

**Request for Application (RFA)**  
**RESEARCH ON**  
**ENABLING CIVIC TECH ECOSYSTEMS & OPEN ELECTION DATA READINESS**  
**TO IMPROVE THE INTEGRITY OF ELECTIONS**  
**RFA No: RFA-02-CTOD/RESPECT/07-2020**  
**Date: Aug 3, 2020**

### **I. Purpose Statement**

Asia-Pacific Regional Support for Elections and Political Transitions (RESPECT) is a USAID funded program with a purpose of supporting and improving election integrity, and electoral justice in the Asia-Pacific region. It is a five-year program implemented through the Leader with Associate Awards Cooperative Agreement by Perludem or Perkumpulan untuk Pemilu dan Demokrasi (The Association for Elections and Democracy) in collaboration with Perhimpunan Pengembangan Media Nusantara/PPMN (The Indonesian Association for Media Development).

Enabling Civic Tech Ecosystem to Improve the Integrity of Elections is a topic of RESPECT research activity planned to be conducted in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. As part of increasing the use of ICT to improve citizen participation in elections and political processes, these research aims to assess and assist in planning what actions could consider in order to establish an effective and inclusive election civic tech program. To achieve the goals, the research will examine two aspects. First, the research will seek a rapid diagnostic of dimensions considered essential for the success of the program development. This research will also provide holistic assessment on availability of key datasets. Therefore, the assessment should consider whether key datasets are available and what would need to be done in order to release them as open data.

For this purpose, PERLUDEM is looking for the innovative and capable applicants to be able to support RESPECT to achieve the goal through conducting the research on:

1. Enabling Civic Tech Ecosystem;
2. Open Election Data Readiness.

These research aim to provide contextual analysis and recommendations to RESPECT for future support in developing civic tech ecosystem & open election data readiness to improve the integrity of elections. In the incoming year, RESPECT will support effective election observation using comprehensive strategies that promote timely collection of data, analysis and dissemination of results via various media.

### **II. Background**

The 2019 Global Digital Report reveals that there were more than 2.2 billion people in Asia-Pacific using the internet—more than 50 percent of whom are active social media users. Meanwhile, According to We Are Social (Kemp, 2019), average internet penetration reached 52%, mobile social media penetration reached 47%, and active mobile social users reached 45%. This growth was primarily enabled through the expansion of technological infrastructure that supports internet and mobile connection in Southeast Asia.

The internet and new media technologies enable the growth of citizen-based initiatives and movements across the world. Civic tech promotes engagement, participation, and enhances the relationship between the people and government by taking advantage of Information and Communication Technologies. The significant number of users—particularly among youth—has not only transformed social media as an essential instrument for inclusive public discourse and the forming of political opinion but also has been utilized and embedded into the contours of societal change.

In Southeast Asia alone, there are several examples of civic tech initiatives as a means to disseminate public information, encourage citizen engagement, and promote election observation, that have created impact in terms of increasing elections transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. For example, *Kawal Pemilu* in Indonesia used social media as a means to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the election results via a self-funded crowdsourcing platform. Association for Election and Democracy (Perludem) developed an election Application Programming Interface (API) and independently build web-based platform PintarMemilih.ID as a one-stop reference that showcase the profile of candidates as well as essential technical information about the first simultaneous Indonesia election in an easy digestible way. This website is made with attractive designs and election information that are easily understandable to young people. Meanwhile, Bersih (the Coalition of Clean and Fair Elections) social media has widened and broadened the space for political participation for Malaysians, especially for the youth, by encouraging them to actively participate in elections.

Organizations and government agencies around the world are increasingly embarking on open data initiatives, pursuing greater transparency, citizen participation and collaboration to strengthen democracy. In 2011, government leaders and civil society advocates came together to create a unique partnership—one that combines these powerful forces to promote accountable, responsive and inclusive governance. Eight countries started the Open Government Initiative, including Indonesia and the Philippines as representatives from Asia and the Pacific.

