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Resilient nations.*

**Evaluation of Phase 1
Regional Electoral Support Project:
Middle East and North Africa
2013-2016**

Evaluation Report – July 2016

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ACRONYMS

BPPS	Bureau for Programme Services and Support
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
CD	Country Director (UNDP)
CO	Country Office (UNDP)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor (UNDP)
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality (UNDP)
EAD	Electoral Assistance Division (UN) of DPA
EDR	Electoral Dispute Resolution
EMB	Electoral Management Body
EU	European Union
GPECS	Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support (UNDP)
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute
IT	Information Technology
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission (UN)
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NSA	Non-State Actor
NVEC	National Voters Education Committee
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PPLC	Political Parties Liaison Council
PR	Progress Report
QPR	Quarterly Progress Report
RBAS	Regional Bureau for Arab States
RESP	Regional Electoral Support Project
RR	Resident Representative (UNDP)
RRF	Results and Resources Framework

**Regional Electoral Support Project: Middle East and North Africa
Phase 1: 2013-2016 Evaluation Report - March 2016**

SC	Steering Committee
SEPJ	Strengthening Electoral Processes in Jordan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPRING	Support for Partnership, Reforms, and Inclusive Growth (EU)
TA	Technical Assistance
TC	Technical Committee
TOR	Terms of Reference
VfM	Value for Money

1. Executive Summary

a) Introduction

The Regional Electoral Support Project commenced at the end of 2013. The Regional Project is a multi-country component of the Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS), aligned with Outcome 2 of the GPECS strategy: that “regional advocacy, capacity development and knowledge generation is strengthened.”

The Project is funded with 40 million Swedish Krona by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) as a sole donor and is managed under the Direct Implementation modality. The SIDA contribution agreement concludes in June 2016 and the donor has requested a second Phase proposal for which positive discussions are now underway.

This evaluation of Phase 1 reviews the content and impact of SIDA’s contribution to UNDP’s electoral assistance in the MENA region. Within the framework of the Project Document, this review examines achievements, assesses progress and proposes some recommendations for consideration as Phase 2 commences.

Summary of Achievements

After discussions with a range of stakeholders including the League of Arab States, Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs), national EMB representatives, civil society, electoral observer groups, as well as national staff of country projects and with other partners, the evaluation has found that the Project has delivered convincingly and consistently on its objectives. It has established strong linkages with key regional bodies; has facilitated the creation of a critically important new regional organization and has contributed significantly to the deepening of knowledge and skills across the region.

See Section 5 for a more detailed review of achievements.

National, regional and global synergies

As noted above, this regional support is part of a wider global project (GPECS) that has several windows: global, regional (one for each region), country, and gender. The regional support for MENA has leveraged synergies to deliver reciprocal benefits both to the regional component which has been a beneficiary of the wider GPECS engagement, and the wider global project which has learned from this inaugural regional experience.¹ Knowledge and learning, for example, has in many ways been driven at the global level with very specific inputs and great regional synergies.

¹ Overall GPECS has provided direct financial support to 18 country level projects for a total of US\$ 14 million (many in the Arab States region) and the whole team did close to 930 country level advisory services by GPECS team from 2009-2015, many of which benefited the component

GPECS is integrated in UNDP's Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster and its regular regional team meetings have facilitated a closer engagement with and integration of electoral assistance within the broader governance portfolio including specific initiatives undertaken between elections and other focus areas such as Human Rights, local governance, electoral violence prevention and parliaments.

The project is a positive model for the way in which regional projects might operate and the way in which **value-for-money** and cost efficiencies can be leveraged while capitalizing at the same time on regional participation. With the excellent relationships that have been developed with key regional bodies like the League of Arab States, the regional component of GPECS is uniquely positioned to broker and offer a level of cohesion of approach, consistency of messaging and delivery standards and high levels of expertise to its partners, at a fraction of the cost that would be incurred by engaging in the same way on a country by country basis. The qualitative benefits of regional dialogue are less easily quantified in terms of cost but are clearly evident in terms of relationship dividends. Cost-sharing approaches with League of Arab States (such as cost splitting on fares and venue costs for meetings, for example) and partners including National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) for the conduct of events; cost sharing also with the UNDP Regional Hub in terms of office support and access to specialist advisors also represent value for money benefits. At the same time, the regional project has been able to successfully provide support, at times on very short notice, to country projects which do not always have sufficient resources, time or the reach to bring, for example, thematic experts on board. It has been able to create synergies across like-minded projects in the region; produce high quality publications and learning materials and provide comparative learning and information-sharing opportunities.

Regional Benefits

SIDA's support to UNDP's electoral assistance in the region has delivered significant impact in a very short time. This is discussed in detail in the body of the report. Some key examples are:

a) Engagement with League of Arab States

Early on the project established, in partnership with the UN's Electoral Assistance Division, a very **effective engagement and relationship with the League of Arab States**, the key regional partner. From a small section within the LAS, the elections area has grown into a full Department headed by an Ambassador with increased staffing levels and a proudly enhanced standing within the League. A very conscious effort to building capacity of the LAS has resulted in over 100 LAS staff undergoing BRIDGE training and the accreditation of 23 semi-accredited and 4-fully accredited BRIDGE trainers; the development of a database of Arab election experts from within LAS and capacity of the Department to begin to deliver technical assistance in its own right.

b) Establishment of Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies

In the MENA region the project has been welcomed for its significant work in **facilitating the establishment of the Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies**. The Organization is without doubt one of the single most important achievements of the project to date as it transcends and shores up vulnerabilities at the national level. At an institutional and even personal level, the Organization provides a regional identity for EMBs. As one

member said: “*We now have a local address.*” The value of this identity cannot be understated. The organization has developed a Charter, a management and leadership structure, a communications strategy and the Government of Jordan has expressed willingness to host the Organization for its first two years. It expects to welcome two new members, Somalia and Mauritania, in the near future.

c) Relationship building through learning exchanges

Other high **level relationship-building** is reflected in MoUs between the Arab EMBs and the Association of European Electoral Officials (ACEEEO) and the Venice Commission, these being important establishment level partnerships, facilitated by the Project. Additionally, UNDP concluded a MoU with the Mexico National Elections Institute (INE), the latter being the entry point for south-south **technical learning exchanges as projected in the Project Document**. Partnerships have also been established (led by EAD) with the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**; an OIC meeting in July 2015 in Jeddah provided an opportunity for CSOs engaged in monitoring elections to exchange views and lessons learned. Workshops, BRIDGE training and roundtables have also been conducted with the support and leadership of the Department of Political Affairs’ Electoral Assistance Division (EAD).

Partners have commended the role of the Project in the provision of **trainings**, particularly the BRIDGE training which has been delivered to a diverse range of partners from the LAS, to staff within UNDP country offices; to women’s organizations and youth representatives, activists, journalists and others across the region, building a cadre of Arab-speaking electoral experts. The value of this forward-looking capacity building approach will inevitably contribute significantly to robust and informed electoral processes in the region and in emerging electoral opportunities.

d) Focus on knowledge management

The Project has encouraged a strong emphasis on **Knowledge Management**, beginning with the publication of the *Arab Lexicon of Electoral Terminology*, an exercise that exemplifies synergies between country and regional projects as the idea for the lexicon was first initiated at the country level. The development of the Lexicon involved the engagement of researchers from a number of countries and which, as a product, has been discussed at international fora including the 2015 NATO Conference on Terminology Management and the annual conference of JIAMCATT, the main international terminology forum held in New York. There is a high demand for more such regional resources as country projects benefit from products that bring in the wealth of knowledge, information and experiences available in the region and beyond. With the collaboration of the global component of GPECS, especially the EC/UNDP Task Force in Brussels, the regional project has initiated a process of publications linked with e-learning short courses on topics including results management, that have been well received with the project adding value and it is hoped that if further support is forthcoming, this level of engagement will grow. Further, the project has embarked on developing targeted courses focusing on elections for inclusion in university programs as a way to encourage research and debate on electoral topics in the region; towards this end the project has developed a pilot course on electoral systems with St. Joseph University in Beirut.

e) Broad-based thematic focus

Thematic workshops on topics including results based management, voter registration and electoral disputes resolution have moved beyond the traditional EMB audience to positively engage stakeholders across the electoral cycle including civil society, observer groups and other stakeholders. Expert input has been complemented by the production of substantial materials and publications supported by e-learning and other well-received interactive tools and have been followed by calls for further such opportunities. It is important to mention that, through these workshops, the project has been able to expand the target audience beyond institutional actors and include civil society organizations which is of particular challenge in the region.

f) Strong focus on participation of women and young people

A cross-cutting focus on the **inclusive participation of women and youth** in political and democratic processes has been a priority of the project. The Project has a very close collaboration with regional projects and initiatives (such as the UNDP regional gender project “Mosharka” and regional work on youth and innovation). Women in EMBs, civil society, observer groups and women activists, journalists, parliamentarians and candidates have been engaged by the project through BRIDGE trainings and thematic discussions on constitutionalism and sustainable development goals and in high level meetings on the relationship between EMBs and other key national institutions such as national human rights institutions.

