Management response

**Electoral Support Project in Armenia**

**Final Evaluation Report**

Date: 30 October 2020

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| **Evaluation recommendation 1. RELEVANCE:** * 1. A stronger focus on the gender equality theme and its mainstreaming into all components of the future projects;
	2. Inclusion of indicators measuring actual change vs the results of key activities.
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| **Management response:** The recommendations are partially accepted. 1.1. UNDP will further strengthen gender mainstreaming component in the next generation of electoral support programmes; 1.2 It is important to mention that all UNDP projects contribute towards achieving the results and outcome level indicators which are defined in UNDP Country Programme Document and its Results and Resources Framework. The elections management bodies’ related indicators are located in Outcome 2, Output 2.4, and UNDP reports vis-à-vis these indicators annually to capture the progress and actual change.  |
| **Key action(s)** | **Completion date** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** |
| **Comments** | **Status****(initiated, completed or no due date)** |
| 1.1 Discussed in the team and will be considered for the next generation of electoral support programmes | 30 October 2020 | Democratic Governance Portfolio and Project team |  | Completed |

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| **Evaluation recommendation 2. EFFICIENCY:*** 1. The appropriateness of the project modality was ensured from the lens of pre-term elections. However, for future electoral support projects it is recommended to switch from an “election event” to an “election cycle” support;
	2. Despite the challenges, the project demonstrated high level of implementation efficiency, however, it is recommended to allocate more time for preparation and implementation in the future to ensure a better work-life balance for the staff and partners engaged;
	3. ESPA managed to ensure high efficiency of the technological support component. However, for the better cost efficiency, it is recommended that future electoral support projects include a component aimed at supporting the Government of Armenia (GOA) and the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) in conducting a feasibility study of future technological solutions prior to the application. Specifically, the cost efficiency and the overall need of the live streaming process of the Camera component (cameras installed at the polling stations on Election Day) should be assessed further for more sustainable solutions;

2.4 There was limited participation of the civil society in the ESPA project design, implementation and monitoring. Thus, it is recommended to strengthen the civil society engagement in the future.  |
| **Management response:** The recommendations are accepted. ESPA was designed in a record time as a *rapid response* to a changed political landscape. The project provided substantive support to the national counterparts in meeting tight deadlines of the electoral calendar in the context of pre-term elections which implied extra efforts from the staff. The work-and-life balance was later compensated with time-off and was observed accurately within the framework of the next ESPA2 project. As for the recommendation on switching to the “electoral cycle support” approach, it should be noted that UNDP applied this approach for the second stage of its electoral support in the frame of the ESPA 2 project, which covers the period of April 2019-December 2020.  |
| **Key action(s)** | **Completion date** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status (initiated, completed or no due date)** |
| 2.1 Discussed and noted. UNDP ESPA2 project is designed based on the mentioned “electoral cycle support” approach. UNDP will explore opportunity in the future to develop a full-fledged project proposal based on “electoral cycle support” approach. | 30 October 2020 | UNDP Democratic Governance Portfolio and Project team |  | Completed |
| 2.2 Discussed and noted. A better work-life balance for the staff and partners is observed within the framework of the currently implemented ESPA 2 project. | 30 October 2020 | Project team |  | Completed |
| 2.3 Discussed and noted. UNDP and the ESPA 2 have initiated a feasibility study to examine sustainable technological solutions for more effective electoral support (e.g., electronic voting). | 30 June 2021 | Project team |  | initiated |
| 2.4 Discussed and noted. More inclusive participation of the civil society in design of next generation of electoral support programme in Armenia will be ensured. | 30 October 2020 | UNDP Democratic Governance Portfolio and Project team |  | Completed |

