Managing knowledge resources at International IDEA

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Meeting:	**95. Knowledge Management**

Abstract:

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide.

The Institute provides comparative knowledge to democracy builders around the world in: elections and referendums; constitutions; political parties; gender in democracy and women's political empowerment; democracy self-assessments; and democracy and development. International IDEA also assists in democratic reform when invited to do so, and influences policies and politics.

Knowledge is a strategic asset of the Institute. The knowledge resources include publications such as handbooks, online databases and knowledge sharing networks.

As of early 2010, information and data from previously separate databases and resources covering topics such as voter turnout, electoral system design, gender quotas, direct democracy and more, have been incorporated into one "unified database" (www.idea.int/uid). The major benefits of this change are to streamline and standardize the Institute's data collection, maintenance and presentation of information. For IDEA's partners and users, the unified database now provides a standard web search interface and workflow to access the data that is stored in either text or numerical form.

I.   ABOUT INTERNATIONAL IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports democracy worldwide. Our

mission is: to support sustainable democratic change by providing comparative knowledge, assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics.

Democracy cannot be imported or exported. However, it can be *supported* through focussing on the ability of democratic institutions to deliver a political system marked by public participation and inclusion, representative and accountable government, responsiveness to citizens' needs and aspirations, and the rule of law and equal rights for all citizens.

International IDEA was launched on 27 February 1995 in Stockholm as an intergovernmental organization numbering 14 countries. Now in 2010, there are 25 Member States: Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ghana, India, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, The Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay. In addition, Japan is an Observer State.

Member States are all democracies spanning many cultures and countries. They provide both financial and political support to the work of the Institute.

IDEA is led by a Secretary-General, with a governing body composed of a Council of its Member States. The Board of Advisers are eminent personalities and experts in the field of democracy support.

As well as the Stockholm headquarters, International IDEA has regional offices in Africa, Latin America and Asia. An Office of the Permanent Observer for International IDEA to the United Nations is maintained in New York.

Networks and partnerships with a wide variety of organizations and policy makers continue to be developed in many countries. Examples are United Nations agencies, regional political entities such as the European Union, the Organization of American States and the African Union, electoral management bodies, political parties and civil society organizations.

The Institute has four main areas of expertise:
1. electoral processes
2. constitution building processes
3. political parties, participation and representation
4. democracy and development.

Issues and themes that cut across the four areas are gender, conflict and security, and diversity. International IDEA's State of Democracy assessment methodology is used by citizens to assess the quality of democracy in their country.

IDEA offers expertise and knowledge by providing comparative data derived from practical experience on democracy building processes from diverse contexts around the world.

II. KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES

Knowledge management is a strategic asset of International IDEA to disseminate and promote its work and achievements to target audiences, such as democracy practitioners and policy makers.

The Communications and Knowledge Management unit of International IDEA manages different knowledge resources including the institutional website, databases and networks, as well as publications.

Knowledge resources supplied by IDEA are global public goods that are freely available on the International IDEA website: www.idea.int. Users can access these dynamic web pages according to their needs and objectives.

Publications

Every year International IDEA publishes a comprehensive range of new titles, including handbooks, region and country reports and more. Published under International IDEA's name, or in partnership with others, these titles embrace the wide range of knowledge resources that the Institute provides to support those involved in democracy building processes around the world.

IDEA publications, also available in hardcopy, can be searched and downloaded in pdf-format from our website, either chapter by chapter, or as a single file.

To ensure increased access to its publications, in 2007 International IDEA started applying a Creative Commons ("CC") licence to selected titles. The CC licence asserts International IDEA's copyright and indicates those uses for which no permission needs to be secured, provided that the licence's conditions are followed.

Publications are sometimes available in a number of languages with an example being the much downloaded *Electoral System Design*, published in English, Arabic, Burmese, French, Spanish and Nepali. As permitted under the Creative Commons license, a number of titles have been unofficially translated into a variety of languages.

Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences is a unique, highly appreciated book, which presents evidence-based assessment of both the strengths and the weaknesses of traditional conflict management mechanisms.

A forthcoming title is *Electoral Justice: The International IDEA Handbook*. Thus far, the publication that has been distributed the most in hardcopy is *Democracy in Development: Global Consultations on the EU's Role in Democracy Building*. A continuation of this project is a commissioned set of about 60 discussion papers that can be accessed on www.idea.int/eu/.