The project has assessed that across the various activities, the participation level of women has been 44 per cent which is noteworthy taking into consideration the low levels of women’s participation in electoral events, particularly in the MENA region.

g) Cross-benefits with UNDP Regional Hub and the wider UN family

Within UNDP, the project’s linkages and synergies with the other components of GPECS including the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force in Brussels, the UNDP Governance and Peace Building Cluster and the Regional Hub including the regional Mosharka Project have all contributed to the success of the project. These linkages have provided the project access to resources and experts across the globe and across the different areas of governance (parliaments, local governance, human rights, etc.). This has enhanced the project’s capacity to develop high quality knowledge products, deliver sound policy advice, ensure effective coordination with other electoral advisors and specialists, and design interventions that are innovative and holistic in approach. These linkages also have a value for money, enabling an economy of scale with access to a wide array of expertise and resources.

The project, like all UN electoral assistance, is guided by the UN Electoral Affairs Division (EAD) and with which it has a strong and positive partnership, particularly in its engagement with the League of Arab States. The project works under the leadership of EAD in providing assistance to LAS, and the two entities work very closely in planning, designing and implementing interventions with LAS and other regional organizations including the Office

of Islamic Conference. Even countries without approved electoral assistance² can benefit from regional discussions and exchange in events and trainings and the Project has been leveraging this added-value aspect.

h) Enhancing regional capacity through the Role of the Regional Electoral Advisor

The **regional electoral advisor**, also funded by the project, provides support to needs assessment missions at country level, the development of quality project documents, contributes to evaluations and assessments, crisis response and interaction and information sharing between country project CTAs, thus enhancing the profile and capacity of the UNDP national projects.

i) Value-added of multi country information exchange initiatives

The project's focus on **multi country information exchange** particularly between country projects and chief technical advisers has strengthened electoral assistance at the national and regional level and, with funding support, has ensured participation in regional events that would otherwise have been challenging. These exchanges have also helped to strengthen and bring coherence to the advice being given to national counterparts through the country projects. This underscores the value of the country window opportunity and builds on the early work of GPECS when, through Spanish funding, support was availed to Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia and Libya. It is hoped that with future support, such opportunities will continue to be offered within the region.

Contextual Appreciation

The context in which the project is being delivered is very relevant to understanding its approach, which is flexible, responsive and rooted in the recognition that credible personal interaction and the building of trust is core to success. The political context, discussed in more detail in Section 7 below, is one of regional instability; national conflict that spills across borders; insecurities; fragility of governance; armed occupation and nascent institutions.

The Project operates in an extremely challenging and complex electoral environment. Nonetheless there have been significant evolutions from elections run by government ministries to the creation of specialist electoral management bodies in countries including Jordan, Libya, Somalia and Tunisia. Some of these bodies have yet to conduct their first elections and are benefiting greatly from exposure to the experience and lessons of others in the region, and beyond. The evaluation is mindful that the project is founded on the electoral cycle approach – a cyclical process that can take between three to five years to turn full circle. The difficulty of the environment is reflected in the reality that in the course of the project a number of country projects have closed down due to insecurity (Yemen); some have ended for financial or political reasons (Egypt), while others have faced extreme

² Under the GPECS framework, no electoral assistance can be provided at the country level without approval.

stresses such as Libya where the project has had to work out-of-country for much of the time.

Future Challenges

The next five years are likely to be equally challenging for development in the region generally and for democratic governance in particular. Insecurity; the impact of violent extremism and political volatility; the protracted nature of armed conflicts in Syria; instability in Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Yemen are just some of the obstacles. The coming years will continue to be challenging. The support to growing regional electoral expertise demonstrates foresight and there is an expectation that electoral violence prevention will also need to be a strong focus of future thinking and interventions.

2. Project Objectives

The project has three principal areas of intervention clustered under the objective *“Transparent and strengthened electoral management bodies are able to administer electoral processes that reflect the will of the people.”*

The three intervention areas are:

- a) Strengthened regional capacity and knowledge of CSOs, media and EMBS on electoral issues;
- b) Increased participation of women throughout the electoral cycle, and
- c) Formal and informal mechanisms in place to enable youth CSOs and youth’s civic engagement in government led and other political processes.

The project describes the objectives thus: “The overall objective is to enhance the credibility, transparency, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes in the Middle East and North Africa region. With a particular emphasis on regional cooperation, capacity development, south-south exchanges, and the participation and empowerment of women and youth, the project will seek to develop policy innovations and programming options in these areas at the regional level. The project will work towards building coherence in electoral support in the region through dialogue, partnership and initiatives that reinforce the participation of youth and women in political and civic life and national efforts to enhance capacity of electoral authorities to play their role in the professional, transparent, and credible administration of elections. The initiatives take an electoral cycle approach to assistance, while also seeking to integrate electoral assistance into a wider framework of democratic governance.”

The project is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and is implemented by UNDP.

Achievements under each outcome are described in Section 5.

3. Evaluation Focus

The focus of the evaluation moves beyond an immediate and more traditional assessment of progress and impact to include emerging contextual issues and consequent considerations for the project moving forward.

The focus has been threefold:

- a) An assessment of the key intervention areas against impact and effectiveness, achievements and challenges, to determine if they are on track to achieve the project's objectives;
- b) Reflections on structural and other contextual issues;
- c) Provision of advice and recommendations.

4. Methodology

The evaluator conducted a document review (as listed in Annex 3) and met with a range of stakeholders from within the Regional Electoral Support Project and the broader GPECS team, the Regional Hub, and UNDP management team. Staff interviews focused on the structure, overall workplan, interventions and challenges. These interviews informed further discussion with other contributors to the programme and with other areas of the UN with whom the project relates. It was the perception of the evaluator that relationships with the UN country offices and technical advisers and with UNDP headquarters were not always smooth, reflective of the still relatively new structure, focus and reach of the regional programme and that there was residual jealousy of the regional programme's capacity to leverage funds. This perception required subsequent clarification with country based CTAs and with the UNDP staff in New York.

Consultations with the donor were held via skype as the representative is based in Cairo.

The consultant visited the UNDP Regional Hub's operations office and the UNDP Lebanon electoral project team in Beirut, as well as domestic and regional observer bodies, and met with the heads and other representatives of regional EMBs and National Human Rights Institutions, the Elections Department of the League of Arab States and other partners at a meeting held at the Dead Sea during the period of the evaluation. Skype interviews were conducted with country-based Election CTAs and with BPPS personnel in New York and Brussels. A list of interviewees is found at Annex 1.

The report looks at the structural relationships including that between the project and the Regional Hub and examines the delivery and achievements of the Project vis-a-vis its objectives and activities as set out in its Log frame.

5. Key Achievements

a) Goal and Impact Assessment

After discussion with a range of stakeholders including the LAS, EMB representatives, civil society, electoral observer groups, national staff in country projects and other partners, the evaluation has found that the Project has delivered convincingly on its objectives and there is strong endorsement of the value of the Project. It has established vibrant and viable linkages with the key regional bodies; has facilitated the creation of a critical new regional organization and has contributed significantly to the deepening of knowledge and skills across the region.

The Project Document describes the goal of the project in a couple of different ways, each with a slightly different emphasis.

