



# ELECTIONS PROGRAM

## *STAKEHOLDER NOTE*

### **1. Introduction**

Transparency Maldives (TM) conducted Domestic Observation for the Maldives' first multi-party presidential, parliamentary and local council elections in October 2008, May 2009 and February 2011, respectively. 19 partner NGOs participated in the Domestic Observation effort in the three elections.

The 2008-2011 cycle of elections was widely accepted as credible and reflecting the will of the voters. However, the current political polarization and the tense, sometimes violent, political environment have strained and continue to further threaten the democratic gains of the previous election processes. The next round of elections is currently headed to unfold against this polarized background that appears to deteriorate in terms of political and economic problems.

Taking the above into consideration it is imperative to conduct a nationwide Domestic Observation for the next electoral cycle. Having conducted three nationwide election observations, coupled with the fact that there are no other civil society groups conducting nationwide election observations, TM is uniquely situated to undertake the task.

### **2. Objectives**

The broad objectives of the election program are to:

- 1 Advance the values of transparency and integrity in the electoral processes by increasing civil society participation, thereby contributing to increasing public confidence in the electoral process
- 2 Empower the electorate to vote responsibly and to make an informed decision by conducting a comprehensive voter education program.

### 3. Program Activities

#### 3.1) Election Observation

TM will build upon the previous election observation experience and extend the observation period to cover the election campaign period in the 2013-2014 elections. In addition to Election Day observation, TM will therefore deploy Long Term Observers (LTOs) to observe the campaign period. The LTOs will monitor, *inter alia*, campaign landscape and misuse of public resources.

#### 3.2) Conduct a Pre-Election Technical Assessment

The assessment will review the practices of the Elections Commission, assess the political context, analyze the electoral legal framework, assess the media landscape, and understand the issues in the electoral environment such as vote buying. The objectives then would be to:

1. Provide recommendations based on the assessment
2. Advocate for reforms based on recommendations
3. Ensure the most important issues receive due attention for monitoring and observations
4. Utilize the assessment for Voter Education Program

#### 3.3) Conduct Comprehensive Voter Education Program

TM believes that educating voters is a crucial component of a credible election. Voter education is important to instill the values of civic responsibilities and prevent electoral violations such as vote buying and patronage and change the attitudes of the general public to encourage wider public participation in increasing the integrity of the electoral system.

#### 3.4) Maintenance of an Online Complaints System

TM developed a basic online complaints system that was utilized in the Presidential Election 2008 and the Parliamentary Elections 2009. The system enabled people to submit online complaints. Where action was required TM forwarded the complaints to the relevant institutions such as the Elections Commission. In the Presidential Election's Election Day, the system received 1400 complaints. TM plans to upgrade the system for the 2013-2014 electoral cycle and ensure sustainability for future elections.

#### 3.5) Conduct Media Monitoring

The media plays an important role during elections and contributes towards forming public opinion. Without professional codes of conduct followed and adherence to journalist ethics, media could



contribute to further deterioration of an already politically polarized society and could be in violation of laws governing media during elections.

TM will build upon the experience of the previous media monitoring exercise and will conduct a media monitoring exercise for the next round of Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

#### **4. Principles and Code of Conduct**

The Elections Program will be fully guided by the principles and values internationally recognized for Domestic Observation, including *Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations* and the *Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors*. Additionally, Election Program will adhere to the code of conduct outlined in the Maldivian legal framework for elections observers.

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