

**United Nations Development Programme**  
**Final Evaluation of the Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT)**  
**Phase II: January 2012—July 2015**



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## Acronyms

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ANA	Afghan National Army
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
CEO	Chief Electoral Officer
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSO	civil society organization
CVEs	Civic Voter Educators
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAC	Development Assistance Criteria
DCEO	Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
DfCs	District Field Coordinators
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DSRSG	Deputy Secretary Representative of the Secretary General
E-Day	Election Day
ELECT II	Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow, Phase II
EDSS	Election Decision Support System
EMB	Electoral Management Body
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EUEAT	European Union Election Assessment Team
EUR	Euro
FEMBOSA	Forum for Election Management Bodies of South Asia
GARMIN	Grant Agreement Risk Management Implementation Note
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMS	General Management Services
GTR	Grants Technology Resources
FPTP	'first past the post' electoral system
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission (of Afghanistan)
IECC	Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (of Afghanistan)
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LTA	Long Term Agreement
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
NIM	National Implementation Modality
MC	Media Commission
MDR	Multiple Dimensional Representation electoral system
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOHIA	Ministry of Haji and Religious Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs

MTR	Mid Term Review
NTA	National Technical Allowance
NTC	National Tally Centre
NUG	National Unity Government
OAI	Office of Audit and Investigation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Office for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PC	Provincial Council
PEO	Provincial Election Officer
PESG	Post Election Strategy Group
PIECC	Provincial Independent Electoral Complaints Commission
PIP	Project Initiation Plan
PR	proportional representation election system
ProDoc	Project Document
PS	Polling Station
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PSO	Procurement Support Offices
PWD	People with Disabilities
ROM	Read Only Memory
SERC	Special Electoral Reform Commission
SEMB	Strengthening Election Management in Bangladesh
SNTV	Single non-transferable vote
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
TC	Tally Centre
ToR	Terms of Reference
TMAF	Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNDPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
USD	United States Dollar
UV	Ultra Violet

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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During the 2012-2015 implementation period, the donor-funded United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) implemented 'Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow, phase II' (ELECT II) project was modified to include Afghan government technical and operational assistance for the 2014 presidential and provincial council and 2015 parliamentary elections. The original project document targeted technical assistance designed to enhance the sustainable and independent institutional capacity of the Independent Electoral Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) in line with several international conferences that, since 2010, saw agreement between the Afghan government and the international community to incrementally move toward a fully-functional Afghan democracy whilst considering the very real challenges facing this country in transition.

From the outset, and following on the institutional capacity built as a result of ELECT I and recognition that the prior project was considered too large and complex, ELECT II sought to narrow focus on the IEC as the sole electoral management body in Afghanistan. Over time, and with Afghan government recognition that international assistance would be needed to accomplish elections on a nationwide scale during a time of declining international military presence and increasing security threats, the project expanded in response and as reflected in the revised project document (2013).

In accordance with the electoral cycle approach, ELECT II focused ongoing process support resources to the IEC while increasing election-related staff and resource allocation in response to planned 2014 and 2015 elections. As a result, ELECT II engaged United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) for support to the nascent Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) in a very short timeframe from government announcement to commission complaints processing. Despite the potential conflict of interest between embedded support to the IEC and the same within the IECC, there was a donor requirement to extend support to all electoral bodies from the common electoral basket fund during the project implementation period as part of the donor basket funding mechanism.

The UNDP independent evaluation team reviewed and examined the project context, relevance, project design, project implementation, project management, and project results according to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Criteria (DAC) and this report provides a detailed analysis with recommendations as to how the ELECT II project succeeded (and to what degree) in that regard. Thereafter, the evaluation team offers a set of recommendations by evaluation criterion for proposed improvements to the provision of technical assistance by the UNDP to Afghan electoral process partners.

In terms of overall project accomplishments, the ELECT II project succeeded in building the capacity of individuals within the IEC and IECC to conduct technically viable elections in 2014, and provided the opportunity for the IEC to independently manage a portion of project funds during the 2014 presidential election cycle. IEC capacity was built in operational, implementation and to some extent institutional capacity, with the caveat that all key election departments will require continued assistance and in some areas (in particular financial management, procurement and oversight) will need additional attention and technical assistance to move forward.

There is a key consideration in all areas for a focus on maintaining the project successes evident within the IEC and to some extent the IECC so that election management and implementation will become more sustainable and therefore incrementally independent of international assistance in the future. Likewise, the detailed examination of project impact, value for money, the mixed National/Direct (NIM/DIM) Implementation Modalities, and quality of reporting and monitoring & evaluation capacity indicates that

while some areas have demonstrated marked improvement from the onset of ELECT II in 2012, there are areas where specific future technical expertise and embedded advisory assistance will help the IEC toward incrementally achieving sustainable capacity.

In terms of project results, there are demonstrated areas of accomplishment, while external factors such as the voter register, ambiguity regarding parliamentary elections, and the outcome and implementation of pending electoral reforms create a level of uncertainty and the need for a flexible approach to future project implementation to help ensure that the project document is a true reflection of the development goals of Afghan implementation partners. This is intended to move Afghan electoral process capacity toward truly independent and Afghan-owned and managed elections. In all cases, there is an identified need for enhanced ownership through Afghan government contribution of staff, salaries, operational, and material costs while working in partnership to help develop institutional memory and individual accountability as Afghanistan enters a new election cycle in 2016 or 2017.

During project implementation with more than \$300 million allocated<sup>1</sup> to the ELECT II project and the separate expenditure of international donor and military funds of more than \$600 billion over the past decade<sup>2</sup> to support the development of Afghan governance, security, infrastructure and social welfare institutions combined with continued erosion of security conditions for average citizens and internationals alike have combined to create donor fatigue and uncertainty as to how much and for how long the overall development assistance can continue—including assistance to the electoral process. In response, the UNDP, through ELECT II, proposed maintaining core funding and a minimal staff in the Kabul Office so that the Afghan government, UNDP, and donors supporting electoral process technical assistance could (through the Project Initiation Plan/PIP) maintain minimal operational capacity in anticipation of the next stage of sustainable electoral process development. Looking toward 2016 and the ongoing Afghan 'Decade of Transformation',<sup>3</sup> parliamentary elections assistance needs consideration of possible reform to the electoral system, and publicly-demanded reforms as a result of the 2014 formation of the National Unity Government (NUG). The Special Electoral Reform Commission (SERC) recommendations were partially announced in December 2015, with an expectation that the president will review and approve them at least in part, and that the government of Afghanistan will announce parliamentary election day thereafter. Meanwhile, it is intended that the Afghan government, UNDP and the donors, will likely formulate a more narrowly-focused project providing electoral technical assistance from 2016 as the successor of ELECTII. ('ELECT III').

Overall, and as noted throughout this evaluation report, **sustainability** is a key consideration for all actors in the Afghan development process and one which will likely determine the level of funding and the scope of project implementation moving forward and as part of a commitment by all project document signatories to ensure that project implementation at all levels is carried out in a productive, transparent, and accountable way. Despite recognized accomplishment in supporting electoral processes to date, there is more to be done within a reasonable timeframe and at a corresponding level of support contributing to an equal and accountable partnership among the Afghan government, Afghan electoral management structures, and the international community.

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<sup>1</sup> A total of approximately 1 billion dollars has been spent on the entire electoral process since 2003/2004

<sup>2</sup> See for example World Bank/Afghanistan assistance report:

[https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/Data/reports/Afghanistan\\_Lessons\\_Ten\\_Years.pdf](https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/Data/reports/Afghanistan_Lessons_Ten_Years.pdf) and "Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002-2010" <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/gha-Afghanistan-2011-major-resource-flows.pdf>. See also: <http://csis.org/publication/us-cost-afghan-war-fy2002-fy2013>

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: "Afghanistan's Transformation Decade, 2015-2024." <http://mfa.gov.af/en/page/6547/transformation-decade2015-2024>

## II. BACKGROUND

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Since project inception in January 2012, ELECT II has been expanded to encompass the third cycle of elections in 2014 and 2015, respectively. With the drawdown of international troops and the corresponding increase in instability, the Afghan government has gone through a period of withdrawal from direct international intervention overall, although international donors have maintained relatively consistent levels of funding—particularly in regards to financing of electoral processes. This includes significant ongoing funding and support to the primary development partner for the ELECT project, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

The electoral timeline established by the IEC for future elections (in conjunction with the Afghan government) during ELECT II implementation has been dramatically altered in response to the political fracas of 2014 during which the two leading presidential candidates battled for political supremacy despite the results of an undisclosed audit of the popular vote during which 100% of ballots were re-counted.

In addition to increasingly fragile political alliances, there are very real challenges to project implementation and technical assistance provision (particularly in the provinces) due to an increasingly unstable security situation. The proposed “Decade of Transformation” proposed as part of the Bonn Declaration<sup>4</sup> has met with several serious obstacles including the full realization of an entirely Afghan-led and scrutinized electoral cycle.