The Project Document's section on Project Results and Activities (p 10) states that *"the overall goal of the project proposal is to enhance the credibility, transparency, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes in the region"* utilizing strategies of building coherence through dialogue and other means; through regional engagement and inclusive participation and through knowledge generation and capacity building activities. The summary of the objectives focuses on dialogue, partnership functions of the project and states the expectation of EMBs is that their capacity will be enhanced 'in order to play their role in the professional, transparent and credible administration of elections'.

The Results and Resources Framework provides a slightly different focus, identifying the overall goal and impact of the programme as: *"Transparent and strengthened electoral management bodies that are able to administer electoral processes that reflect the will of the people."* [Writer's emphasis]. In hindsight this latter wording was very ambitious for a relatively short term project and was superseded in practical terms by the interpretations of the programme's objectives. It imposes a somewhat higher demand on delivery against an expectation that is not necessarily within the capacity of an EMB to control or contain. There are many stakeholders in an election from security to civil society, media to political parties. The role of an EMB is to deliver an administratively exemplary and transparent process (essentially the objective of the ProDoc) but how the will of the people may or may not be manipulated or impacted by the behavior of the other stakeholders is beyond the mandate of an EMB to control.

It is advised that for the protection of the project, the RRF in a future project document limit the ambition of objectives to those within the control of the project to deliver. An EMB is one of many entities with contributory responsibility for delivering electoral results that reflect the will of the people. These entities include political parties, security forces, media, boundary delimitation commissions, the judiciary in the process of electoral disputes and other statutory authorities as well as the broader civil society. An EMB alone should not take responsibility for the impact of other entities on the process nor can a small project of modest funding realistically influence such a breadth of stakeholders or expect results that reflect the will of the people when not all entities engaged in the process are parents of the project. It may be preferable to limit intended impact to demonstrable and specific achievements such as increased specific capacities within EMBs to manage and deliver electoral processes and to measurable relationship-building between EMBs and other partners, with impact measurement supported by reliable baseline studies.

6. Outcome Assessment

The evaluation finds that in relation to Outcome 1, **the strengthening of regional capacity and knowledge of CSOs, media and EMBs on electoral issues** through strengthened regional engagements, enhanced south-south cooperation and knowledge generation and capacity enhancement of electoral stakeholders, there have been some very important and regionally significant achievements as outlined in Section 1 above.

The Project has clearly delivered on these overarching objectives through the establishment of a regional network of EMBs and through the technical advice, support and training components.

During the life of the Project, the **partnership with the League of Arab States, with** whom the Project has a pivotal relationship, has opened the door to broader electoral engagement within the region. In a groundbreaking event to be held in May 2016 towards the end of Phase 1, from a proposal of the LAS Election Department, supported by the UN Security

Council, the EMBs of 22 Arab countries will come together “to exchange experiences on the practice of elections in their respective countries – an important step towards expanding the dialogue on elections and democracy in the region.”

The LAS has been delighted with its relationship with the Project.

“The cooperation between the LAS and UNDP in many fields has helped train approximately 100 staff. We have 19 semi-accredited trainers and 4 fully-accredited BRIDGE trainers within our own staff now.” With another workshop scheduled for late May, these numbers will increase. *“Our motivation was very much assisted by the relationship with the Project.”*

The LAS has a long history of election observation and feels, with the possibility for intervention in Syria at some future time, they are now being a much stronger position to mobilize local experts. *“UNDP planted the seed and now we are growing strongly.”*

The LAS also reported that after three years since becoming a ‘Department’. *“We are able now to mount our own technical assistance efforts.”*

Ambassador and Director, League of Arab States Election Department:

Overall, the establishment of the **Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies** – launched in Beirut in June 2015; the elaboration of its Charter; the progress towards the finalization of an MoU for the hosting and support of the Organization by the Government of Jordan for an initial two year period, together with the capacity building and training programme implemented by the Project and the publication of knowledge products and complementary e-learning guides through GPECS global/ EC/UNDP Task Force in Brussels have contributed collectively to meeting the Project’s goals in a very impressive way. The modest staffing component has benefitted hugely from the synergies leveraged with GPECS global component, particularly in developing knowledge products (i.e. media, gender guide, results management, etc.), as well as at the country level on the lexicon for example. The regional project has integrated, expanded, translated knowledge products developed globally to provide a larger offer to the region which has meant that they did not need to create all knowledge themselves.

The establishment of the Organization achieved effectively in little over one year, after successive previous attempts since 2005 had come to naught, is a major success and a key building block in cementing, at an institutional level, the links between the EMBs of the region.

Strengthened regional engagement and enhanced south-south cooperation

The Regional Project commenced in December 2013 and within a short time EMBs from the region were being brought into the wider election family. The various GPECS global conferences have been tremendous opportunities for bringing together EMBs and sharing experiences and expertise. The event in Jordan in 2014 was an ‘eye-opener’ - as described

by one interlocutor - for the country EMBs from the region. It was an opportunity for exposure to the reality of the general lack of capacity; it was the first time the nine Arab countries had come together; it offered insights into their vulnerability; the significance of networking beyond the core EMB family; for strengthening the linkages with women, youth, observer and civil society networks and for a glimpse into how other regional electoral networks operated.

Early on the Project focused on the benefits of regional cooperation and the establishment of a regional network. This had been attempted at least twice in the last decade or so without success but within a year the momentum for support for a regional structure led to the launch of the ArabEMBs in Beirut in June 2015. The Organization's core membership of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine and Yemen is shortly to grow with recent applications for membership from Somalia and Mauritania, with Tunisia retaining close engagement if not formal membership. That the Project is also able to engage with countries beyond those supported by UNDP technical assistance in elections indicates that the benefits of participation and engagement resonate far more broadly than simply within its membership. The Workshop on Elections and Human Rights held in March 2016 is a good example of this, with more than sixteen countries gathering together, many of which were outside the traditional scope of UNDP technical assistance.

The Organization has engaged in a number of interactive meetings facilitated by the Project that are elaborated in the 2014 and 2015 Progress Reports which include the Launch of the Arab EMBs; the Regional Workshop of Arab EMB experts on voter registration and the regional training of EMBs on results management systems.

The process of engagement has been an incremental one of building trust through conversation and dialogue. Through 2015 and early 2016, sixteen separate meetings involving the EMBs were conducted with a strong focus on capacity development and training covering topics including voter registration, electoral dispute resolution; results-based management; BRIDGE training; women and constitutionalism; youth leadership and human rights. These meetings, in addition to its main objectives, contributed to the strengthening of relationships between the EMBs in the region, providing opportunities to network and discuss what their needs are at the national level, as well as regionally. This level of engagement has also led to new EMBs like that of Somalia to seek peer to peer advice in these meetings on topics such as establishing a secretariat, developing budgets and identifying staff needs.

The scope of investment has varied from high level institutional meetings, to the engagement of individual staff from one entity to support another such as the support of the Lebanon Legal Adviser to Libya; from international exchanges between Arab EMBs and other stakeholders with the Mexican National Electoral Institute (INE), to the discrete capacity building of the Elections Department of the League of Arab States, and from the support to country-based CTAs to exposure to other national entities such as national human rights commissions, bodies which often share the same legal or constitutional framework or basis; similar challenges in terms of perceptions of independence and civic education and who have the potential to mutually reinforce their respective roles and responsibilities.

The creation of the Organization is without doubt the single most important achievement of the project to date. At an institutional and even personal level, the organization provides a regional identity that is a counterpoint to national vulnerabilities.

"We now have a local address."

Regional EMB representative's personal reflection on the impact of the Organization of Arab EMBs.

"The organization is new and the workload large. It started as an idea two years ago and was launched within one year, beginning in June 2014 with eight members. We have had continuous communication, workshops and meetings. It is an institution much needed in the region and will have a big impact on democracy and human rights. The Organization creates a way of communication between countries previously not easily achieved."

Dr Emad Alshadly Alsayah, President, Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies

The Arab EMBs President acknowledges with profound thanks the brokering and coordination role of the Project saying *"The Project has been honest, open and flexible. We planned together, in a very good partnership."*

There is, however, a residual concern on the part of the Organization regarding sustainability, particularly certainty of funding in the bridging period. The Project might look to allay those concerns. Promising examples of regional institution-building can be found in the NHRI sector, the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions as well as other regional electoral bodies.

