

Problems Mount For Indonesian Elections

(NAPSA)—As Indonesia prepares for the most important elections in the country's history, technical problems and political corruption threaten the credibility of the fast approaching polls. The 2014 legislative and presidential elections will be just the fourth national poll for the world's fourth most populous country in the 15 years since the fall of the dictatorial Suharto regime. Accommodating for nearly 200 million voters spread over 17,000 islands in the Southeast Asian nation is a monumental task. However, the 2004 elections were widely viewed as free and fair while the 2009 polls faced problems but managed to get a passing grade by most international observers. For the 2014 cycle, the challenges and accusations of manipulation are mounting by the day to an unprecedented level while the stakes to conduct free and fair elections could not be higher.

Political corruption continues to plague the Indonesian government and erode public trust in political parties and the electoral authorities due largely to greed, abuse of power, and inadequate financing laws and oversight. In perhaps the most ominous sign of potential electoral manipulation, reports are surfacing that the Indonesian Electoral Commission (KPU) is banning international election observers except for those handpicked "friends" of the ruling party. Several presidential candidates have expressed serious concern over the challenge that rampant corruption represents to this young democracy, still working to build its foundation of representative government. Gerindra party founder and leading presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto has stated he will stamp out government corruption and manage the government like a



Voter enthusiasm runs high for troubled Indonesian elections.

business, incorporating "modern management techniques: IT, transparency and e-government." Many polls are responding to his no-nonsense approach to addressing the country's biggest challenges and his popularity is continuing to rise as a result.

Additionally, major problems with the voters list have continued to raise concerns about the country's ability to conduct free and fair elections next year. Reports are surfacing of millions of inaccurate voter registration data or even fictitious voters that could result in more than 10 percent of the electorate being turned away at the polls or millions of fraudulent votes. In an election expected to be the most highly contested in the country's democratic era, several political parties are understandably concerned and calling for answers. The KPU claims to be working to fix the glitches but concerns about the capacity to meet the challenge continue to linger.

With a booming population and a third of the electorate voting for the first time, the stakes are high to get the younger population to invest in civic participation and trust in the democratic process. The list of challenges to meeting the threshold of a free and fair election in Indonesia is long and the road to get there is, unfortunately, getting shorter by the day.