ELECT II set out to establish independent sustainable capacity primarily for the IEC in Afghanistan, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). That primary objective was accomplished in part through UNDP’s technical assistance intervention, and operational assistance, and via ELECT II as the primary intermediary between Afghan electoral bodies and international donors. The Afghan presidential elections in 2014 represented the first peaceful transition of power in the nation’s history. The persistent “culture of impunity” and real and perceived fraud that ripples through all levels of the electoral administration is a real challenge to accomplishing the UNDP’s stated goal of working toward sustainable independent development for any partner country.

## III. METHODOLOGY

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In order to produce this report, the evaluation team (ET) directly engaged and independently reviewed the project through individuals and relevant documentation to enable a better understanding of the legal, political, electoral and security impact of the significant technical and operational challenges to the electoral process which have occurred in Afghanistan since project inception in 2012. Before departing from respective home bases in Spain and the USA, the team conducted a **desk review** of all relevant documents supplied by the UNDP/key interlocutors or made available through independent on-line research, including those that make up the legal and operational electoral framework upon which the UNDP ELECT II project is based.

In addition, while in Kabul for 9 consecutive days of **in-person interviews** and after hours **Skype conversations** with key interlocutors from the international donor community, Afghan electoral

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10494.doc.htm>.

management bodies, UNDP, and civil society, the team continued to review specific documents relevant to the Afghan electoral cycle and as noted in the Appendices to this report.<sup>5</sup>

In Kabul, the independent evaluators interviewed approximately 50 interlocutors, including former ELECT II staff, and other available stakeholders who were instrumental in the implementation of the project in country.<sup>6</sup> Interviews were conducted with the chairman, director, and Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and subsequent department head levels at the IEC, members of the Independent Elections Complaints Commission (IECC) and Special Electoral Reform Commission (SERC), the ambassadorial and first secretary levels in embassies representing ELECT II basket fund donors, and several directors of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) playing an important role in the transparency and accountability of the Afghan electoral process.

Once the ET had concluded in-country interviews and review of documents, the team returned to their respective homes to continue drafting this report while reviewing a steady flow of relevant background documents and ELECT II-related reports, conducting follow-on Skype interviews, and corresponding with interlocutors via email to obtain additional specific information to better inform the evaluation process.

The interview, analysis and evaluation process was conducted in accordance with Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Criteria (DAC) criteria, with specific reference to the UNDP TOR for this 36 months<sup>7</sup> project implementation timeline. Specifically the evaluators considered these criteria during the report, interview and drafting process in terms of ELECT II's contribution to the development of the Afghan electoral system:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency (including value for money)
- Impact
- Sustainability

## IV. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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“A secure environment with credible leadership and in which the rule of law is enforced is a necessary precondition for peace, reconstruction and development.”

—UNDP ELECT II ProDoc

During the implementation period of ELECT II from January 2012 through July 2015,<sup>8</sup> the project focused donor resources on strengthening the IEC as the primary focus of a comprehensive technical and operational assistance project.<sup>9</sup> Technical and operational assistance was provided to the IEC through ELECT II and operational and technical assistance was provided to the IECC through a subcontracting

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<sup>5</sup> While the ET recognizes that travel to at least several provinces, as part of the evaluation process would have been of benefit, the security, logistical and time constraints of the evaluation period prevented that from being part of the evaluation. However, the ET did meet with representative staff who were responsible for procurement, project coordination, and project implementation in the provinces as part of ELECT II.

<sup>6</sup> That is, 40 in person interviews in Kabul and 10 Skype interviews conducted in Kabul and from respective home bases. See Annex 1 for a comprehensive list of interlocutors.

<sup>7</sup> The overall timeline for the project was reduced by approximately six months when it closed in June 2015

<sup>8</sup> ELECT II was due to close in December 2015 but suffered an early closure due to the uncertain electoral schedule

<sup>9</sup> See UNDP ELECT II synopsis/Afghanistan: <http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/library/ProjectSummaires/ELECT-II.html>

agreement with United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES).<sup>10</sup>

Given the on-going political, operational and security challenges evident in conducting any international development intervention in Afghanistan,<sup>11</sup> the UNDP project ELECT II is recognised for supporting the IEC and IECC in the successful organisation and implementation of the technical aspects of the 2014 presidential and provincial council elections. The deteriorating political and security climate from project start in 2012 through the second round of elections in 2014 mirrored donor frustration with a political impasse that was as much a reflection of Afghan contemporary political reality as UNDP success (or failure) in project implementation overall.

The implementation timeline for ELECT II was ambitious, particularly given the recognised obstacles to designing, implementing, monitoring and engaging in a sustainable elections project involving elements of a National Implementation Modality (NIM) combined with the necessity for aspects of a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM).<sup>12</sup> The sheer size and scale of the 2014 elections and the critical nature of this latest election cycle in a broader international development and donor political priority context is recognised. In terms of the implementation timeline, it is important to note that international donors were eager to spend substantial resources to ensure a positive outcome in a very short time which can result in unanticipated and unintended financial misallocation and resource duplication.<sup>13</sup>

For example, staff hired en masse during the run up to Election Day by Election Management Bodies (EMBs) (IEC and IECC) concurrent with the necessity to hire, train and deploy substantial numbers of internationals to accomplish nationwide presidential and provincial council elections in tandem with the “Afghanisation” of the process placed extraordinary demands on the human, financial, and time allocation resources for all involved in the process.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, there is a recognised gap between donor expectations for a consecutive series of successful elections resulting in the transfer of sustainable development skills and the reality of the Afghan development timeline in accordance with a very different set of cultural norms, expectations and process outcomes.<sup>15</sup> However, as acknowledged initially at the London Conference (2010), underscored subsequently at the Kabul Conference (2010), and affirmed at the Bonn Conference (2011), there is a joint international-Afghan commitment to realising sustainable governance structures (including EMBs and electoral capacity) among other key development areas in the years ahead.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See IFES/2014 presidential elections (PDF):

[http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2014\\_ifes\\_afghanistan\\_presidential\\_and\\_pc\\_elections.pdf](http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2014_ifes_afghanistan_presidential_and_pc_elections.pdf), UNOPS/Afghanistan: <https://www.unops.org/english/where-we-work/middle-east/Pages/Afghanistan.aspx>, and UNDP/Afghanistan: <http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home.html>

<sup>11</sup> See for example, NDI/Afghanistan “lessons learned”: <https://www.ndi.org/afghanistan> and

<sup>12</sup> UNDP Direct Implementation Modality (DIM): <https://info.undp.org/global/popp/frm/pages/direct-implementation-dim-modality.aspx> and National Implementation Modality (NIM): <https://info.undp.org/global/popp/frm/pages/national-implementation-nim-Finances.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> The UNDP ELECT II budget for the implementation period as originally planned was \$338,157,793 USD.

[http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/operations/projects/democratic\\_governance/ELECTII.html](http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/ELECTII.html)

<sup>14</sup> Reference the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Deutschland) report: “Elections and Conflict in Afghanistan” <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/08587.pdf> and USIP (USA) report “2014 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan”

<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR338-2014%20Presidential%20and%20Provincial%20Council%20Elections%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> See for example, “Suffering, hope, and entrapment: Resilience and cultural values in Afghanistan”: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953610002662>.

<sup>16</sup> London Conference (28 January 2010): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/d-af/dv/af-london\\_conf\\_jan10/af-london\\_conf\\_jan10en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-af/dv/af-london_conf_jan10/af-london_conf_jan10en.pdf), Kabul Conference (20 July 2010):

[https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Kabul\\_Conference/FINAL\\_Kabul\\_Conference\\_Communique.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Kabul_Conference/FINAL_Kabul_Conference_Communique.pdf), and Bonn Conference (December 2011): <http://www.afghanistan-un.org/2011/12/the-international-afghanistan-conference-bonn-2011/>.

For the IEC, the expectation that ELECT II technical assistance would result in sustainable recruiting, staff training and retention processes in place during a relatively brief implementation period is more a rational long-term goal than an expected short-term outcome. Institutional memory is lacking and appointments and staffing have to date been more a reflection of personalities and personal relationships than an institutionalised process which selects candidates based upon transparent human resource policies and as part of a publicly accountable process. This was true in the way some staff were recruited and appointed during the ELECT II project implementation period and is likely to be true of the forthcoming appointment of Commissioners to the new IEC in 2016 as part of the recently announced SERC recommendations.<sup>17</sup>

However, there was an effort to compile a compendium of all documents and related Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to assist the IEC in accomplishing incrementally more aspects of the electoral process independent of direct donor and UNDP intervention. That compendium is still being compiled and UNDP intends to deliver it to the IEC in 2016.