Regional and South-South cooperation has also been formalized - and sustainability outside the framework of the project therefore built-in - through the elaboration of agreements such as that in 2014 with the Mexico National Elections Institute (INE); while collaboration between INE and Arab EMBs is not new, the regional project formalized the engagement through the signing of an MOU and planning of specific activities jointly sponsored by the project and INE; given similarities in context, exposure to the Latin American experience has proven valuable. The Project supported the participation of an Arab delegation inclusive of EMBs, civil society and other stakeholders to the 6th Latin American Democracy Forum in Mexico in October 2015 which was followed by the Results Management Workshop with INE in the November focusing on the criticality of a strong results management system to the credibility of electoral processes as well as to the mitigation of election-related conflict.

"The Ministry of Information was so impressed by the infrastructure they observed in Mexico that they returned with lots of ideas and a strong advocacy position for a modernized candidate and registration system. This led to a dramatic re-shaping of the Operations Room and IT within the Mol and a systematic restructuring. All it took was some exposure to other and new ways of doing things. The regional experience has taken things to a whole new level. Prior to this there was no sharing of systems, and much of the work was ad hoc. We have moved from no systems to a more solid systematic approach as a result of local efforts combined with regional support. It would have been impossible to advocate for changes in results management at the Ministry level if we hadn't seen the process in Mexico.... We are now preparing a national follow up exercise."

The Lebanon Election Support Project.

At the request of the Libyan EMB, the Legal Advisor from Lebanon provided expert support to that sister institution.

“It was an amazing opportunity personally for the comparison of experiences...”

Another important cooperative arrangement was formed with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a relationship forged by EAD. This relationship facilitated a regional meeting in June 2015 in Jeddah focusing on the role of civil society in supporting electoral integrity through domestic elections observation.

Knowledge Management

The Project has encouraged a strong emphasis on Knowledge Management, beginning with the publication of the *Arab Lexicon of Electoral Terminology*, an exercise that first began at the country level and was scaled up to a regional knowledge tool involving researchers from a number of countries. The Lexicon is being utilized by the LAS, regional ArabEMBs as well as by EMBs and UNDP offices at the national level, with the Somalia EMB recognizing the need to have the tool in Somali language which it is currently developing. ArabEMBs utilized the Lexicon during the development of the organization’s charter as well as its mission and vision statements, and LAS has referenced the Lexicon when translating and adapting BRIDGE training modules to its needs. There is a call for more such regional resources as country projects simply cannot afford this level of expenditure and do not have the resources locally to develop such materials. There is also a call that publications be linked to specific follow-up initiatives. Through synergies between GPECS global including with the Joint Task Force in Brussels, the project has initiated a process of publications linked with e-learning that have been well received. According to the Task Force, the global meeting of EMBs in the Dead Sea with over 250 participants led to the recognition of the potential flow-on effect in the Arab world. Consequent to that significant steps have been taken to ensure knowledge management is a focal point of the project.

Likewise, other initiatives of the project, such as the discussions on results based management, have been supported with both hard copy and e-learning products. The Project emphasized the preference for high quality hard-copy publications and accordingly they have been beautifully produced. **Nine major knowledge products** have been produced including BRIDGE modules translated and customized into Arabic; an e-learning course on results management, the Lexicon for electoral Terminology, and contribution towards the development of the Arabic Site on the ACE Knowledge Network.

National project CTAs in the region have urged that future training and knowledge products focus on electoral technology and on effective use of social media.

Training and Capacity Development

Partners have commended the role of the Project in the provision of trainings particularly the BRIDGE training and the opportunity for semi or full accreditation as BRIDGE trainers.

“Staff had two-week full time TtF training on BRIDGE training with staff of the Arab League and UNDP.... We want to go higher and become fully accredited.”

Lebanon UNDP Electoral Support Project

More than 1000 persons in EMBs, domestic observer groups, human rights institutions, civil society, youth and women’s networks have been reached by the Project through regional meetings and trainings, BRIDGE trainings, youth camps and expert-level meetings. These have included staff of sixteen national human rights institutions; staff of the League of Arab States; staff of all engaged EMBs; domestic observer organizations; youth representatives from across the region and women’s organizations, thus **more than achieving the goal of a minimum ten organizations trained on electoral issues and a minimum five trainings organized at a regional level by the project. Some of those trained have already applied this learning - for example, LAS noted that their BRIDGE trained staff who went on election observation missions had a more sound knowledge and understanding of electoral practices and were better able to observe and provide recommendations on enhancing national electoral processes.**

Trainings provided by the Project include the Regional Voter Registration Workshop; the Regional Conference on Electoral Dispute Resolution; the Annual Electoral Meeting in the Arab States; the regional Workshop on Results Management Systems; and a series of BRIDGE trainings with the League of Arab States and other stakeholders including women’s organizations and domestic observers, promoting a keen interest in further opportunities and follow-up training.

“It would be very helpful to have follow up programmes and training at the country and individual institutional level...the workshops are very helpful for learning [about data management] and how to do my job more effectively.... EMBs themselves need more direct input on women – especially on tools to defend the cause - and youth, and on monitoring and evaluation because we have to be accountable to donors.”

Staff Member, Lebanon

Benefits of the project accrue not only to EMBs and UNDP staff but also to other stakeholders. *“The electoral disputes resolution workshop was especially helpful for civil society”*, reported one participant. Such regional conferences on key thematic issues such as electoral disputes resolution, results based management and voter registration have been welcomed with suggestions for more such events. Topics for further conversation include election technology and social media. Some reflections from a sample of stakeholders follow:

The Lebanon (LEAP) project is an excellent example of the way in which the Project has helped build capacity at the local level both the staff and within the Ministry of Interior responsible for election administrations).

UNDP Staff Lebanon

The local group, LADE (Lebanon Association for Democratic Elections) participated in both Regional Meetings in Beirut including that on electoral dispute resolution. *” Our participation reinforced our role in the region and helped enlarge the expertise of our monitors and observers and we were able to form a lot of longer term partnerships.... The creation of the Arab EMB network is a very important development and we encourage them to allow civil society to play a bigger role.”*

ANDE (Arab Network for Democratic Elections)

Multi-Country information Sharing

The role of the Regional Project in bridging relationships between country level projects and UNDP at the headquarters level, and in creating linkages between country level projects at the regional level has been very well received.

The Project has filled gaps in communication, collaboration, interaction, in the provision of policy advice and guidance and in other areas that have been a profound gap in institutional structures.

The Project has also supported annual meetings of UN/UNDP Chief Electoral Advisors managing country specific projects. The CTAs themselves speak highly of the opportunity afforded to share experiences and best practices and have requested more opportunity for regional staff interaction and learning.

The capacity of the project to bring together CTAs and others to attend meetings is a modest but very significant contribution to regional harmonization, coherence and cooperation and to the ongoing professionalization of electoral specialists.

In addition to the enhanced level of engagement between the UN and country projects through the role of the project, thematic engagement such as on electoral dispute information and results based management, and through the links with the Mexican Electoral Commission, have produced dividends for the project's beneficiaries.

Value for Money

The regional project demonstrates value for money not only in its judicious use of donor funds but also from its linkages with the other components of GPECS (global, other regions) and the broader UNDP governance and peacebuilding cluster which enables an economy of scale to more easily engage with colleagues working in areas linked to elections (human rights, parliament, local governance, etc.). Its judicious use of funds for example include cost-sharing for events such as the Human Rights and Elections event in March 2016 executed in partnership with Qatar, and on a vision for ensuring, through modest contributions, national participation at a regional level that both provides core input at a much more reasonable cost for one event than could be achieved by replicating event within individual countries, while building networks and strengthening relationships. The utilization of Regional Hub Advisors in gender, youth and human rights areas has enabled the project

to draw on readily available expertise without the challenge or expense of appointing individual advisors. Similarly, as a component of GPECS, the project has access to global resources and expertise as well as linkages to GPECS advisors covering other regions; the project has utilized these linkages to enhance the quality of its knowledge products (for instance through partnership with the Joint Task Force on e-learning, and collaborating with GPECS Asia on development of curriculum on electoral security) as well as synergies with other regions (exposure to Latin America experiences through GPECS LA region).