The transparency and availability of election data are extremely important not only to promote a democratic election and to ensure electoral integrity but also to engage the public in non-partisan civic tech initiatives that support domestic election observation and inclusive voter and civic information. In Southeast Asia, this is particularly hard because there are no specific laws and standards regarding open election data. Thus, many of the data on government websites remain unknown to the public. There are also many other challenges, including poor storage management systems, that make most of the election data disappear after the elections, and a limitation of data published on election commission websites due to the lack of standards of what election data and information should be open and what not.

Social media—as is now widely known and debated—can also pose a significant threat to democracy and the integrity of elections. The Oxford Internet Institute noted that the number of countries where formally organized social media manipulation occurs has dramatically increased, from 28 to 48 countries globally. Within Southeast Asia, Myanmar is one of the most extreme cases, where social media have been used by elements within the military as a tool to facilitate ethnic cleansing (Mozur, 2018). Some of the most pressing concerns of the use of social media during elections include the rise of echo chambers, polarization, hyper-partisanship, populism, disruption of the public square, and targeted messaging due to personal data capture.

The promotion of civic tech by development initiatives such as RESPECT must also navigate specific risks. Such risks tend to revolve around the need to ensure general concepts of ethical use of technology and data privacy and security as well as to mitigate country-specific risks posed by

legislation that can arbitrarily punish social media contributors and online publishers under spurious defamation or national security statutes.

In support of more effective civic participation, there is no consensus on the constructive impact of civic tech. Debates tend to revolve around two opposing arguments: those who emphasize the important role of the internet and social media behind civic action; and those who dismiss the role of social media technologies claiming their incidental role.

### **III. Areas of Interest and Objectives**

USAID Asia-Pacific Regional Support for Election and Political Transitions (RESPECT) Program is disseminating the opportunities through a Request for Applications (RFA). RESPECT through grant opportunity of solicitation stages is looking for an interested applicant to submit the proposal through the Request for Application (RFA) from qualified organizations. PERLUDEM will then works closely with partners as they implement grant awards, and monitor and report on outputs and outcomes of activities. Therefore, RESPECT invites your organization to submit a comprehensive and complete proposal with the template of Full Grant Application Form (FGAF) accordance to the Request of Application (RFA) for Enabling Civic Tech Ecosystem and Open Election Data Readiness to improve the integrity of elections. RESPECT will award to and manage grants with both U.S and non-U.S. Project Implementers (PIs) to implement activities of supporting and improving election integrity, and electoral justice in the Asia-Pacific region, with focus on promoting public engagement in electoral reforms and conducting voter education and election observation.

The objective of the two research is interlinked thus each research should be done in the atmosphere to support the improvement of each components – Civic Tech and Open Data. While it would be more preferable for the two research to be undertaken by the same organization, however we understand that the two components might have a very different detailed focus thus applicants are open to submit proposal for either one of the researches on which their organization are focusing or both.

PERLUDEM through RESPECT ensures that grant awards are consistent with USAID rules and regulations, including 22 CFR 226, and the Automated Directives System (ADS) Part 302.3.5.6 and 303, to the extent that it is relevant to such grants, and that budget items are allowable costs as defined by the applicable cost principles and regulations.

#### **Research Objective**

This research will provide contextual analysis and recommendations to RESPECT for future support in developing civic tech ecosystems and supporting open election data initiatives to improve the integrity of elections. In the upcoming year, RESPECT will support effective election observation using comprehensive strategies that promote timely collection of data, analysis and dissemination of results via various media. RESPECT will ensure that the observation design and implementation will be inclusive, in the sense that these will promote participation of women, people living with disability, youth, and indigenous people. To achieve the goal of civic tech research, the research will involve a rapid diagnostic of dimensions considered essential for the success of program development.

From the analysis of those dimensions, the research on civic tech will provide recommendations on how best to support sustainable strategies, with which partners, using what appropriate and viable technology and making best use of what data, in order to enable which priority election services and most important of all empower citizens through this process.

The research on open election data readiness will provide holistic assessment on availability of key datasets. The assessment should consider whether and which key datasets are available, what would need to be done in order to make public important data that are not yet available, and how best to leverage those data sets already made public.