There is an important role for civil society to play in helping to ensure that public officials and government agencies are held accountable to citizens while providing a forum for Afghans to express sometimes competing points of view. Civil society organisations provide an opportunity to address issues in a native linguistic context so that all participants in the Afghan democratic process can be given a voice in how their elections are conducted. This recognises that Election Day (E-day) is the beginning of a process as part of the electoral cycle that results in forming a government and then governing a country in the best interests of the largest possible percentage of a nation's populace.

Likewise, the importance of recognising and promoting the important role of women in Afghan society as a whole and within the electoral process is noted. While most positions within the management of the IEC and IECC were held by men, there is an evident opportunity for the UNDP to mobilise its considerable expertise and resources toward the goal of gender mainstreaming at least within the EMB structure moving forward.<sup>18</sup>

To date, numerous issues relevant to elections, electoral process, and electoral management bodies have been left unresolved as a result of the political turmoil of the summer of 2014. The necessity to broker a deal to create a national unity government so that the top two candidates for office could both play a role in the first democratic transition of presidential power in Afghanistan, to date, while marginalising the popular vote represents a very real crisis of confidence in the validity of the Afghan electoral process—most notably for Afghans who risk their lives to trek to the polls and who have done several times over the past decade.

“The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) also reiterated the Government of Afghanistan’s commitment “to conduct credible, inclusive and transparent Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015 in accordance with the Afghan Constitution, in which eligible Afghan citizens, men and women, have the opportunity to participate freely without internal or external interference and in accordance with the law.”—from the ELECT II ProDoc (revised)

<sup>17</sup> Free and Fair Elections Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA)/Special Electoral Reform Commission (SERC): <http://www.fefa.org.af/index.php> and “Strengthening Afghanistan’s Ballot Box” (Foreign Policy, September 2015): <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/01/strengthening-afghanistans-ballot-box/>

<sup>18</sup> See for example EPD “Women and Elections in Afghanistan” <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/WE-paper-English.pdf> and USIP Special Report, “Learning from Women’s Success in the 2010 Elections”: <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR309.pdf>

This is an important statement for consideration given the clear intent of the Framework as reflected in the revised project document. As with so many clearly defined and intended project outcomes in Afghanistan, this statement includes the need for serious consideration when formulating a future electoral assistance project. Specifically:

- Conducting credible, inclusive and transparent elections must include consideration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), other vulnerable groups such as People with Disabilities (PWDs) and how the IEC manages finances and ensures accountability for internal malfeasance, and a deliberate and systematic effort to create a credible (if imperfect) voter registry with valid voter ID cards preferably allocated to polling stations early on in the pre-election preparation process.
- Conducting elections in accordance with the Afghan Constitution should translate into a clear timeline and election implementation strategy that subscribes to the current constitutional mandate and one which does not include extra-constitutional processes, positions, or mandates. This is recognized as an issue beyond the control of ELECT or any international implementer.
- Eligible men and women have the opportunity to participate freely without internal or external interference in accordance with the law is a long-term goal which all international development partners are working in concert with Afghan authorities to accomplish over time.

## V. RELEVANCE

The ELECT II project of technical and operational assistance provided the intended opportunity for the Afghan electoral management body to design, staff, deploy, conduct, and evaluate their electoral process in accordance with international norms and best practices and as part of an electoral cycle approach. This is an important goal that has not yet been accomplished in its entirety. Implementation of this technical assistance on the Afghan side of the development partnership was relevant within the Afghan cultural context but considered unacceptable by the international donor community in terms of financial mismanagement and the lack of public or adjudicative accountability for those elections officials involved in fraud, financial impropriety, or electoral misconduct.<sup>19</sup>

The vagaries of the Afghan cultural, political and social context made this intended project a challenge to implement and manage over time despite the best efforts of a core group of national and international partners who were resident in the IEC and the IECC as national staff or international advisors during the run up to and conduct of the 2014 elections.

The expectation by some that presidential elections in concert with provincial council elections would take place seamlessly and in a fully transparent and accountable fashion did not coincide with the level of political maturity and operational expertise extant in the country during the ELECT II project implementation timeline. Despite 13 years of occupation and repeated elections during the past decade, the provision of technical assistance does not necessarily equate with either acceptance or internalisation of international norms and practice by development partners in any country—and that is evident in Afghanistan as well.

As with any successful international development assistance project, the goals and objectives of ELECT II (and indeed of a potential ELECT III) must coincide with the actual (and underlying) motivations of Afghan

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<sup>19</sup> “In Afghan Election, Signs of Systemic Fraud Cast Doubt on Many Votes” (NY Times, August 2014):

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/world/asia/in-afghan-election-signs-of-systemic-fraud-cast-doubt-on-many-votes.html>,

“Majority of IEC Staff Accused of Fraud Are Provincial Chiefs” (TOLU News, March 2015):

<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18444-majority-of-iec-staff-accused-of-fraud-are-provincial-chiefs>, and “Election Scandal Brings Down Afghan Official” (CBS/USA, June 2014): <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/afghanistan-election-ziarul-haq-amarkhel-resigns-amid-fraud-scandal/>.

development partners—and not merely the externally-perceived or assessment-based perceptions that result from relatively short-term deployment of international staff or other technical assistance providers. Afghanistan is a challenging deployment, operational, cultural, and communication environment. Turnover in international and national partner staff is high and is likely to continue along this trend, particularly as international donor funding levels decline and the security environment deteriorates even further.

According to the immediate project implementation timeline, the security and logistical obstacles to conducting successful nationwide elections during the project implementation period were significant and the ability for any monitor or implementer to assess and scrutinise actual field accounting, materials, and staff in the current operational climate are significant. Afghan interlocutors and available international staff both acknowledge that ELECT II was relevant to the needs of Afghan electoral bodies in terms of implementing the technical aspects of the 2014 elections, and in particular the first round. Afghan political discord and on-going uncertainty resulted in an undermining of the relevance of the project thereafter, particularly given that there is not yet a final agreement or approval of a set of promised electoral reforms as of this writing, and these reforms are a necessary first step toward restoring public confidence in and continued international involvement toward a sustainable Afghan electoral system.<sup>20</sup> The lack of an electoral timeline for delayed parliamentary elections and the constitutional issues inherent in these delays further complicates the ability of the UNDP (or indeed any international development assistance provider) to conduct a viable, effective and sustainable electoral systems support project.

Given that there is a continual debate among the international community and within the Afghan government as to which voter registration system will prove to be the solution to the long-standing challenge of conducting effective, efficient, timely, and inclusive elections, the ELECT II project could only be as relevant in this regard as the primary decision-makers in the process would allow. A re-validation of voter identification cards in 2016 to prepare for proposed 2017 parliamentary elections did not commence during ELECT II implementation and the current PIP project funding bridge period will require substantial internal UNDP project design, donor involvement, and Afghan partner consent prior to potential follow-on (e.g. “ELECT III”) activity to solve the short-term challenge to providing one voice/one vote moving forward.

The international donor and understood current government preference for technological solutions to at least some electoral process challenges<sup>21</sup> in an admittedly difficult and challenging operational environment in a country lacking in democratic traditions and infrastructure makes any longer-term assistance project more complex and challenging during the field implementation stage. Cognizant of the fact that there is a stated preference on the one hand for continued hand over of all aspects of electoral process management and implementation and on the other a recognised lack of national technical and project management expertise, it is important for all parties involved in the ELECT project to openly and frankly discuss the extent to which development expectations are SMART<sup>22</sup> in the Afghan context.

Given that the IEC is currently in transition toward a new set of organisational outcomes and objectives in accordance with the recently-announced SERC recommendations, there is the expectation that these

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<sup>20</sup> The SERC reforms were introduced in part on December 23, 2015 and are now awaiting presidential review and approval.

<sup>21</sup> For example, e-E-Tazkira biometric identification cards and for some favored e-voting platforms which face numerous implementation and infrastructure challenges in countries even with nationwide electric, transmission, and internet connectivity. See: IOM/Afghanistan: <http://afghanistan.iom.int/programmes/migration-management>, e-voting in the Afghan Parliament (Estonia): <http://balticreports.com/2010/06/10/estonia-bringing-e-voting-to-afghanistan/>, “Afghanistan Electronic ID Cards and Voter Registration” (FaceBook, February 2013) <https://www.facebook.com/notes/afghanistan/afghanistan-electronic-id-cards-and-voter-registration/609508302409061/>.

<sup>22</sup> Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART). See: CDC/USA Evaluation Brief, <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief3b.pdf> and

reforms will be implemented concurrent with the appointment of a new IEC Commission, and thereafter that there will be forward movement on voter registration and the consideration of a complex transition from the current single non-transferable vote (SNTV) to a parallel proportional representation (PR)/SNTV or a multi Dimensional Representations (MDR) System. **In this regard, continued UNDP technical assistance would seem of equal and relevant import to the massive electoral assistance that occurred during ELECT II (and indeed during the prior period of ELECT I).**

While many of these reforms have been suggested previously and prior evaluation analysis has recognised the need for a sustainable development strategy for Afghan electoral management bodies,<sup>23</sup> it is important for the UNDP to consider where its institutional strengths and weaknesses lie so as to ensure continued national capacity development while supporting the implementation of the SERC recommendations and promoting the gradual withdrawal of Afghan dependence on international financial and human resources to accomplish their own regional and national elections independent of international elections professionals.