Even with the economies of scale achieved, a significant increase of funds will allow for expansion of the project team, perhaps through the commissioning of additional short or longer term specialists and to assist with the very significant coordination challenges.

Arab-speaking electoral professionals

Another success story is the incremental **creation of a cadre of informed Arab-speaking election professionals** through targeted capacity building and training opportunities for partners including the League of Arab States, EMBs and country office staff and the creation of forums for thematic conversation and the exposure to other ways of working which have had a direct and immediate impact within EMBs. Through the LAS and with the support of EAD, **a database of Arab-speaking electoral experts** from within LAS has been created for rapid deployment. The impact of such interventions is significant, immediate and broad-ranging. These success stories are described further in Section 8.

Increased participation of women throughout the electoral cycle

Creative and innovative work has also been carried out under Outcome (2) that pertains to the participation of women throughout the electoral cycle. A significant focus has been on **BRIDGE training** on gender and elections (a total of **four have been conducted**: two held in Cairo in 2014 and two in Tunis in 2015) attended by participants from EMBs, civil society and UNDP counterparts.

The workshops benefited from the UNDP-UN Women guidebook 'Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for EMBs on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation'; the guidebook was developed by GPECS in partnership with UNWomen, demonstrating synergies not only between the global and regional components of GPECS but also with the broader UN family.

A high level meeting convened by the Hub's Mosharka project in Cairo in December 2014 in partnership with UN Women and the Arab Women Organization on the SDGs, focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. An outcome is the responsibility of the Arab Women Organization to lead in advocating for the recommendations as part of the SDG implementation in the Arab region. The project also supported the participation of women in the 23rd Annual Conference of the Arab States on the topic of Electoral Processes and Public Life, and another on Women's Participation in Constitution-making and Legislative Reform held in Amman in February 2015. This meeting created a network between women drafters and lobbyists at the NGO level.

At the Youth Leadership Forum (see next section) 37 young women from 18 countries participated.

In September 2015 the Project recruited an additional team member to support the project's gender and elections activities with the Mosharka project; the project has provided expert advisory support to the UNDP Election Projects in Lebanon and Jordan; worked cooperatively with IFES on BRIDGE trainings; worked with the LAS on training of women and who is also preparing country profiles that documents the laws relating to women as an

addition to the project's legal database. These opportunities have provided a critical first opportunity to really come to grips with the role of women in electoral processes.

Moving forward, the opportunity exists to focus more specifically on elections and gender; on facilitating women's participation in democratic process; on the provision of knowledge-learning platforms and trainings and in building the understanding, endorsement of and expertise of EMBs in gender analysis, reflection and advocacy. Since conducting the evaluation, the project has held a gender and elections workshop focusing particularly on women in elections, both as administrators of elections, as well as voters, candidates, etc. throughout the electoral cycle. The workshop also served as the launch event for the Arabic version of the UNDP-UN Women guide 'Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for EMBs on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation'. Steps are also being taken, in partnership with ArabEMBs, to form a network of women in elections in the Arab States. (A lexicon to assist with this process is attached at Annex 2.

Formal and Informal mechanism in place to enable youth CSOs and youth's civic engagement in government led and other political processes

The youth and gender interventions have been implemented largely through the Hub's Mosharka ("Participation") Project. While laying foundation stones for future work, and addressing donor priorities for more engagement with youth, they have dealt with the challenges of participation in an environment where youth are the majority but hold no political power or sway and have focused on the project objectives of regional awareness raising, mapping of ongoing initiatives; the encouragement of regional dialogues with decision-makers and the promotion of annual youth fora.

Principal activities have been the Regional Youth Forum in Morocco in April 2014; the Youth Innovation Forum and Camp of June 2015 and the Youth Leadership Programme in October 2015, both conducted in Amman. In partnership with UNDP country offices and UNDP Egypt the project brought together **65 young men and women from 19 Arab countries** to reflect on challenges in development in the broader sense. The Youth Leadership Forum which brought young people together from **18 countries** then honed in on youth contributions to sustainable development.

The research paper concluded for the Project in March 2016, *National Youth Policies/Strategies, and Civic/Political Engagement: Way Forward* is a good example of this dilemma. The paper reviewed approaches and government initiatives in youth participation policies across the region, providing a useful contextual analysis for future strategic interventions under Outcome (2). The next step will be to analyze the extent or otherwise of youth participation in electoral processes specifically as candidates, observers, party agents, members of political parties, participants in consultative processes and so on, review the impact of youth participation or exclusion in electoral processes and, for example, grapple with the role of youth in electoral violence.

One challenge raised was the extent to which an 'election project should be engaged with broader stakeholders in this manner or whether it should be more restrictive, viewing the EMB as the major partner/client. The donor was very clear however that the expectation is for a broad-based electoral cycle approach. Moving forward, there is room now to drill down into the election related implications of the policy frameworks and overall experiences of Phase 1 and to articulate strategies and interventions that will provide a cohesive programmatic framework and rationale.

A greater focus on *institutional* level support to address issues of youth participation and gender in political and electoral processes can be further strengthened in the next phase of SIDA's support. While engagement through the Mosharka project has been beneficial to the project and contributed to its success, having expert advisory input from an elections and gender specialist to help shape future election-specific interventions will further increase the effectiveness of the project.

Linkages and synergies with GPECS, the Regional Hub and other UN agencies

As a regional component of GPECS, the project benefited from the synergies and linkages with the global component of GPECS as well as the other regional components. Its collaboration with and access to global advisors and the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force in Brussels ensured the high quality of knowledge products produced, the quality of policy advice, more effective south-south cooperation and enhanced coordination with other global electoral assistance providers. Examples include collaboration with GPECS Latin America to identify relevant experiences and initiatives in Latin America that could benefit the Arab region; joining forces with GPECS Asia in developing a training curriculum on electoral security; partnering with the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force in Brussels in organizing a global conference and developing knowledge products and accompanying e-learning courses.

Similarly, because of its placement within the governance and peacebuilding cluster, the project has access to expertise from across the different areas of governance including parliament, local governance, human rights, conflict prevention and peace building, among others. This access enabled the project to link elections with other related areas of governance, making its interventions comprehensive with greater potential for impact. An example includes a recent initiative conducted with the collaboration of the Hub's human rights advisor; this was a three-day workshop that brought together the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) and EMBs from 16 countries to discuss human rights and elections and the role of NHRIs in the electoral process. It was the first such meeting and provided a unique opportunity to make the links between civil and political rights and the rights of women to political participation and the electoral process. Another example includes the project's engagement with the local governance team in undertaking research on the state of local elections in the region. The partnership with the Hub's Mosharka project, as noted throughout the report, is another example of the benefits the project has gained from building synergies and linkages with other parts of UNDP. This has not only enhanced the project's results and impact but also contributed to value for money.

Through its engagement with Mosharka, the Project has partnered with UN Women on its youth interventions, particularly the youth leadership camps. These interventions have been examples of positive collaboration with different projects and agencies working together towards the same goal. Regular coordination meetings with UN Women, particularly during the planning and implementation of the joint interventions, ensured there were clear synergies and effective coordination in carrying out the activities. This level of coordination and collaboration is important given SIDA provides funding support to both UNDP and UN Women, and should be continued.

7. Project Design and Approach

The Regional Project, a regional component of GPECS, was designed “beyond the timeframe of any specific election event and supports the building of norms, practices, mechanisms and institutions that can foster active civic engagement and democratic accountability in the region.” It aims to strengthen and provide coherence to national efforts in the creation of robust mechanism and norms that support genuine political competition. The design reflects the country based electoral assistance projects which are also electoral cycle projects with a multi-year approach.

The project has had two long-term professional positions assigned to the region: the Regional Electoral Adviser, who acts as manager of the component, and a Regional Electoral Policy Specialist. It also has a project analyst, a gender analyst and two operations support staff. The project also retains part time advisors who, in addition to providing services to the regional project, at times also work with the Jordan Election Support Project and other projects at a country level.

The GPECS project sits within the Inclusive Political Processes unit of the Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster. As a result, the interaction with UNDP’s parliamentary work comes more natural. Additionally, the interaction with other Governance and Peacebuilding issues is facilitated under the integrated approach of the Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster itself.