The results of both research are designed to support RESPECT’s strategy in support of several key objectives, including inclusive voter information, innovative approaches to election observation, and engagement of the private sector.

As such, this research contributes to all of RESPECT’s Intermediate Results:

1. Improved enabling environment for electoral governance and political processes;
2. Increased citizen participation in elections and political processes—including political transitions;
3. Enhanced effectiveness of election observation and oversight.

### **Research Questions**

This research will provide contextual analysis and recommendations for future support in developing civic tech ecosystem and election open data initiative to improve the integrity of elections. The research aims to assess and assist in planning what actions could be considered in order to promote election civic tech programs under RESPECT.

To achieve this goal, the research will be narrowed down to two primary questions:

1. What are the essential elements that need to be addressed in order to enable civic tech ecosystems in target RESPECT countries to improve the integrity of elections?
2. What key election datasets are available in target RESPECT countries and how best to promote open election data in support of civic tech as well as elections transparency and accountability?

## **IV. Specific Guideline of Research**

### **Research Methodology**

Systems thinking, or a systems approach, is particularly relevant in designing sustainable development strategies, and has therefore been chosen as a core approach underlying this proposed research on civic tech for elections.

Systems thinking is based on the premise that: “achieving and sustaining any development outcome depends on the contributions of multiple and interconnected actors. Building the capacity of a single actor or strengthening a single relationship is insufficient. Rather, the focus must be on the system as a whole: the actors, their interrelationships and the incentives that guide them” (Shah, 2018).

Under this approach, external support, such as that provided by RESPECT, is considered more likely to contribute to sustainable processes when it supports local ownership—including local definition of priorities—as well as sustainable local systems, including civic tech ecosystems.

Inclusive systems recognize the value of a range of actors, from government, to the private sector, social enterprises, civil society, universities and individuals. Each of these is recognized to have valuable resources (human and financial). Innovation ecosystems are companies, people and relationships and not organizations or investment. They work to the extent that their individual components productively interact. (Thomas, 2018)

Use of an ecosystem approach will promote more sustainable and high impact open data as well as civic tech programs. The ecosystem approach in this context means that open data programs are not simply about the supply of data and launch of open data via online portals or other means, but also about addressing the policy/legal framework, institutional readiness, capacity building (for government and infomediaries), citizen engagement, innovation financing, and technology infrastructure.

Furthermore, there are eight key elements Perludem refers to in mapping and developing a successful **election civic tech** program. Those eight key elements are leadership; policy and legal framework; institutional structures, responsibilities, and capabilities; data availability, management policies, and procedures; demand; civic engagement and capabilities; funding; and national technology and skills infrastructure.

To assess **data availability and openness**, this research will define key election data and assess whether target countries comply to open data standards with regards to these key election data. A very comprehensive definition of data sets that can be considered for publication as open election data has been established by the Open Election Data Initiative. The Open Election Data Initiative's definition includes tabular and spatial data, as well as textual data. With this definition, open-data principles can be applied in all phases of the electoral cycle. The specific types of data include: legal framework; electoral boundaries; election management body administration; election management body processes; election security; political party registration; ballot qualification; election campaigns; campaign finance; voter registration; voter lists; voter education; polling stations; election results; e-voting and counting; as well as electoral complaints, disputes, and resolution. Making data 'open' refers to sharing the data in ways that make the data freely and easily used, reused, and redistributed by members of the general public. There are seven principle of the openness of data: Timely, granular, available for free on the internet, complete and in bulk, analyzable, non-proprietary, non-discriminatory, license-free, and permanently available. (National Democratic Institute, 2014)

Open data assessment is a basis for effective civic tech. More specifically, civic tech is the use of technology that enables engagement, participation or enhances the relationship between the people and government by enhancing citizen communications and public decision making, improving government delivery of services (Code for America Startup Program, 2014). Civic tech has its focus on informing, engaging and connecting citizens with their government and one another to improve the public good. (Ransbeeck, 2019)

Providing election data as open data has numerous benefits: it provides civil society, citizen journalists, electoral observers and citizens access to the same detailed information that was previously only available to selected stakeholders such as large media outlets. In doing so, open data allows all interested stakeholders to follow and understand the electoral process and can enable more inclusive, transparent and trusted elections. Open election data is not necessarily technology, does not inherently enable, does not directly result in better services or empower citizens, but it has the potential to facilitate and power all of these—notably through effective civic tech.