The IECC is likely to be incorporated into the IEC pending presidential approval of the recently-announced SERC electoral reform recommendations. If that does occur, it would benefit **the UNDP to refocus and reconfigure increasingly limited financial and qualified human resources toward a more streamlined and technical assistance oriented approach to electoral development assistance.**<sup>24</sup>

Overall, the ELECT II project subscribed to the defined goals in place at the time of the drafting of the Project Document and in accordance with the stated development goals of the UNDP and international donors as a reflection of joint international and Afghan priorities for the country.<sup>25</sup>

There is a continued persistence of gender inequality in political representation, organisational leadership, and political participation—within electoral management bodies and more broadly within the Afghan political participation sphere. The cultural obstacles to meaningful progress are significant though various reports have noted at least incremental progress over the past decade and within the timeframe of ELECT II project implementation.<sup>26</sup>

## VI. PROJECT DESIGN

Project design subscribed to the stated goals of the Afghan government for electoral process assistance and allowed for a rapid response to the request for the UNDP to act as a neutral channel for direct technical and operational assistance to the IEC and IECC while managing the substantial basket of funds provided for accomplishing nationwide presidential and provincial council elections in 2014.

The project was initially designed to be implemented over a two-year period from 2012-2013, and was intended to enhance the IEC's electoral administration capacity. In response to Afghan government request and subsequent to a United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) needs assessment

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<sup>23</sup> As noted in the revised Project Document for ELECT II (April 2013) and as part of the ELECT II mid-term review. See: <http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/demgov/elect/ELECTII-APR-2013.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> That is, it is important to consider that the era of seemingly limitless international donor funding to Afghanistan is drawing to a close and the shift toward development priorities and security resource allocation to other regions of the world to address, for example, the European refugee crisis and the rise of such groups as ISIS and ISIL. Likewise, there is a trend away from the ability for UNDP or other international organizations to recruit and retain highly qualified and experienced international elections technical experts to deploy to Afghanistan—and that trend is likely to continue over time.

<sup>25</sup> As outlined in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/page/6547/afghanistans-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs>, and the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), <http://mfa.gov.af/en/page/6547/afghanistan-national-development-strategy-and-ands>

<sup>26</sup> See UNDP MDGs/Afghanistan report, <http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/library/mdg/MDGs-report-2012.html>.

and stakeholder agreement, a revised project document was produced. In June 2013, the project was extended through to 2015 and expanded to include electoral and operational support for the then-planned 2014 presidential and provincial council elections and thereafter for the parliamentary and district council elections in 2015, inclusive of support to the IECC and the Media Commission.

This two-pronged approach to project implementation can be summarised as:

- An on-going technical support project to strengthen the institutional capacity of the IEC, and;
- Technical and operational support to the Afghan government to conduct 2014 and 2015 elections.

Specifically, and in accordance with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate established in Afghanistan per United Nations Security Resolution (UNSC) Resolution 1401 and as reflected in the UNDP ELECT II project document, ELECT II assisted in supporting the organisation and implementation of democratic elections in the country while supporting the political transition process through capacity-development to the IEC and IECC.<sup>27</sup>

The technical and operational expertise that the UNDP brought to the Afghan electoral process through ELECT II assistance to the IEC and UNOPS assistance to the IECC was recognised by Afghan and international participants in the project for having allowed for staff and advisors to become resident in the IEC and IECC while providing significant technical and operational capacity in country. The vagaries of recruiting and retaining international staff of the competency and calibre needed to deliver the desired level of technical expertise to their Afghan counterparts is recognised, as is the challenge inherent in retaining Afghan electoral administration staff who (once they have obtained an advanced level of professional skills and experience) tend to move on to other professional development opportunities elsewhere.

While not all aspects of ELECT II proved to be the most effective in addressing a persistent “culture of impunity” and the fraud and financial mismanagement that resulted from significant and substantial donor resource flow, the project did provide for internal mechanisms to address irregularities in an open, honest, thorough and critical fashion. The conduct of an internal audit of the IEC and the pending (or at least proposed) imposition of punitive measures against those who committed electoral and/or financial fraud during the ELECT II implementation period is noted by both Afghan and international interlocutors, and is an issue that may need to be addressed by Afghan authorities separately and is likely beyond the scope of UNDP/ELECT mandate.

**Regarding punitive action, the UNDP, as the implementing partner, intends to follow up with the IEC on this issue, and has sent the investigation report to the national supreme audit office emphasizing that punitive action should be taken.**

**This is also an issue where the international community can provide assistance moving forward. Assuming that donors will send a clear message to the IEC and to the Afghan government that no further funding on elections will be forthcoming without concrete action being taken, this also serves as a positive pressure point for punitive action in 2016.**

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<sup>27</sup> The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/un-peacekeeping/missions/afghanistan.html>

“ELECT II contributed significantly to the timely development of planning documents for the upcoming elections, such as the: Election Operations Plan for the 2014 elections; Security and Fraud Mitigation Plans; Gender Strategy and Action Plan; Public Outreach Strategy; Media Commission Concept Paper; and Election Procurement Plan. These planning documents not only serve as a guideline for the upcoming elections, but also as an institutional memory for the preparation and conduct of future elections. To enhance logistical management and proper assets tracking, ELECT II introduced an electronic assets tracking software to the IEC. To assist the IEC with electoral planning and implementation, ELECT II recruited 24 international advisors who were deployed to eight regional capitals in three-person teams (electoral, logistics and security specialist). Furthermore, ELECT II advised the IEC on the development and revision of regulations and procedures, as well as self-regulatory Codes of Conduct, in line with the new legal framework. In 2013, ELECT II further supported the IEC in conducting coordination meetings with the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to secure the VR ‘top-up’ campaign, and to undertake forward security planning for polling centres.”—excerpt from ELECT II 2013 Annual Project Progress Report.

## VII. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### PROJECT COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The ELECT II projected budget was estimated at USD\$338,157,793 and is the most expensive UNDP electoral assistance project worldwide. While the budget is still comparably high, the overall costs has been decreasing steadily with the presidential and provincial council elections costing USD\$129 million in 2014 as compared to USD\$290 million in 2004.<sup>28</sup> . Some of these costs have been reduced due to the numbers of international project staff which oscillated at around 575 in the first internationally supported elections in 2004/5 to under 60 persons (including 24 provincial staff) in 2014.<sup>29</sup> This demonstrates a significant reduction in the overall cost per voter – USD\$ 23 in 2004 as compared to USD\$8 in the 2014 elections.

Up until June 2015, and subsequent to the 2004 elections, the international community has been subsidizing almost the whole of the electoral process, which has meant that many costs not normally associated with a UNDP technical assistance project were borne by the project. These included practically all the salaries of the IEC staff: - polling staff amounting to USD\$12,868,469.64, IEC and HQ and registration staff, USD\$29,558,701.07. Further costs such as the rental of transportation of materials amounted to over 54 million dollars in the 2014 elections. In addition a total of nearly USD\$ 100,000,000 was paid on procurement of goods and services implemented directly through UNDP (DIM) and the IEC under the NIM modality (approximately 25% of this amount).

<sup>28</sup> Elections in 2009 cost an average of USD\$184 million however there was no second round

<sup>29</sup> This was a 90% reduction compared to the 575 international staff which supported the first national elections in 2004.

Under a new project, it is unclear which costs will be undertaken by the government and those that will be still be borne by the project. Various sustainability options have already been put forward by the project and these should be explored. One of the biggest costs of any election is the procurement of *big ticket* items such as ballot papers, ink and registration and polling kits. In order to ensure expediency, the UNDP Procurement Services Office (PSO) in Copenhagen was used - The specialized Elections Team provides strategic guidance and operational support in electoral procurement to UNDP Country Offices and Electoral Management Bodies around the world. PSO was also used in the 2009 and 2010 process and proved pivotal to assure due diligence and efficiency.

While it is important to ensure due diligence, recommendations from the Mid Term Review (MTR), encouraged the project to provide on the job training for procurement which is vital for the sustainability of the IEC and the future electoral processes. Key procurement staff who could have potentially provided capacity building in the area of local procurement, were not on board until the preparations for the elections were well under way, thus a vital window for capacity building closed, and local vendors were not afforded the required capacity to compete on international bids. Furthermore, contrary to what had occurred in 2010, PSO was encouraged in taking on the vast majority of the procurement and potential savings and opportunities for building a more sustainable approach to what is a substantial portion of the overall budget, was lost.