Databases and networks

International IDEA has collected and produced a number of global online knowledge resources and networks on different areas of democracy and elections worldwide

together with international partners, such as various UN agencies. They are all accessible via our website: www.idea.int.

From its inception, International IDEA has, for example, been involved in the BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) professional development curriculum for election administration, which is being expanded to include democracy and governance.

IDEA is also a partner in a number of other networks such as Quotas for Women, providing information on countries having electoral gender quotas, iKNOW Politics (International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics), linking women in politics throughout the world and the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network (originally Administration and Cost of Elections), which presents comparative knowledge on all aspects of election administration and most recently ConstitutionNet, created to build a community of best practice on constitutional issues.

III.   THE UNIFIED DATABASE – THE WAY FORWARD!

In 2010, information and data from previously separate databases and resources covering topics such as *voter turnout*, *electoral system design*, *electoral gender quotas*, *direct democracy* and more, have been incorporated into one common interface, the "**unified database**" (www.idea.int/uid). Navigation and appearance (such as maps, tables, menus, etc.) are now common for all.

The major benefits of this change are to streamline and standardize the Institute's data collection, maintenance and presentation of information. For partners and users, the unified database now provides a **standard** web search interface and workflow to access the data that is stored in either text or numerical form.

Community based

The data has been collected by International IDEA and its partners during previous and ongoing projects.

Keeping the data up-to-date has been a major effort in the past, but with this new system the community is invited to help maintain the high quality of data. A wiki function allows registered users to input and update data. Before approval, all submissions and sources will be checked for accuracy wherever possible.

Most pages showing data include an edit icon that will take users to an edit page. Here they can edit the current data, add new data for a different year or simply add a comment, link or an additional source.

Searching, exporting and customizing data

All of the data collected by International IDEA is stored in a single database that has been designed specially for this site.

The stored data is either text or numerical. For numerical data it is possible to receive simple statistical summaries like maximum values or averages in search results. In the advanced search page, the user can request data from several different thematic areas (such as gender quotas and voter turnout) and filter by region and/or date.

A special search page for each theme is available. This helps to better search that particular subset of the database.

Each of the thematic pages has a list of example queries that cover common searches of interest. One can also choose to select all countries and all fields to view and export all the data for that theme.

Each search page has a "Preview" button that lets one check search results before exporting them to CSV or Excel format. There is also a "Quick view", which provides an intelligently grouped and simplified table view of data for users who wish to quickly visualize the available information without performing their own data analysis.

It is intended that this central unified structure will eventually house all of International IDEA's future databases.

Annex A
Examples of the unified database

Advanced search

1. Select the geographic scope

[Americas ⬍] **1**

Click on **>>** to add all countries listed in the left box, or **>** to add just the highlighted country

Anguilla	Anguilla
Antigua and Barbuda	Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina	Argentina
Aruba	Aruba
Bahamas	Bahamas
Barbados	Barbados
Belize	Belize
Bermuda	Bermuda
Bolivia	Bolivia
Brazil	Brazil

(>) (>>)   (×) (clear)

2. Select themes and fields

[All themes ⬍] **2**

Click on **>>** to add all fields listed in the left box, or **>** to add just the highlighted field(s)

Voter Turnout	**Electoral System Design**
Parliamentary - First time voters	Electoral type
Presidential - First time voters	**Voter Turnout**
EU Parliament - First time voters	Parliamentary - Population
EU Parliament - Invalid votes	Parliamentary - Voter Turnout
Parliamentary - Invalid votes	Parliamentary - Voting age populati‹
Presidential - Invalid votes	**Gender quotas**
Parliamentary - Population	Quota type in Lower House
Presidential - Population	
EU Parliament - Population	**3**

(>) (>>)   (×) (clear)

3a. Choose year(s)

○ All years ○ Range...
◉ Latest year for which there is data

(Preview) **4**
or export to
(Excel) (CSV)

3b. Quick view

Quick view presents a user-friendly overview of the latest available data for the selected countries and fields

(Launch) **5**

Figure 1: Advanced search page

Steps
1. Select the countries of interest. You can narrow down the list to a particular region and select all from the left box by using the **>>** button.

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2. Select any fields of interest. You can mix fields from any of the different themes, and again you can select all fields in a theme by using the **>>** button.
3. The right box shows the currently selected fields. You can remove a field with the **x** button, or clear the whole selection and start again.
4. If you want to **export** data to perform a detailed analysis on your own, choose **3a**. You can select "All years…" to see all the data available, limit to a range in time, or just show the most recent data point. You can **preview** the data on the screen to confirm that you are getting the data you need, then export to **Excel** or **CSV** format.
5. If you want to just **view data online**, choose **3b**. and you will get a view of the latest data points such as *Figure 2*.