The research will be conducted in the following target countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines. The research will focus on open data analysis and systems analysis of the civic tech for elections ecosystems within each country.

### **Data Collection Methodology**

RESPECT in a collaboration with in-country researchers will manage the data collection and writing of the research. RESPECT will recruit researchers to conduct ecosystem research and analyze openness of key election data in the four target countries. The researchers will be selected through a tender across the networks of RESPECT and its partner organizations. Proposals will then be gathered, and researchers selected by RESPECT before contracting.

In-country researchers will derive first-hand insights through in-depth interviews and group discussions (possibly to include structured focus group discussions). Given the Covid-19 emergency situation, it is likely that much of the interviews and group discussions work will take place online.

A set of guidelines will be defined by RESPECT and given to the selected researchers to ensure the research focus is standardized across countries.

The research process will be a circular, iterative process consisting of analysis, drafting and revision based on thorough reviews. RESPECT will conduct weekly conversations with all researchers during the three-month intensive research period in addition to routine electronic communication. We will employ Slack and Asana as a means to coordinate research and communication.

The data collection methodology will consist of the following:

1. In-country researchers conduct desk research to collect physical evidence such as laws and regulations, key reference documents, and examples of data available as preliminary information;
2. Researchers conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews (in person, by call or by email) with a selected list of experts and practitioners that have specific experience, regarding civic tech, social media and democracy to follow up the preliminary information gathered;
3. Researchers report the significant obstacles and favorable conditions which would be relevant for each dimension based on the evidence, interview, and group discussion in a weekly meeting;
4. Researchers conduct analysis and review the current situation from the evidence and the results of the relevant interviews. Analysis will provide and explain ratings given to each element on the following scale:
  - RED: Evidence/responses to questions suggest significant obstacles currently existing to successful and sustainable implementation of Open Data and Civic Tech programs meeting the objectives set.
  - YELLOW: Evidence/responses to questions do not show significant obstacles, but the evidence of favorable conditions is mixed.
  - GREEN: Evidence/responses to questions show favorable conditions already exist for the successful and sustainable implementation of an Open Data Program meeting the objectives set;
5. RESPECT NGO partners facilitate group discussions (to possibly include FGDs) among civic-tech activists, social-media experts and practitioners in the target countries to share the preliminary key findings;
6. Based on the group discussions, researchers develop specific, actionable recommendations on key actions which should be prioritized on each element to promote successful and

sustainable implementation of Open Data and Civic Tech programs meeting the defined objectives;

7. RESPECT executes the final format of the draft of the research. The research serves at least three important functions:
  - It provides a record of findings and evidence generated from engagement with stakeholders that is visible to anyone—and can be updated or expanded later;
  - It shows the basis for many/most of the recommendations and strategy;
  - It indicates important issues, obstacles and opportunities associated with implementation of specific actions recommended.
8. Draft report review by external experts to ensure analytical rigour
9. Provision of draft findings to USAID for comment
10. Review and revision of draft report until finalized and approved by USAID

RESPECT will maintain inclusion by creating and nurturing an environment where individuals are welcomed and respected in their differences, and ensuring that all partners participate fully in all of these research activities. We will ensure that equity, diversity, and inclusiveness are promoted when recruiting the researchers as well as during the research (when the research activities are being conducted) by ensuring the participation and leadership of women and people with disability in the FGD and interview process.