In the 2009 and 2010 elections an average cost of USD\$ 5.20 was paid per voting screen including freight, while in 2014 through a Long Term Agreement (LTA) through PSO an average of USD\$ 35.18 per screen was paid. It is possible that for the 2014 elections the same local vendor was unable to deliver on time, however **in the future, local options for non sensitive material should be explored, especially when the saving of the costs are so significant.**

Other items such as the indelible ink, which is indispensable to the electoral process, costs over one million dollars and normally cannot be used for a second election. Given the fact that indelible ink has high levels of silver nitrate and is considered as hazardous, disposal thereafter is also costly. In 2014, the IEC piloted the use of Ultra Violet ink that costs a fraction of the price. The ink was only piloted in Kabul and its use deemed to be a success. **Exploring new and innovative possibilities can go a long way to ensuring sustainability and in this case could amount to savings of up to nearly USD\$ 894,000 on ink alone.**

Other items such as many of the polling station kits and public outreach material<sup>30</sup> were also purchased via LTAs through the PSO. While not all materials can be procured locally, such as ballot papers and complicated secured results sheets, ELECT II lost an optimum opportunity to encourage ownership of the process and to promote long-term sustainability of the process. In addition, the supplementary 2% costs imposed by the PSO and the demonstrated back and forth of emails on items which were not up to standard, weakened overall efficiency, albeit in the end, overall actual costs reduced and remedies were provided for the sub-standard quality of some of the products procured. Nonetheless, the IEC procurement unit is no nearer to having sufficient procurement expertise and **the use of PSO needs to be decreased in the future in order to ensure sustainability.**

Output six which provided support to the IECC, was subcontracted out to IFES and UNOPS in order to avoid a potential conflict of interest. This was considered appropriate and their use deemed efficient given the circumstances. Nevertheless, subcontracting these two agencies did result in double or even triple dipping, as both agencies charged their own fees on top of that of the General Management Services (GMS) of UNDP. These fees were slightly reduced, however most donors would like to see some remedy

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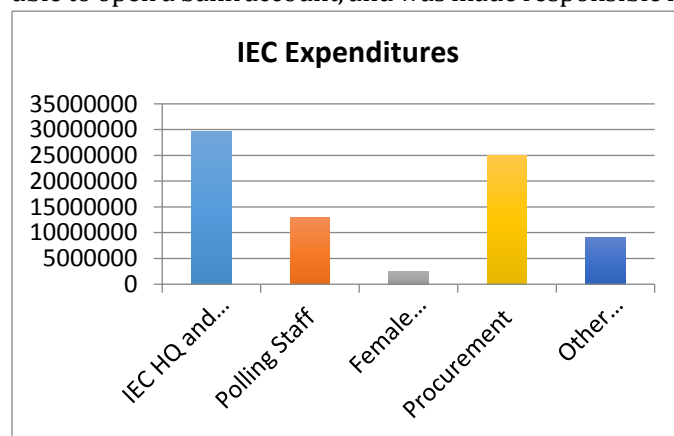
<sup>30</sup> Many of these items were procured locally in previous elections

to this in the future, but do however understand that subcontracting is necessary and would prefer to invest in one single project, rather than having two basket funds to support the IEC and IECC separately.

## IMPACT OF THE FINANCIAL MODALITY

The usual default mechanism for UNDP election technical support projects is DIM, this mechanism is especially useful for international procurement and also facilitates the process, as most government procedures are cumbersome and tend to lead to unwieldy delays. When ELECT II commenced its activities in 2012, it did so under a DIM as it had done in the past. Upon revision of ELECT II, in April 2013, UNDP and the IEC signed a Standard Letter of Agreement, which transformed the project from a DIM to a NIM modality. Nevertheless, the IEC concluded that it did not yet have the capacity to carry out its activities under a NIM and therefore a hybrid version of the two modalities was formed.

The taking on of further financial responsibility by the IEC supported the findings of the Grant Agreement Risk Management Implications Note (GARMIN) report, ELECT II, and thus a sum of approximately 76 million dollars was allocated to the IEC for them to administer. For the first time in its history, IEC was able to open a bank account, and was made responsible for the paying of polling station workers and other



IEC staff, albeit with donor funds. According to the SOP on the NIM modality, the IEC were responsible for “all payments including DSA, rental of venues, fee of trainers, travel cost, accommodation costs and other miscellaneous costs, authorized IEC staff is accountable to ensure that required supported documents meet UNDP minimum standard requirements.” They were also made accountable for the procurement of *soft procurement* items according to government rules.

Figure 1: Expenditures of IEC 2012-2015

While such a modality no doubt promotes the capacity learning opportunities of the IEC, the audit and subsequent investigations by the Office of Audit and Investigation (OAI) revealed that IEC staff had siphoned funds and were implicated in fraud involving considerable amounts of money from the project.<sup>31</sup> An investigation has been completed and punitive measures are expected to follow.<sup>32</sup> It is probable that under a DIM modality, such financial malfeasance would have not arisen, as there would have been less opportunity to forge receipts and proper due diligence would have been applied. With the closure of ELECT II in June 2015 and the cutting of the support of core operational costs, many of these expenses under figure 1 could potentially be transferred *on-budget*, and the oversight thereof will be under the auspices of the government and all transactions thereunder will be subject to government rules. Cognizant of the fact that NIM promotes fuller national ownership of a project, the big ticket items will still inevitably fall under international procurement and will still be subject to UNDP rules and procedures and will therefore necessitate a continuation of the DIM modality thereafter. **If in the future, an upcoming project is to afford mainly technical support and reduce the level of financial operational support, the necessity for continuing NIM is not evident.** Furthermore, given the pending conclusion of the

<sup>31</sup> The investigation revealed that a total of 375 falsified airline tickets had taken place, including 125 that had already been paid for with project funds amounting to USD\$84,604.

<sup>32</sup> This includes the amount of USD\$84,504 being returned to the project

investigation and the lack of an effective mechanism to prevent future financial misfeasance, **consideration of a NIM implemented project should only be considered when stringent measures can be put in place and if certain conditions are met.** The recommendations outlined in the GARMIN report refer to many items becoming on-budget, and in essence the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GoIRA) responsibility to fund the electoral process **will provide the financial department of the IEC the opportunity for further on the job learning which could be supported by a future ELECT without having to resort to a NIM modality in the short term future.**

## OFFICE OF AUDIT AND INVESTIGATIONS

During the lifetime of the project, it underwent six audits and a special investigation into allegations of Misrepresentation, Forgery and/or False Certification against the Independent Election Commission. The special investigation took place between 11 December 2014 and 15 May 2015<sup>33</sup>. The audit of internal controls of FY 2014 which qualified the project as "unsatisfactory"<sup>34</sup> took place in April 2015 and findings were issued on 31<sup>st</sup> July of the same year. This audit articulated ten key recommendations,<sup>35</sup> four of which were considered to be high priority. Two of these recommendations underscored the weaknesses under the NIM modality with reference to failure "to follow up on significant weaknesses in salary payments to IEC staff "(issue one) and "Inadequate controls over salary payments to IECs polling staff "(issue two). It is worth highlighting that these two particular issues were inherited from the previous electoral support projects, and while due diligence needs to be applied, there were little alternatives to for example the payment of polling staff in the provinces which in their vast majority do not have access to banks and therefore cannot be paid by cheque. Furthermore given the huge logistical operation that takes place during the elections, payment of over 105,000 staff is very hard to monitor and only a number of measures can be put in place to avoid financial misfeasance. With the closing of ELECT II in July 2015, and the possibility of these line items being "on budget" in a future project, they should not pose a risk for the next elections.

With regards to the third key recommendation, the evaluation team is in agreement that reporting should reflect the accomplishment of results and as this particular report identifies, capacity building needs to be strengthened and key indicators identified in order to measure the impact of these activities. Other recommendations made in the audit report mirror some of the weaknesses found in the project, however such a report conducted by an external authority should also be put into perspective while considering the reality under which ELECT is working. While many of the recommendations could be perceived to be tangible and due diligence can always be applied with more rigor, operational constraints and the obligation of ELECT to conform to time bound activities need to be considered. This inflexibility is compounded by the complex political environment under which it works and therefore a project of this genre requires it to adapt to ever changing working conditions from an operational security and political perspective. The project and the donors have to inevitably accept that the activities will not always be implemented according to a scheduled timeframe and structure and changes in such an environment are an inherent risk of the nature of the project. To this end, recommendations with regards to the leasing of helicopters, recruitment and the ability of the project to submit annual work plans is not always feasible and all of these issues need to be put into perspective and ensure that such recommendations as highlighted in the report will not have the potential to disrupt a process which is already seen as complex and unpredictable.

