good. So that's the situation. We are concerned with how substantive participation is, and through what means it should occur and at which points throughout the process.

PARKER: Perfect. Do you have advice for your successors or others about how to effectively work with personnel from the partner country?

GUZMAN: *From where?*

PARKER: From the partner country, from Sierra Leone.

GUZMAN: *As I told you before, the definition of the role is very important. You can try your best to clearly define roles, like advisory role or capacity building role, and it is important to do so. But the truth is, that is being decided in every single moment, in the day by day operation itself. For example we have here, at this particular moment today, completely different experiences from one part of the process to another, which are caused by many factors, both personal and institutional. Even when we are doing well in an area, but then somebody from the commission comes and gives completely different instructions, it affects completely.*

So from my point of view of course, it is important to explain to the country office their role and the mandate of the elections, if they are to get involved in the decision making process without even seeing the profiles and the CVs of candidates vying for a position. Also it will help to give more training and hold more discussions and culturally sensitize the international consultants. Imperialism has many phases, and the attitude of foreigners affects how we approach them. Sensitivity training is crucial if we are to build a true partnership. Both sides will benefit. There are people here who are very sensitive, and they are always suspicious that their country is seen as underdeveloped, and race becomes an issue. The attitude of many internationals is "Let's see how can we deal with these stupid guys here". That is not helpful of course.

When you can make two or three different groups of people interact in a more respectful way, learning to see differences as richness and not as problematic, then you really train. I am very sensitive of this because that was my experience. You must train the electoral people to understand that democracy is in the day-by-day life. To be democratic is to really hear the other and to feel the other as equal and to give the same opportunity and to build consensus. That would be the best and really only way to deal with that.

PARKER: I know you have somebody waiting so I think we will end it here, but thank you so much.