#### **V. In-Country Researcher Scope of Works**

The following Scope of Work will be conducted by In-Country Researcher:

1. Identify all the major relevant stakeholders and how they should be involved in the research.
2. Identify target list of interviewees mapped to each element of the research and conduct interview and/or focus group discussion
3. Collect evidence and information including:
  - a. Law, regulation, policy on protection of personal privacy; access to information; data security, data archiving, and digital preservation; social media and citizen engagement; ownership and licensing of government data; and other policies/laws exist that may have significant impact on open data
  - b. Political promise, policy position, or commitment on open data or related topics such as open government or freedom of information through the publication of data
  - c. Mechanisms for data requests by people outside government
  - d. Track record of releasing information requested using the freedom of information mechanism, including important information
  - e. Election management bodies' action plan and budgeting on open data, ICT training, tech development, or related topics
  - f. Process for digitization of records which conforms to international standards to ensure access and use of the data.
  - g. Examples of civil society organizations program using technology to empower voters.
  - h. Similar research about open election
4. Report initial findings and make analysis of the current situation from the evidence and the results of the relevant interview
5. Report early feedback on emerging conclusions and recommended actions
6. Reviewing final research and provide comments

## Research Output

Specifically, this research project will provide a summary report to RESPECT including all tables and graphics, that will include the following:

- Executive summary (2 pages)
- Introduction (3-4 pages)  
Definition of the scope of the research, including an inclusive definition of civic tech and objectives of the research reflecting the agreement reached with the partner
- Analysis, assessment, and recommendations on each of the eight elements (3-6 pages each)  
Analysis of eight key elements in enabling civic tech ecosystem to improve the integrity of elections: leadership; policy and legal framework; institutional structures, responsibilities, and capabilities; data availability, management policies, and procedures; demand; civic engagement and capabilities; funding; and national technology and skills infrastructure.
- Analysis, assessment, and recommendations on the election key datasets (up to 6 pages, presented as a table or graphic)  
A mapping of key election data and information available in the four target countries.
- General conclusions, priorities, and recommendations (up to 6 pages)
- To include proposed partners and approaches—to increase the effectiveness of the use of civic tech in support of RESPECT key objectives

## VI. Timeline

The timeline of this research will be described and scheduled with following table below:

No.	Activities/Milestones	Month											
		Jul		Aug		Sept		Oct		Nov		Dec	
1.	Confirmation of the research design	X											
2.	Tendering for in-country researchers		X	X									
3.	Contracting in-country researchers			X									
4.	Desk research, interviews and group discussions				X	X	X	X					
5.	Writing first draft of the report							X	X				
6.	Share report draft with external reviewers								X				
7.	Revise draft based on expert review									X			
8.	Share draft with USAID									X			
9.	Revise draft based on USAID review										X		
10.	Final and fully designed report											X	



11.	Dissemination of report findings													X	X	
12.	Preparing open data assessment													X	X	X

**VII. Availability of Funds**

Budget allocated for each In-Country Research Organization to implement activities for each research including providing the research tools, materials and communication will be in the form of Lump Sum and is estimated at the maximum of USD 5,000 (Five Thousand US Dollar). However, applicant may propose optional budget whereas benefits of higher priced proposal must merit additional cost. Disbursement will be based on completion of milestones as stated in the Grant Agreement.

**VIII. Eligibility of Applicants**

Perludem will issue grants to both U.S. and non-U.S. nongovernmental organizations (for profit or nonprofit) provided they are legally registered and not prohibited from receiving USG funding by US federal regulations. For the example this may include Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), National, regional, and local organizations, Professional organizations, Research institution.

Applicant selected for award must demonstrate clear and achievable objectives, a realistic work-plan and acceptable timeline within the stated period, and measurable outcomes. An organization’s proposed grant activities should tie closely to the organization’s own overall mission and strategy and advance its key objectives. Finally, proposed activities under a grant should be able to be reasonably supported by the applicant’s existing administrative structure.

Perludem will identify institutions that are well placed to work with USAID in the longer term, and will develop capacity-building programs, including training, to enable the institutions to successfully implement grant projects while building organizational capacity.