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<sup>33</sup> The report was issued on the 18th September 2015

<sup>34</sup> Unsatisfactory "internal controls, governance and risk management processes were either not established or not functioning well. The issues were such that the achievement of the overall objective of the audited entity could be seriously compromised." This rating was mainly due to weaknesses in organisation and staffing, project management, and asset management

<sup>35</sup> See Audit of UNDP Country Office in Afghanistan –Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow Project – Phase II (Project No. 63078) – Report No. 1459 – Issue Date: 31 July 2015

## PROJECTS ADAPTION TO CHANGING CONDITIONS

The ELECT II project was originally established to provide long term institutional capacity, however it soon became apparent that the IEC would need support for the conduct of the presidential and provincial council elections in 2014 and the Wolesi Jirga elections scheduled for 2015. The project was revised and finally endorsed in Spring 2013 and the project responded well to the changes.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, due to the operational mode in preparation of the elections, much of the opportunity to fulfill its mandate in providing long-term capacity building was diluted.

Recruitment was sometimes slow, and the quality of the applications was not always of the required standard and some positions were re-advertised. This was the case with the operations manager and a Chief Technical Advisor<sup>37</sup>, whose positions stood empty for quite a long time until quality candidates could be found. While UNDP tends to be slow in its recruitment due to unwieldy procedures, difficulties in recruiting qualified staff in Afghanistan also need to be acknowledged. Subsequent to the Arab spring, there are a number of UNDP election support projects around the world and the technical nature of the job requires a specific skillset, and there is therefore a restricted pool of persons available. Many experienced and professional election experts worked in Afghanistan during the last electoral cycle, however efforts to re-recruit them have failed as many of them are now working in other areas of the world and the poor security conditions of Afghanistan tends now to deter highly qualified candidates from applying. Unfortunately for the next round of elections, **recruitment will still remain a challenge and this should be factored in the planning for any new project.**

## GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The governance arrangements of the project took a three tiered approach, (see annex five) which enabled the IEC to have both proper ownership of the project and exposure to key stakeholders, while giving UNDP and donors alike proper oversight of the activities of the project. This three-tiered structure (Project Board, Technical Working Group and Donor Meeting Group) has been since replicated in other UNDP projects and has been heralded as a best practice by contributing donors. Given the political implications of the project, this structure was further supported and complemented by a number of other meetings convened and led by UNAMA at various levels, including by the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) or Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) as and when needed. These meetings also included one with political officers and development advisors along with ELECT II donors that took place fortnightly to deliver political updates on the elections. There was also a TMAF International Electoral Forum which discussed key International Community messaging with the GoIRA on the TMAF commitments. A monthly information-sharing meeting with all key electoral stakeholders including afghan Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (et al) was also held.

The project board of ELECT II which met on a quarterly basis had an important quality assurance and strategic guidance function although decisions at a more technical level were governed by the Technical Working Group (TWG) which met regularly to inform donors of the latest project developments. While donors participating in the evaluation process were very satisfied with the amount and level of information shared, they were perhaps sometimes overwhelmed with the technical details and were sometimes unable to process the plethora of information provided. The TWG was mostly guided by technical inputs, nonetheless its mandate was also to provide a review of the overall project's work plans and to give substantive guidance to achieved project results as well as monitor the achievement of those results. TWG meetings could have therefore potentially served as a forum to discuss possible failures or shortcomings of the process (not necessarily of the project) and to discuss possible mitigation strategies

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<sup>36</sup> The original project had four outputs and the revision outlined seven outputs.

<sup>37</sup> This post remained vacant between January 2014 and January 2015

if available. While concerns and issues pertaining to the electoral process could be aired in the third tier of meetings (i.e. the ELECT II donor Group), the opportunity to address key concerns in the presence of the IEC were missed and although donors were clearly informed on the level of activities taking place, their impact on the overall process was not necessarily discussed or addressed.

Similarly, Quarterly and Annual Reports were a vehicle to express the project's success rate according to indicators and targets set out in the Project Document, and although tables were provided and lessons learned cited, **future reports could benefit from a more centered results based management approach which closely discusses the achievements of the project and could provide alternative approaches to ensure compliance with the overall objectives is on track.** The recommendations<sup>38</sup> articulated in the OAI Audit Report <sup>39</sup>of the Project are an important reference point.

Despite these lacunas, initial communication difficulties inherited from the beginning of the project were gradually ironed out, and UNDP in partnership with UNAMA enjoyed a collegial relationship with donors whereby information was shared regularly and readily. The overload of information in the run up to elections and the ability to filter out which information is pertinent for the donors is no mean feat. A balance needs to be struck on providing the international community with all of the technical and operational details of the elections while at the same time providing reassurance that the project is on track in accordance with project objectives and outputs. Mitigation measures need to be put in place in order to detect when results are off track or there is an inherent risk of them not being achieved. As the section on risk management and monitoring and evaluation demonstrate below, **expectations must be managed and risks need to be realized and acknowledged**, especially when many of the inherent risks involved in this particular project are indeed outside of the scope or control of a technical assistance project.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

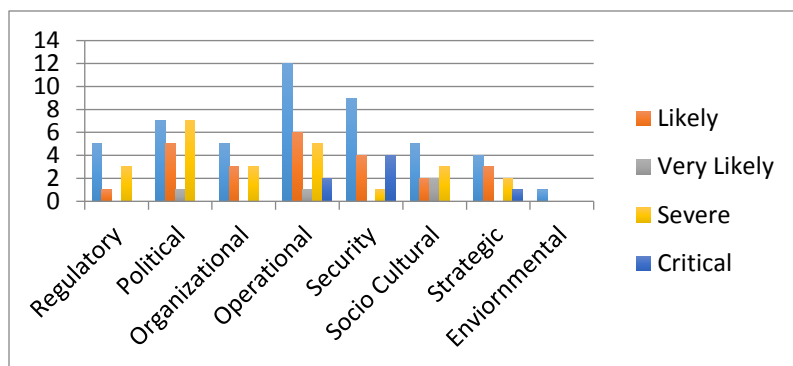
The revised ProDoc designed a comprehensive risk log which evaluated the risks according to the output. Different types of risks, i.e. Regulatory, Political, Operational, Organizational, Security, Socio Cultural, Environmental and Strategic Risks were identified. On some occasions, the risk was evaluated as a combination of some of the above factors. In total the project identified 62 different types of risks, of which 28 were assessed to have the potential of a severe impact and six to be critical. Four of these risks were deemed to be very likely and 27 likely to occur. Of those which were deemed to be *very likely*, the impact would be severe in three cases, and for those which were deemed to be *likely*, 12 were assessed as having a severe impact and five as a critical impact on the process. As is noted in the graph below, the most common risk identified was operational risk, followed by security, political, regulatory and socio cultural risks, all of which were to a certain extent outside the scope of the project's control. Furthermore, the most critical risks to the process were those under **security** as well as **political** that had a higher number of severe impacts together than any other type of risk identified.

**Figure 2: Risk Log**

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<sup>38</sup> (a) articulating clear results to be achieved; (b) developing appropriate indicators that are specific and measurable; (c) identifying appropriate baselines as reference points; (d) ensuring the advisory and technical support provided is results-oriented and measurable; and (e) developing a comprehensive capacity-building strategy that consolidates the Project's support to enhance capacities.

<sup>39</sup> Report No 1459 – Issue Date – 31 July 2015



The risk of widespread occurrence of fraud during the electoral operations was indeed identified as a risk in the ProDoc, but was deemed as a political and not an operational risk. The mitigation strategy was to improve fraud deterrence and detection measures as compared to 2009 and 2010 elections. This was done through ELECT II, and although it may be argued that the amount of fraud

committed, and indeed discovered was less compared to the 2009 and 2010 (65% less) process due to these updated fraud mitigation strategies, the overall impact and the credibility of the entire process was nonetheless severely damaged. The massaged outcome of the audit, led to a peaceful transition of power, but at the same time provided a politically brokered process rather than a technical result (i.e. actual votes for a given candidate), which has invariably eroded the trust of the average Afghan in the electoral process and Afghan democracy itself.

To this end, it is to be argued to what extent ELECT II could have prevented the overall outcome as many of the inherent risks were beyond the project's control. For lessons learned, it is imperative that these risks are addressed and updated during the implementation of the project. Pending electoral reforms can address some of the inherent problems and vulnerabilities in the process, but there is no guarantee that they will provide a magic formula to eradicate the high levels of fraud and manipulation witnessed in the last two electoral cycles. **A voter register tying voters to polling stations and an end to the culture of impunity** bestowed on those who commit electoral and/or financial fraud will be two of the most important steps towards ensuring an even playing field and promoting the IEC's ability to regain control over the electoral process and an end result which has inevitably been taken out of the institution's hands to date.

## VIII. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

The original ELECT project was developed in 2008 and as its name suggests, it aimed to enhance legal and electoral capacity for **tomorrow**. Unfortunately, due to inherent problems in recruitment of international staff and a lack of sense of urgency in 2008 and a delay in getting adequate funds, ELECT I was unable to fulfil its main mandate of enhancing the future legal and electoral capacity of the staff and instead concentrated its efforts on delivering the electoral process in 2009 and 2010 which unfortunately resulted in widespread fraud in both sets of elections.