As with many new business models, the regional project has generated new ways of looking at old problems and has experimented positively with different delivery modalities. Collaborating closely with other projects where there is cross-over, such as gender and youth, which a lot of activities have been delivered together with the Mosharka (‘Participation’) programme of the Regional Hub and with the active participation of the Hub’s Gender Advisor/youth focal point.

The Project has an excellent relationship with the donor who is closely engaged with the project through its representative in Cairo who states the project is “in line with SIDA’s regional strategy” and is designed to be flexible and responsive. With the blessing of the donor it has a more informal management and reporting structure than traditional projects as it engages in a constant process of review, often on a weekly basis with the donor noting “there is continual dialogue at the implementation level”. And as per the management structure of the project, Sweden is a member of and participates in GPECS Steering Committee meetings; it participated in the annual GPECS Steering Committee meeting held in New York in 2015.

The strategy is one of flexibility and responsiveness – particularly to emerging needs of country projects for ideas or themes for engagement, and personnel, noting the demands on the project to be continually brokering relationships and networking.

This is a productive context in which the donor, who is keen to focus on opportunities rather than challenges and clearly appreciates working with a creative and enthusiastic team, can engage closely with the team on the identification of opportunities, strategies, emerging needs and timely inputs.

Finally, SIDA noted that the quality of reporting improved markedly from 2014 to 2015 with the latter progress report more data including a breakdown by gender of attendance at the fifteen major activities of 2015 with an overall participation rate of 44 per cent by women despite the low levels of women in the field of elections in the region. Links to the nine

knowledge products produced in 2015 - reports; the Lexicon; e-learning courses and other publications - were also recorded.

The project can, however, benefit from a more nuanced and higher level focus on monitoring and evaluation through setting of baselines, monitoring progress and assessing impact at a greater depth.

8. Expenditure Overview

The below table provides an overview of the financial expenditure of the project across its three outcome areas since its commencement in 2013.

Outcome	Expenditure
Outcome 1: Strengthened Regional Capacity and Knowledge on Electoral Issues	\$1,959,027
Outcome 2: Increased Participation of Women throughout the Electoral Cycle	\$1,400,835
Outcome 3: Formal and Informal Mechanisms in place to enable Youth CSO's and Youth Civic Engagement in Government Led and Other Political Processes	\$995,130
4. Project management and advisory support	\$1,160,860
Total	\$5,515,852

9. Regional Context

The regional component is being implemented in a region facing political uncertainty, impacted by dramatic changes in stability in countries like Libya, Syria, and Yemen, and threatened elsewhere by the incursion of armed oppositional forces. The region has a range of governance systems from monarchies to parliamentary systems; a spectrum of stability in terms of electoral processes, and an equally diverse experience of electoral systems with a common element being their relative fragility.

The electoral landscape has evolved rapidly, particularly since 2011. It has been strengthened in some places and has collapsed in others for reasons quite beyond the scope of the project to influence. As the 2011 uprisings sowed seeds of hope across the region, impacting in initially buoyant and even jubilant ways across many countries, so the collapse of that initial flush of optimism and the consequent collapse of governance and termination of election support projects accordingly have littered the project, and development work more broadly, with immense challenges. This is a region where conflict is not a respecter of borders; where internal strife in one country can spill over into another

country's politics and where there has been little tradition of institutionalism. However, it is also a region where a common language and culture provide for a strong foundation for cross-border efforts, cooperation and collaboration. Internal and regional politics are highly sensitive, volatile and nuanced and require a high level of experienced professionalism to navigate effectively.

The Project has expanded in vision and scope the type of electoral support envisioned at the regional level, generating thinking around the changing election support environment and prompting timely thinking about regional vis a vis country specific support; the design of regional projects that contribute to but do not interfere with country level interventions; the recognition of the benefits of regional information and experience sharing and the consequent need to provide for a reliable and enduring knowledge base, and the particularity of focus on EMBs as the principal 'client' in relationship to other stakeholders.

That the project has managed to encourage effective networking and has helped build a new, successful regional body in a very short period is testament to the skill with which the project is being guided.

The following two extracts from the Congressional Research Services underscore the dramatic range of context the Project faces. With internal challenges such as these, the benefits of the creation of the regional organisation, the centralised capacity development and learning within the LAS and the opportunities provided by the programme for cross-border lesson-learning become much more meaningful.

a) Tunisia

Tunisia's 2011 popular uprising, known as the "Jasmine Revolution," ended the 23-year authoritarian regime of then-President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali and sparked a wave of unrest in much of the Arab world. Since then, Tunisia has taken key steps toward democracy. Civil and political liberties have expanded dramatically, and Tunisia has experienced far less violence than some other transitional countries. An elected National Constituent Assembly adopted a new constitution in early 2014, and presidential and parliamentary elections were held in late 2014, formally ending a series of transitional governments (see timeline, Figure 1). During the transitional period, leading political factions repeatedly overcame political crises by engaging in informal negotiations. The durability of such arrangements remains to be seen. The 2014 elections were largely peaceful ("Tunisia's Call"), a secularist party founded in 2012, won the largest number of seats in the new parliament, and its founder, Béji Caïd Essebsi, an elder statesman who served as Interim Prime Minister in 2011, was elected president. The main Islamist party, Al Nahda (alt: Ennahda, "Renaissance"), its top political opponent, won the second-largest block of seats. After protracted negotiations, Nidaa Tounes formed a coalition that includes two other secularist parties as well as Al Nahda. Al Nahda leaders, who had publicly called for a "national unity" government, praised the coalition's formation. It was controversial within Nidaa Tounes, however, with some leaders arguing that the decision to include Al Nahda would betray voters.

b) Yemen

On November 23, 2011, after eleven months of protests and violence that claimed over 2,000 lives, then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen signed on to a U.S.-backed, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-brokered transition plan. In line with the plan, Yemen held a presidential election in February 2012 with one consensus candidate on the ballot—former Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour al Hadi. President Hadi took office in February 2012 shortly after his election. He resigned on January 22, 2015, and is under house arrest, surrounded by fighters from the Houthi movement.

Issues such as terrorism and Yemen's political stability are tied to broader questions regarding the country's long-term economic and environmental viability. According to the 2014 United Nations Human Development Index, Yemen ranks 154 out of 187 countries. Its poverty has been exacerbated by the quadrupling of its population over the last 30 years. Agricultural development has been decimated by water shortages, political strife, and lack of investment, making the country dependent on food imports for up to 90% of basic staples. In May 2014, the World Food Program estimated that 10 million Yemenis out of a total population of 25 million could be categorized as either severely food insecure or close to it.

.... Hopes for progress and stability arising from Yemen's 2011-2012 political transition have been eroding throughout 2014 and early 2015. Before that.... observers considered Yemen to be one of the few relative Arab Spring "success stories"; the government had new leadership (President Hadi) and had managed to bring all the nation's political factions together under the rubric of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) in an attempt to reach consensus on governance. However, in Yemen no one group, including the central government, has a monopoly on armed force; various actors can act as "spoilers" to disrupt the system in pursuit of their own interests and that dynamic played out throughout 2014.

When the NDC concluded in early 2014, Yemen's political transition was still several key steps from completion; a constitution had yet to be drafted, so a referendum on its approval had yet to be held, and subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections were still on hold. After two years of transition and with the prospect of several more, many observers were concerned that momentum would shift from President Hadi to those opposed to the internationally backed transition process—namely former president Saleh and his Houthi allies who sought to redraw Yemen's internal boundaries more to their favour.

Within weeks of the National Dialogue Conference's conclusion, the Houthi movement, a Zaydi revivalist political and insurgent movement in the north that has been at war with the government on-and-off since 2004, launched another military offensive against various tribal allies of President Hadi. Their campaign has continued, culminating in the summer 2014 takeover of the capital Sana'a and other parts of Yemen. Their battlefield successes have created a new balance of power, and this evolving political dynamic may challenge outside powers, such as the United States, to reassess how they can exert influence inside Yemen in pursuit of their national security interests, such as counterterrorism.