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| **Evaluation recommendation 3. EFFECTIVENESS in relation to Project Objective 1 on Credibility of the electoral process improved** * 1. Conduct a feasibility study to explore possibilities for further upgrade of digital solutions for voting system;
	2. Ensure one unified database for Voter Authentication Devices (VADs);
	3. Increase the level of accountability of the PEC and the TEC for the violations identified, as part of the structural and institutional changes;
	4. Revisit the formation principle for the PEC to enhance their professional capacity and reduce political affiliations;
	5. Ensure that at least 6 months are allocated for proper preparation to any election and/or referendum.
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| **Management response:** Accepted partially:3.1. and 3.2 are already being implemented in the framework of ESPA 2 project (see also Action 2.3 above). The recommendations 3.3 and 3.4 should be addressed in the frame of the ongoing process of the legislative amendments to the Electoral Code of Armenia; UNDP may consider possible support to this process should there be a next generation of electoral support programme. 3.5. Accepted, it is fully in line with UNDP approach, with a caveat of rapid response to emerging need of the Government. |
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| Discussed and noted. Part of the recommendations are already being implemented within the framework of ESPA 2. The other part will be considered as part of a potential future . | 30 October 2020 | UNDP Democratic Governance Portfolio and Project team |  | Completed |
| **Evaluation recommendation 4. EFFECTIVENESS in relation to Project Objective 2 on Inclusiveness and participation in the elections is increased*** 1. Ensuring better protection of voters’ personal information while making them publicly available;
	2. Making the polling stations more accessible and educational materials more inclusive;
	3. Analyzing voter participation statistics to better understand the trends and make future election campaigns more targeted;
	4. Enhancing participation of women through economic and political empowerment initiatives, specifically in rural and remote areas;
	5. Developing a mechanism for streamlining voter lists to ensure that it includes RA citizens residing in the country in order to have a more realistic picture of voter turnout;
	6. Consider strengthening the “future voter’s education” component of the school curriculum within the scope of the education sector reforms in Armenia.
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| **Management response:** Partially accepted. 4.1 Voters’ list is prepared and managed by the Passport and Visa Department of the Police of Armenia. Publishing voters’ list on the CEC website, as well as signed voters’ list after elections, is required by law. As part of its potential future project, UNDP will explore opportunities to cooperate with the Police and the National Assembly of Armenia on strengthened protection of voters’ personal data. 4.2 Accessibility of polling stations requires a comprehensive assessment followed by rehabilitation of infrastructure; this is a long-term programme to be led by the Government in partnership with other international organizations. The recommendations 4.3 and 4.6 are noted and will be considered in future programmes (see respective actions below). As for 4.4: it is currently addressed by ongoing UNDP programmes on political and economic empowerment of women at local level. Regarding the recommendation 4.5 – according to the legislation, Armenia applies passive voters list i.e., citizens of Armenia above 18 years old are eligible voters and are included in the voters list. To fulfil this recommendation, the legislative changes are needed; this process is led by the National Assembly.  |
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| **Comments** | **Status****(initiated, completed or no due date)** |
| 4.2 Discussed and noted. UNDP will address the recommendation and consider allocating more resources to the issue of accessibility of polling stations in the design of its future electoral programme. | 30 October 2020 | Project team |  | Complete |
| 4.3 Discussed and noted. UNDP will consider using the available data on voter participation as a baseline info for designing the voter education campaigns in its future electoral programme. | 30 October 2020 | Project team |  | Complete |
| 4.4 Discussed and noted. UNDP will explore possibilities of designing more inclusive and holistic voter education campaigns, with specific target of remote areas and women. | 30 October 2020 | Project team |  | Complete |
| 4.6 Discussed and noted. In its future projects, UNDP will study the opportunity of designing a similar course. | 30 October 2020 | Project team |  | Complete |
| **Evaluation recommendation 5. EFFECTIVENESS in relation to Project Objective 3 on Capacity of the Central Electoral Commission strengthened*** 1. Work with the Government of Armenia and the National Assembly of Armenia to promote the finalization of the electoral reform agenda. This will define the country’s vision for the future of the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and lay a foundation for a long term and more strategic approach towards the institutional capacity building.
	2. Continue supporting the CEC by finalizing the Commission’s Strategic Plan and further developing the educational and e-management platforms.
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| **Management response:** Partially accepted. Recommendation 5.1 is noted as a reference for the next generation of UNDP electoral support programmes. Recommendation 5.2 has been fully addressed already within the scope of ESPA 2. Please see the action below. |
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| 5.2 ESPA2 initiated the feasibility study as described in action 2.1 above. E-learning, VAD database, PEC member registration and certification system have been initiated by ESPA and are being further developed by ESPA2 as a part of improved CEC electronic election management system (EMR). | June 2021 | Project team |  | Initiated |
| **Evaluation recommendation 6. SUSTAINABILITY:** Make sure commitments and procedures are documented and integrated into the operational regulations of the state bodies. |
| **Management response:**  Recommendation is partially accepted. Many procedures have been already incorporated in the CEC decisions. |
| **Key action(s)** | **Completion date** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** |
| **Comments** | **Status****(initiated, completed or no due date)** |
| 6.1 UNDP will explore if additional procedures and commitments will be possible to fix in CEC decisions.  | 30 June 2021 | UNDP Democratic Governance Portfolio |  | Initiated |