ELECT II commenced its activities in 2012 aiming at providing long-term assistance to Afghanistan's IEC, focusing on institutional strengthening and capacity development. Nevertheless, with the impending election timeline taking precedence for the IEC, upon the request of the IEC and subsequent to the conclusions presented by the Needs Assessment Mission (NAM), ELECT II extended its outputs to encompass support to the holding of elections in 2014 and 2015 as well as support to the IECC and the Media Commission (MC). The overarching objective of the project was to support the electoral institutions to plan and administer Afghan-led credible elections with reduced external support through the seven outputs outlined in section VI.

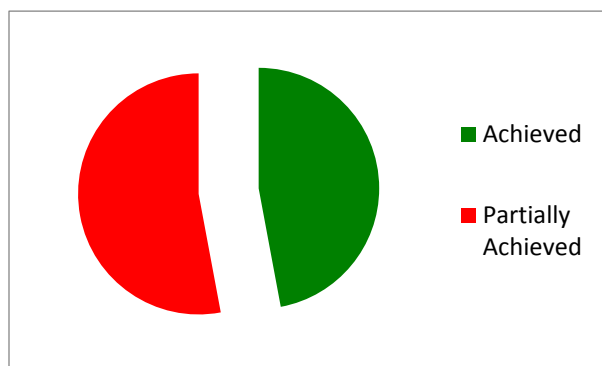


Figure 3: Percentage of activities achieved and partially achieved.

In order for the evaluation team (ET) to present a snap shot on the success and overall impact of each of these outputs, the ET has examined the results resource framework outlined in the revised ProDoc and have sought to ascertain whether the indicators and targets have been obtained. In some instances, the indicators have not been achieved and where they have been attained, their achievement does not necessarily signify that the activities have had the intended impact. To this end, the ET has further analyzed reports from the desk review, interviews with interlocutors and have carried out additional

research of secondary sources such as surveys and observation reports to ascertain whether the activities have obtained the results desired and as defined by the implementers. In line with the ToR, the team has analyzed whether the output has been *achieved*, *partially achieved* or *not achieved* according to the overall activity results taking into consideration the aforementioned criteria. The tables below score each activities performance from 1-5 using the OECD DAC criteria, with 5 being the highest score. A total of 17 activities have been analyzed, with nine of them being deemed as *partially achieved* and eight *achieved*.

The objectives of the ELECT II project<sup>40</sup> included support to EMBs and specifically a primary focus on the IEC and IECC throughout the electoral cycle. Specifically:

- Support in improving and consolidating institutional capacity
- Support in improving and consolidating the professional and electoral skills of staff
- Sustain and develop electoral facilities, systems, and infrastructure
- Develop procedures and mechanisms to improve governance and administration of future elections
- Support in undertaking a voter registration top up exercise
- Increase capacity of the IEC and IECC in encouraging broader democratic participation
- Enable IEC and IECC to mainstream gender within its institution and in electoral administration
- Support in conducting candidate nomination process
- Support in the conduct and adjudication of the presidential and provincial council elections and the subsequent parliamentary and district council elections
- Support to other EMBs such as the Media Commission

Accordingly, ELECT II project objectives were then defined further through corresponding outputs:

## OUTPUT ONE: SUSTAINABILITY OF THE IEC IS ENHANCED VIA THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOTH ITS INSTITUTIONAL AND STAFF CAPACITIES

Upon examination of the results, activities 1.1. and 1.4 have been partially achieved and activity 1.2 and

<sup>40</sup> As excerpted in part from the final UNDP TOR for this evaluation consultancy.

1.3 have been achieved.

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
<b>Output 1: Sustainability of the IEC is enhanced via the development of both its institutional and staff capacities</b>						
1.1. Support the IEC in sustainable strengthening of its institutional capacity, via its strategic plan and upgrade of its knowledge, information, decision-making and data management systems	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	3	3	3	3
1.2. Support the IEC's engagement in legal reform and improvement of its regulatory framework	<b>Achieved</b>	5	4	4	4	4
1.3. Support the upgrade of the IECs physical infrastructure and security at HQ and in the provinces	<b>Achieved</b>	5	5	5	4	5
1.4. Support the professional training and development of IEC permanent and temporary staff	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	3	3	4	3

Table 1: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

## OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.1. – SUPPORT THE IEC IN SUSTAINABLE STRENGTHENING OF ITS INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY, VIA ITS STRATEGIC PLAN AND UPGRADE OF ITS KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION, DECISION-MAKING AND DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

### Indicative Activity Results:

- The IEC is a well-functioning organization with proper internal plans, procedures and policies appropriately implemented on managerial, departmental and unit level and an updated and accurate management information system;
- A sound management information system is in place to collect, systematize and archive data of past and future elections.

While it is evident that ELECT II played a fundamentally important role in providing technical assistance to the IEC, and the project was pivotal in enabling the elections to be held, capacity building centered around individuals (and individual capacity) rather than supporting the sustainable strengthening of the institution.

Throughout its history, ELECT has found itself in operational mode and has had a limited window to provide capacity building for *tomorrow*. ELECT II did provide that window, but was slow in recruiting adequate staff and after harnessing sufficient interest by the donors, elections were announced on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012 (to take place on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2014) and in early 2013, the project underwent significant revisions to incorporate the implementation of the elections and thus many of the activities planned to strengthen the institutional management of the IEC (and therefore sustainable capacity) were relegated to the backburner.

The extended timeline of the elections due to the Audit of the results, although providing additional practical skills to the members of the IEC also meant that many months were lost in consolidating skills gained during the immediate electoral period. This was exacerbated by the unclear timeline for the future parliamentary elections and the introduction of consideration of electoral reforms, which has left the future capacity building of the IEC in limbo. This political uncertainty coupled with extreme donor fatigue in supporting an election commission with significant questions on its integrity and to foster a level of operational and staffing sustainability inevitably led to the early closure of ELECT II and deprived the IEC of an additional six months of development assistance<sup>41</sup> which were to be used to consolidate capacity gains and to ensure an adequate and smooth transition to the implementation of the Civil Service

<sup>41</sup> Towards quarter three and four of 2015, the project will retain a consultant to help IEC HR department chalk out a clear transition plan to the civil service commission recommended structure.

Commission (CSC) reform.

### IMPACT OF OUTPUT ONE - ACTIVITY 1.1.

The weakness of the IEC Strategic Plan<sup>42</sup> coupled with the development of a Capacity Assessment Plan which lacked a systematic approach to consider skills gaps that were common throughout the organization, meant that the impact of activity one was relatively weak. The IEC in their evaluation/survey<sup>43</sup> of the ELECT II project in the main were satisfied with their support towards plans and procedures, however these plans were more geared towards the electoral process rather than long-term institutional capacity. Tight timelines and the fact that 2013 marked a shift in project approach towards operationalizing the IEC to conduct elections in the spring of 2014, meant that key advisors concentrated on systems for the smooth conduct of elections rather than on long term planning.

Systems such as the Election Decision Support System (EDSS) which is essentially, a single resource for recording all data and producing real-time reports was developed and has proven very useful to enable the IEC to carry out checks and balances on the electoral process. Its most important functions include packing and tracking of sensitive material (identifying quantities and locations of materials); Election Day reporting (indicating polling center preparedness, openings, voting progress and closing/counting of ballots); and material retrieval. In addition to real-time Election Day reports, information stored in the EDSS can inform quantitative trend analysis to allow for more efficient operational planning of subsequent elections. It is critical, however, for the IEC to proactively update and maintain this information to ensure accuracy and reliability of reports and data tracking produced by the system.

The project was unable to support the long-term development and implementation of departmental plans and/or issue based policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to enhance the institutional capacity of the IEC and promote self-sustainability for a future with less international support and more IEC independence in accordance with international norms and standards for an independent, politically-neutral, and professional election commission. While these activities were not carried out during the project implementation timeline of ELECT II, the compendium of all relevant documents and forms created during ELECT II is in process and is now awaiting approval from the IEC. The archiving and institutional memory is indeed a continual process and needs to be revisited, updated and revised after each election cycle, however **it is doubtful if key department heads are able to use this system to its fullest capacity and are really aware of its existence. The knowledge management system is still a weak point, and many of the staff lack adequate skills to maintain it in order to inform planning, budgeting and decision making for the future.** Some SOPs and operational manuals still need to be developed and modified as per government regulations and should be completed by early 2016.

### OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.2. – LEGAL REFORM – SUPPORT THE IECs ENGAGEMENT IN LEGAL REFORM AND IMPROVEMENT OF ITS REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Prior to the holding of the 2014 elections, the electoral legal framework underwent various reforms. To this end the IEC updated its existing electoral policies, procedures and codes of conduct with the support of ELECT II. In addition, all codes of conduct – including Codes of Conduct for electoral officials, observers, media, political parties/candidates/candidates agents and security forces – were reviewed and revised.