10. Conclusion

Overall, the establishment of the Organization of Arab Election Management Bodies; the elaboration of its Charter; the progress towards the finalization of an MoU for the hosting and support by the Government of Jordan for an initial two year period, together with the capacity building and training programmes implemented by the Project; the support that has propelled and supported the creation of the Department of Elections in the League of Arab States; the synergies derived from the complementary publication of knowledge products

and complementary e-learning guides through collaboration with global GPECS including the Task Force in Brussels; the focus on training; the sharing of information between countries including south-south dialogue and the work with women and young people have collectively met the goals of the project and has laid a solid foundation for Phase 2.

As the project transitions to the next phase it is recommended that it continue to build on its coordinating role to act as a regional archive or knowledge-base on election issues such as legislation (able to provide access to the legislative frameworks of every country in the region, for example); legislative models to address specific needs (such as quota legislation or regulations); on voter and civic education, ballot paper design and examples; EDR, IT-solutions and so on and develop a suite of knowledge products to complement those already produced which could also be supported by a regional web-based community of practice. CTAs have expressed a strong preference for more country to country information-sharing and have acknowledged the support of the regional project for the timely support to date.

The Project has been requested to prepare a Phase 2 proposal the preliminary design of which aims to build and expand on the achievements of Phase I, taking forward initiatives that have potential for greater impact in the region. With the overall aim to improve accountability, participation and representation, the Project will contribute towards enhancing knowledge, awareness and capacity on electoral processes and broader democratic governance themes in the region. Through regional partnerships, linkages and south-south cooperation, the Project strategy is designed to strengthen ties between and among networks and organizations promoting democratic principles in the region. With a particular focus on vulnerable groups including women, youth and persons with disabilities, Phase II is designed around five outputs:

1. Strengthened regional capacity and knowledge on electoral issues
2. Profession of electoral administration established in the region through the codification of knowledge and good practices
3. Integrated programming promoted through the linking of elections and broader democratic governance topics
4. Civic and political participation of women and youth mainstreamed
5. Targeted national level electoral cycle interventions

Phase II is also anticipated to activate the 'country window' facility that is already embedded into GPECS but not utilized under phase I of the regional project and will include country level support earmarked to countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. The country window will allow country programs to apply for specific programmatic support thus reinforcing regional electoral assistance and providing for greater capacity to respond to country needs.

11. Recommendations

1. Gender equity and the provision of opportunity for women and youth to participate equally in democratic, political and electoral processes within the legal and cultural framework is a massive regional issue, and a primary focus for SIDA. It is

recommended that in Phase 2 the project develop a clear gender strategy with defined objectives and targets that includes more focused strategies for women and youth political participation and ensure dedicated gender and youth election experts engaged with the project. A glossary of gender terminology that may guide some thematic interventions is attached as an Annex.

2. Sustainability of the Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs) is a risk and should be a major focus of phase II, with a clear funding model that ensures not only the sustainability but effectiveness of the new organization. While its charter includes provision for membership fees, the ArabEMBs will need assistance from the project in ensuring it has a clear strategy and action plan for becoming fully operational and sustainable. Furthermore, acknowledging the very positive aspects of organization as a model, and in partnership with EMBs, it is recommended that the Project create additional sectoral opportunities for linkages and networking in additional electoral stakeholder areas. Such areas might include legislators on the drafting of electoral legislation and regulations; the judiciary and EMBs responsible for election dispute mechanism processes, and possibly with domestic observer bodies through the Arab Network for Democratic Elections, a body that could also help coalesce work with civil society, on gender, youth and work with other vulnerable groups.
3. The five intervention areas outlined in the Phase 2 draft project Document provide a solid basis for a more integrated advisory function for the Project and learning platform regionally, and wisely refrain from setting objectives outside the capacity or responsibility areas of an EMB to deliver. To achieve this the Project needs to move towards becoming a regional resource both in the provision of high level electoral advisory support and in strengthening the collaboration with and between country projects. Recognizing both the limited skills sets in a necessarily small country team and the value-for-money cost efficiencies of regionally-based expertise already provided (as in communications and voter registration), a greater focus on the provision of regionally based capacity development and policy support be pursued. It is suggested the Project lead on a focused capacity training programme / approach in collaboration with country projects in areas including communications and the use of social media; electoral technology; monitoring and evaluation and other thematic areas identified by CTAs as gaps or weaknesses in the general knowledge base.
4. It is strongly recommended that Phase 2 embed clear baselines, based on information gathered through implementation of phase I, against which progress and impact can be measured over the coming years which provide for a robust M&E reporting framework.
5. To leverage the impact of learning opportunities such as regional Workshops or study visits, it is recommended the Project dedicate resources, possibly through the CTAs and through M&E oversight, to locally-based follow-up and application. A follow-up support and intervention strategy will add qualitative and value-for-money impact

from larger regional events and reorient the focus from being event-driven to being integrated-support driven.

6. As the project transitions to Phase 2 it is recommended that it leverage its coordinating role to act as a regional archive or knowledge-base on election issues such as legislation (able to provide access to the legislative frameworks of every country in the region, for example); legislative models to address specific needs (such as quota legislation or regulations); on voter and civic education, ballot paper design and examples; EDR, IT-solutions and so on and develop a suite of knowledge products to complement those already produced which could also be supported by a regional web-based community of practice. CTAs have expressed a strong preference for more country to country information-sharing and have acknowledged the support of the regional project for the timely support to date.
7. It is suggested the project continue building upon the networking and learning opportunities for CTAs and UNDP election project staff as a contribution towards the building of regional expertise through further BRIDGE and other training and the support to more fully accredited facilitators within the region.
8. Should the Project evolve as expected with possibly increased resources, the project will benefit from a review of staffing structures to strengthen the core team, and increasing its pool of senior, highly experienced electoral professionals. A dedicated finance manager should be appointed to ensure accurate and timely financial reporting.
9. The donor envisages that in Phase 2 under the country window facility, requests from country offices in the region will come to GPECS. While there are already clear guidelines for this facility, it will be, nonetheless, helpful to ensure that information on the guidelines for country window support are widely disseminated and understood by all country offices in the region.
10. Given the evolving political, economic, institutional and electoral dynamics of the region, the myriad issues demanding attention and the history of country election projects affected by issues essentially beyond their control, it is strongly recommended that the Project invest in periodic political analysis assessment of the region building on what is currently being undertaken by the Hub under its conflict prevention work. Such analysis, focused particularly on prevention of electoral violence, would draw upon input from CTAs and country offices, academics, researchers and key interlocutors as well as on existing UN and donor political analysis. This effort reflects the reality that national conflict often spills over and has consequences regionally.
11. It is advised that for the protection of the project, the RRF in a future project document limit the ambition of objectives to those within the control of the project to deliver. See comments under Section 5a for further explanation.

12. To enhance communications and address concerns of some Chief Technical Advisors (CTAs) for more timely information sharing, and to clarify roles and responsibilities between national and regional projects, it is advised that a robust communications protocol be agreed between regional and country projects.

13. As national projects, particularly CTAs, have called for stronger focus on follow-up to regional events, it is recommended that the project prioritize national follow-up and sustainability of regional initiatives through close engagement with CTAs and country offices. This will also strengthen the project's impact at the national level.