More description of eligibility criteria for organizations that will be interested and participate with this formal grant announcement or request for applications may include, without limitation, the following:

- The organization must have demonstrated experience in technical areas relevant to the scope of work or grant focus.
- The organization must have been in existence for more than 1 year or as specified in each grant solicitation.
- The organization must currently be implementing activities in the geographic area or technical area for which it is submitting an application.
- Possess sound managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve project results;
- The organization has minimum absorptive capacity and demonstrates the potential to acquire sufficient capacity to manage programs in a sustainable manner.
- The organization has a functional financial system and apply a system of internal controls to safeguard assets and to protect against fraud;
- The organization’s other relationships, associations, activities, and interests do not create a conflict of interest that could prevent full impartiality in implementation of the grant activities.

## IX. The Selection and Evaluation Process

1. Perludem will issue a **Request for Application (RFA)** and the Full Grant Application Form (FGAF) for this Grant Activity. Interested organization shall send their Notification of Interest along with any questions they may have regarding the RFA, by email to [respect@perludem.org](mailto:respect@perludem.org) within 3 (three) working days upon receiving the invitation email (by August 6, 2020). Deadline for submission of FGAF is by Close of Business on **August 16, 2020**.
2. Perludem will **solicit and review the Full Grant Application Form**. Applicants are encouraged to submit complete application and all required documentation in electronic form to the e-mail address: [respect@perludem.org](mailto:respect@perludem.org). Applicants are encouraged to compress files so that all required documentation can be sent in one e-mail. However, should the attachments be too large to fit in one e-mail, applicants can send the files in more than one e-mail. In this case, e-mails and attachment files should be numbered, and their total number should be clearly indicated.
3. **Perludem will review and select** Full Grant Application Form (FGAF) submitted by various applicants to ensure that they are consistent with USAID policies and procedures prior to submission to USAID.
4. If submitted Full Grant Application are selected, the **final negotiations and Pre-Award Determination** discussion process must be documented for the appropriateness type of grant application process
5. The USAID AOR involvement will be depending on types of award received by Perludem for the respective grant project
6. Issuance of this RFA and receipt of FGAF in no way obligates Perludem to award grant agreement and applicants will not be reimbursed for any costs associated with the preparation of their application.

## X. Evaluation Criteria

In order to identify applicants who are most qualified to achieve the goals of the research, RESPECT will evaluate applications based on the following criteria:

### *Experience with Civic Tech and/or Open Data programs*

Researcher should be able to show that it has practice experience of actually making Open Data available to the public, working with a wider Civic Tech/Open Data Ecosystem, addressing policy/political issues and addressing technical issues related to Civic Tech/Open Data.

### *Time commitment*

The research is intended to be performed rapidly effectively within two to three months with weekly check-ins by video or audio conference.

### *Sustainability*

Research is designed to lead to action. In order for a research to be worthwhile, it is highly desirable that researcher has a reasonable commitment of being able to take forward recommended actions and strategies.

All above criteria will be translated into scores and ranked according to the points listed below, based on a maximum score of 100 points. In the condition where Technical Approach have not yet reached the maximum point while other criteria are met, Perludem will assist the applicant with streamlining the approaches whenever possible:

**1. Strategic fit: 20 points**

- a) Sustainability of project results for applicants, and
- b) Anticipated benefits to the beneficiaries.

**2. Technical approach: 40 points**

- a) Clearly defined problem statement within the respected country,
- b) Clearly identified relevant stakeholders and respondents
- c) Clearly outlined goals
- d) Strategy or methodology to collect information and data through innovative technical approach, and
- e) Potential obstacles identified, and solutions provided.

**3. Organizational capabilities: 15 point**

- a) Expertise on similar key areas and past performance on similar projects,
- b) Relevance of staff skills to the proposed program,
- c) Experience in geographic region,
- d) Soundness of accounting and procurement practices, and
- e) Capacity to adhere to USAID financial guidelines.

**4. Gender and inclusiveness consideration: 10 points**

- a) Inclusion of women and/or marginalized group in the research
- b) Impact on women's and/or marginalized group participation.

**5. Cost effectiveness: 15 points**

Perludem is not obligated to award one organization for both researches. Applicants submitting proposals for both of the research will still be reviewed for each research separately and in the case that the proposal for only one research met the qualification for award, it does not guarantee that the applicants be awarded for both researches.

- End of RFA -