Figure 2: Quick view – showing the latest data for each country and selected column

Steps (continued)
6. The preview window introduction explains how to use the window to edit or export data.
7. This view shows the most recent data point for each country and field. The year of the data **occurred** is displayed in brackets underneath. The most recent version of this data point of this occurrence is shown, meaning that any approved correction supplied by the community are automatically displayed.
8. For fields with pre-defined values, a legend is shown at the bottom of each field's column.
9. You can see any additional notes about each data point by clicking on the cell. You will also have the option to add missing data or update/correct existing data.

Figure 3: An update page for new data for Saint Pierre and Miquelon, and Quota type in the single/lower house

Steps (continued)

10. The update page is pre-configured for a particular country and data field. The year refers to the time that the data was recorded or measured. For example, if we are correcting the voter turnout for an election that occurred in 1996, then 1996 should be selected here.
11. Contributors enter their e-mail address so that we can confirm that the submission is not made by a spammer. It also helps the team at IDEA to get more information and sources when confirming the submission.
12. Pressing the "**Save**" button submits the new data to IDEA. The responsible team is alerted to the update, and will review and approve the change as soon as possible. Submissions will **not** appear in the search results until approved by a staff member.

International IDEA's Unified Database was designed and implemented by Transmachina by combining and adapting existing disparate databases and data collected for different publications. Read more about the design and technical specifications at www.transmachina.com/idea-uid.

Index of International IDEA's publications 2010
Note: These titles are available free of charge in electronic format on the IDEA website: www.idea.int. The indicated prices are for printed publications.

Titles available in English
30 Years of Democracy: Riding the Way? Women's Political Participation in Latin America, Free
A Glossary of Constitutional Terms: English-Nepali, Free
Annual Report 2008, Free
Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide, Free
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International IDEA's databases and networks

Ace Electoral Knowledge Network (www.aceproject.org)
The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network provides comprehensive and authoritative information on elections. It promotes networking among election-related professionals and offers capacity development services. The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network is a partnership between EISA, Elections Canada, the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE), International IDEA, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

BRIDGE (www.bridge-project.org)
BRIDGE stands for Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections and is the most comprehensive professional development course available in election administration. The five BRIDGE partners are the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), International IDEA, IFES, UNDP and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD).

Constitution Net (www.ConstitutionNet.org)
The ConstitutionNet website is a joint initiative between International IDEA and Interpeace. It is designed to support the process of constitution building around the world. The website serves as a knowledge portal on constitution building and contains news and views as well as a calendar of key events.

Electoral System Design (www.idea.int/esd)
This website contains relevant information about the electoral systems used in over 200 countries and territories worldwide. The data are presented by country, by region and globally.

Global Database of Quotas for Women (www.quotaproject.org)
This is a global database of comparative information on the use and impact of gender quotas. International IDEA and Stockholm University work as partners in this project and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) became an additional partner in 2009.

International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics: iKNOW Politics (www.iknowpolitics.org)
This is an online workspace designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, leaders and members of political parties, researchers, students and other practitioners interested in advancing the position of women in politics. Versions are available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The Network is a joint project managed by International IDEA, IPU, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNDP.

Political Finance Laws and Regulations (www.idea.int/parties/finance/db)
This site hosts the world's largest collection of information on political finance laws and regulations on the funding of political parties.

Reconciliation Resource Network (www.idea.int/rrn)
This is an online forum for sharing information, best practice, links and other resources in the field of reconciliation.

State of Democracy Network (www.idea.int/sod)
This website includes an interactive version of International IDEA's State of Democracy Assessment Framework, a collection of assessments conducted around the world, as well as interviews, related publications, links, and an 'Ask the Expert' feature.

Unified Database: Community-supported democracy and election data (www.idea.int/uid)
Several of International IDEA's key databases are now being brought together under one common interface so that navigation and appearance (maps, tables, menus, etc.) are common for all. It will be possible for visitors to contribute to improving the quality of each database, and to customize their own data.

Voter Turnout (www.idea.int/vt)
The International IDEA Voter Turnout Website is the most comprehensive collection of voter turnout statistics available. It contains voter turnout figures on a country basis for all the national presidential and parliamentary elections since 1945, as well as for European Parliament elections.