ENDS

Annex 1

List of Persons Consulted

Name	Organization
Jos De la Haye	Regional Cluster Leader, Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster, UNDP Regional Hub, Amman
Luis Martinez-Betanzos	Regional Electoral Adviser for Arab States
Hafsa Halawa	SIDA Sweden, Amman
Dr Emad Alshadly Alsayah	Chairperson, Arab Electoral Management Bodies Association
Rafael Lopez-Pintor	Senior Electoral Adviser, Regional Hub, Amman (Consultant)
Niall McCann	Lead Electoral Advisor, UNDP New York
Gianpiero Catozzi	Senior Electoral Advisor; Coordinator of the EU/UNDP Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance, Brussels.
Najia Hashemee	Regional Electoral Policy Specialist
Richard Chambers	CTA, UNDP Electoral Support Programme, Jordan
Riccardo Barranca	CTA, UNDP Electoral Support project, Tunisia
Panto Letic	(fmr) Chief Electoral Advisor, UN, Libya
Dan Raduelsecu	CTA, UNDP Electoral Support Project, Beirut, Lebanon
Aleksandar Mihajlov	CTA, UNDP Electoral Support Project
Kate Sullivan	Former Team Member Libya and former CTA Yemen
Yakup Beris	Director, Regional Programmes, Regional Hub, Amman
Allesandro Mracic	Local Governance Advisor, Regional Hub, Amman
Ms Bedrieh Belbeisi	Deputy Secretary-General IEC Jordan; Acting Secretary General, Arab Association of Electoral Management Bodies

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Ambassador	Director, Elections Department, League of Arab States
Ahmed Amin Sultan	Head of Election Observation Division, Electoral Affairs Department, League of Arab States
Hisham Kuhail	Chief Electoral Officer, Central Electoral Commission, Palestine
Linda Haddad	Regional Hub Gender / Youth Programme Manager
Marta Vallejo	Human Rights Adviser Regional Hub, Jordan
Kawtar Zerouali	Gender and Youth Focal Point, Regional Hub, Jordan
Shatha Mahmoud	Gender Analyst, Regional Electoral Support Project/Regional Hub
Yara Nassar	Exec. Director, Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
Rahaf Abu Shahin	Network Coordinator, Arab Network for Democratic Elections
Nora Mourad	Research Officer Lebanese Elections Assist. Project (LEAP)
Diana Kallas	Legal /Electoral Officer, LEAP
Olga Eid	M&E Assistant, LEAP
Maroun Sfeir	Training Officer, LEAP
Guilnard Asmar	Media and Outreach Officer, LEAP
Nazih Darwish	Communications Officer, LEAP
Mansour Sadeghi	Electoral Affairs Officer, EAD

Annex 2

Documents Consulted

a) Project Docs

- Project Document: Regional Electoral Support: Middle East and North Africa Phase 1(2013-2016) under the framework of the Global Programme for Electoral Cycle Support.
- Cost Sharing Agreement between Sweden and UNDP for the MENA Regional Electoral Support Programme. Signed 2013.
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Annex 3

Gender Terminology

Given the emphasis on gender in the project and in the light of recommendations that gender be refocused with a more specific electoral framework, it is helpful to appreciate the scope of issues needing to be addressed and the desirability therefore of embedding a dedicated gender advisor within the project.

Based on a glossary developed by the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW): <http://www.un-instraw.org>

Affirmative action – tries to rebalance the traditional discrimination against women or other marginalized groups with actions that are designed to give women a ‘step up’. Quotas etc.

Diversity management –creating a work place culture that is beneficial to the organization, in particular through reducing the monolithic culture, reducing long work hours and enabling more flexible working environments

Empowerment - Empowerment implies people - both women and men - taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills (or having their own skills and knowledge recognized), increasing self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome.³ Empowerment implied an expansion in women's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.⁴

Equal opportunities – undertaking specific actions which encourage and promote the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups such as women, persons with disabilities, minority ethnic groups

Gender - The socially prescribed culturally and historically specific roles that men and women are expected to adopt. Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.⁵

Gender Analysis - Gender analysis is a systematic way of looking at the different impacts of development, policies, programs and legislation on women and men that entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive information about the population concerned. Gender analysis can also include the examination of the multiple

³ IDRC 1998

⁴ Kabeer, N. "Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." In *Discussing Women's Empowerment: Theory and Practice*. Stockholm: Sida Studies No. 3, 2001.

⁵ *Exploring Concepts of Gender and Health*. Ottawa: Health Canada, 2003
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/women/exploringconcepts.htm>

ways in which women and men, as social actors, engage in strategies to transform existing roles, relationships, and processes in their own interest and in the interest of others.⁶

Gender Balance – percentage of women and men involved in an activity.

Gender Equality - Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.⁷

Gender Equity - Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.⁸

Gender Mainstreaming - Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men and women is not perpetuated.⁹

Gender Mainstreaming Principles

- forging and strengthening the political will to achieve gender equality and equity, at the local, national, regional and global levels;
- incorporating a gender perspective into the planning processes of all ministries and departments of government, particularly those concerned with macroeconomic and development planning, personnel policies and management, and legal affairs;
- integrating a gender perspective into all phases of sectoral planning cycles, including the analysis development, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation policies, programmes and projects;
- using sex-disaggregated data in statistical analysis to reveal how policies impact differently on women and men;
- increasing the numbers of women in decision-making positions in government and the private and public sectors;

⁶ Health Canada, 2003 and ILO 2000 and Gender and Biodiversity Research Guidelines. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1998. http://www.idrc.ca:8080/biodiversity/tools/gender1_e.cfm ILO

⁷ ABC of Women Worker's Rights and Gender Equality, Geneva: ILO, 2000.

⁸ Ibid. and Gender and Household Food Security. Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2001. <http://www.ifad.org/gender/glossary.htm>

⁹ Agreed Conclusions on Gender Mainstreaming. Geneva: United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1997. <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/docs/1997/e1997-66.htm>

- providing tools and training in gender awareness, gender analysis and gender planning to decision-makers, senior managers and other key personnel;
- forging linkages between governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to ensure a better use of resources.¹⁰

Gender-Neutral, Gender-Sensitive, and Gender Transformative

The primary objective behind gender mainstreaming is to design and implement development projects, programmes and policies that:

- 1 do not reinforce existing gender inequalities (Gender Neutral)
- 2 attempt to redress existing gender inequalities (Gender Sensitive)
- 3 attempt to re-define women and men’s gender roles and relations (Gender Positive / Transformative)

The degree of integration of a gender perspective in any given project can be seen as a continuum.¹¹

Gender Negative	Gender Neutral	Gender Sensitive	Gender Positive	Gender Transformative
Gender inequalities are reinforced to achieve desired development outcomes	Gender is not considered relevant to development outcome	Gender is a means to reach set development goals	Gender is central to achieving positive development outcomes	Gender is central to promoting gender equality and achieving positive development outcomes
Uses gender norms, roles and stereotypes that reinforce gender inequalities	Gender norms, roles and relations are not affected (worsened or improved)	Addressing gender norms, roles and access to resources in so far as needed to reach project goals	Changing gender norms, roles and access to resources a key component of project outcomes	Transforming unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and support for women’s empowerment

Practical Gender Needs - Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) are identified by women within their socially defined roles, as a response to an immediate perceived necessity. PGNs usually relate to inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care and

¹⁰ *Gender Equality and Equity: A summary review of UNESCO’s accomplishments since the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995). Geneva: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2000.*

¹¹ *Adapted from Eckman, A, 2002*

employment, and they do not challenge gender divisions of labor and women's subordinate position in society.¹²

Sex - Sex refers to the biological characteristics which define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females. (WHO)

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – Violation or mistreatment by someone in an institution towards a beneficiary, whereby goods or services are exchanged or promised in relation to benefits usually allocated by the programme in a regularized manner. The abuse and exploitation often preys on the fact that the person is vulnerable and needy, and would usually include sexual favors which may or may not be illegal.

Strategic Gender Interests - Strategic Gender Interests (SGIs) are identified by women as a result of their subordinate social status, and tend to challenge gender divisions of labor power and control, and traditionally defined norms and roles. SGIs vary according to particular contexts and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies.¹³

Women friendly – An environment or organization that provides a safe and secure place for women, including with policies, practices and processes which take into account staff's practical and strategic gender roles, and which provides funding, support and training to enable women to advance.

'Mainstreaming gender and gender equality is a commitment to ensure that women's as well as men's concerns and experiences are integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, policies and programmes so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is integral to all development decisions and interventions; it concerns the staffing, procedures and culture of development organizations as well as their programmes; and it forms part of the responsibility of all staff. Gender mainstreaming does not preclude women only projects. It shifts their focus from women as a target group, to gender equality as a goal. It supports women-only (or men-only) projects designed as strategic interventions to address aspects of gender inequality and promote greater equality'¹⁴.

¹² Vainio-Mattila, A. *Navigating Gender: A framework and a tool for participatory development*. Helsinki: Finland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1999. http://global.finland.fi/julkaisut/taustat/nav_gender/glossary.htm

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Gender Manual: A Practical Guide for Development Policy Makers and Practitioners, Helen Derbyshire, Social Development Division DFID, 2002.