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<sup>42</sup> The implementation of its current strategic plan and planning for its strategic plan will assist the IEC in defining its vision. Revised PRODOC – ELECT II

<sup>43</sup> During the evaluation mission, the consultants were presented with a survey that had been conducted independently by the departmental heads of the IEC. The ET was able to meet with all of these departmental heads and discuss the content and conclusions of said survey.

## IMPACT OF OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.2.

### Indicative Activity Results:

- Provisions of the revised Afghan law are coherently and harmoniously translated into IEC regulations and policies, and are updated as required for future electoral processes;
- Where appropriate, electoral procedures, guideline, and code of conducts are revised and updated as required for future electoral processes.

It is important to note that the impact of this particular activity was positive and the indicative activity results were achieved. The IEC, however, felt that the support to the legal framework was inherently weak, however this claim could rather be more attributed to personality issues rather than the lack of substantive support to the legal procedures. In total 18 electoral regulations were developed or revised in line with the electoral legal framework and seven codes of conduct were also supported. The existence of regulations and policies is

of course important, but the implementation and the perception thereof by the key stakeholders on these policies is equally pertinent. Observers noted “despite general shortcomings in transparency, the IEC showed significant improvements in the communication of the policy-making procedures through the regular publication of the IEC decisions and procedures, as well as consistent information on the activities of the institution.”<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, as the elections progressed, inherent weaknesses were noted by international and national observers that were dictated by external factors and therefore were beyond the scope of the project. This included the lack of transparency in the results management and the development of the procedures for the audit, which took on a more ad hoc nature and tended to curry favor with the top two candidates rather than follow consistent and transparent procedures. (See Section 5.2) Furthermore, ELECT II was unable to support the evaluation of key internal procedures that could have the potential to strengthen decision-making procedures by the commission and therefore have a more positive impact on the day-to-day work carried out by the Secretariat. **To date, a disconnect persists between the Commission and the Secretariat and as a result many advisory decisions supported by ELECT II were rejected by the Commission.**

## OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.3. – IEC PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE – SUPPORT THE UPGRADE OF THE IEC’S PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SECURITY AT HQ AND IN THE PROVINCES

### Indicative Activity Results:

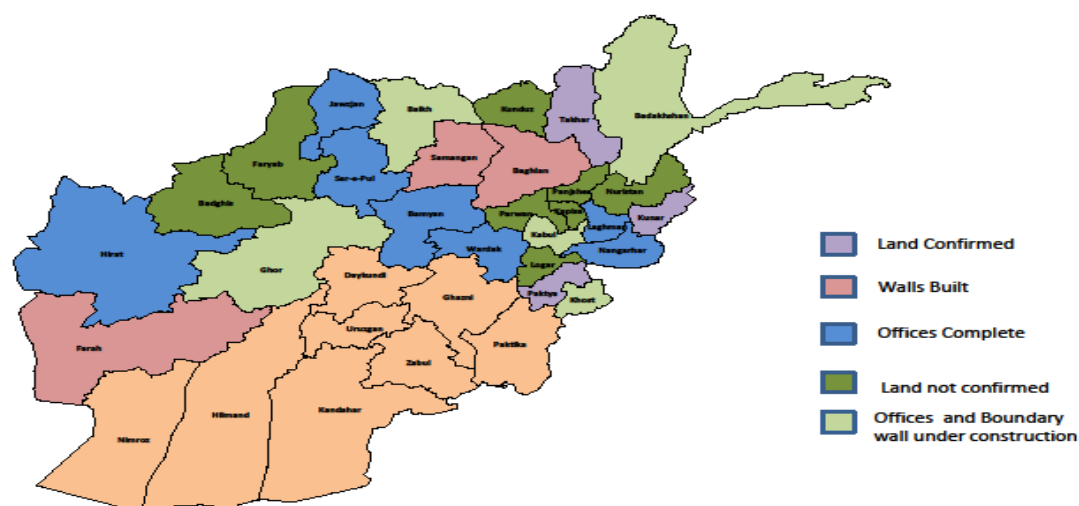
- By the time of the 2014/15 elections, the IEC owns fully established, well functioning, security-enhanced offices and warehouses at both the central and provincial levels.

In order to achieve sustainability and to reduce the costs of the elections, it was imperative to reduce long term costs and enhance efficiency of the provincial IECs allowing for easy inventories of materials and supplies and allow a higher degree of quality control on operations. To this end, the construction of security enhanced offices and warehouses are essential.

<sup>44</sup> Final Report – Presidential Election 5 April and 14 June 2014 – European Union Election Assessment Team

## IMPACT OF OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.3.

IEC Provincial Office Construction Project by 2015



The IEC owns land in 24 provinces, and at the closure of the ELECT II project<sup>45</sup>, nine<sup>46</sup> provinces had started or finalized construction. This included the planning for construction of six offices in Herat, Jowjan, Balkh, Badakshan, Ghor and Khost. To date the offices are constructed and in use by the IEC in Herat, Jawjan and Balkh, in the remaining provinces work has been suspended<sup>47</sup> or is under evaluation.<sup>48</sup> Warehouses have been built in all of the aforementioned nine provinces, with six of them already in use by the IEC.<sup>49</sup> Security upgrades are complete in 15 provincial offices and all provincial offices - including rented spaces - have internet connectivity which is paramount to running the elections in a timely and efficient manner, and ensuring full communication with the provinces. At the headquarters, there has been additional construction of buildings and security structures, including the finalization of the training center, a canteen and a kindergarten which is necessary to promote women's inclusiveness in the work place as well as the provision of security lights to heighten safety during the working dark hours. The construction of these offices and upgrading of security has had an important impact on the ability of the IEC to conduct its work in Kabul and provincially and on the capacity of the IEC to continue its work sustainably, including during the complete electoral cycle, such as carrying out registration services and civic education programmes. As a result, the costs can be amortized over time, and ensure that assets donated under ELECT II are controlled and inventoried for the future.

<sup>45</sup> Construction is financed under a separate fund financed by Japan

<sup>46</sup> Bamyan, Herat, Jowjan, Laghman, Nangahar, Balkh, Badakshan, Ghor and Khost

<sup>47</sup> Work has been suspended in Ghor due to insecurity

<sup>48</sup> The tender is under evaluation in Khost, and in Badakshan Excavation, RCC foundation and ring Beam-1 and brick work for basement has been completed, RCC ring beams and lab from work is progress.

<sup>49</sup> Work is still not complete in Badakshan, Ghor and Khost (see footnote 41 and 42)

#### Indicative Activity Results:

- IEC permanent and temporary staff are enhanced in their professional performance and career development;
- Staff retention levels in the IEC are increased due to improved staff capacities, greater focus on staff professional development, and greater options for staff career advancement

#### OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.4. – IEC STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – SUPPORT THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF IEC AND PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY STAFF

A key critique of previous evaluations of ELECT I, is that project's weakness in maintaining and developing the capacity of the Afghan Electoral officers, to this end ELECT II emphasized the importance of staff development. Various capacity

assessments were undertaken but have failed to ensure a strategic approach to enhancing the capacity building of the IEC. An IEC capacity development action plan was drafted however it has never been finalized or formally adopted. Nevertheless, IEC staff did receive various trainings based on a comprehensive training plan. Key staff assessments and evaluations by the IEC were not done during the course of the project, and an evaluation conducted by IEC to complement this particular evaluation indicates that IEC, although cognizant of the huge efforts to provide technical assistance by ELECT II to the IEC, still consider that sufficient independent capacity has not been built for them to become sustainable. It should be noted however, that the perception of the quality of the capacity by ELECT II varies among the different departments, with the training, public outreach and operations department citing that important capacity has been built, to the legal, external relations, procurement and finance <sup>50</sup> department rating the level of capacity support as poor. There is a general consensus by all interlocutors, that the aforementioned departments where the capacity is deemed by the IEC to be weak still require substantive support in the future. The IEC does maintain that it still requires support for all departments and would like to see a future ELECT mirroring their organizational departmental structure.

#### IMPACT OF OUTPUT ONE: ACTIVITY 1.4.

"On the operational front, the IEC demonstrated consistent technical improvement and increased capacity in comparison with previous elections. More specifically, the election administration long-term vision as well as the regular identification and application of remedial actions throughout the electoral process allowed the IEC to complete organizational and logistical preparations on time for both rounds, despite a necessary delay in the run-off preparations." **Final Report - EU EAT**

There is absolutely no doubt that the technical assistance provided to the IEC improved the IEC's capacity to conduct elections. The 2014 elections are considered to have been the best technically so far. Nonetheless, the operational mode under which ELECT II operated reduced the overall impact on **long-term sustainability** and therefore focused on building skills for the implementation of the elections. The issue of staff retention and their long term capacity has been a long standing problem which was originally identified in the Post Election Strategy Group (PESG) Preliminary Report (2005), and still persists today. As was mentioned above, the issue of addressing salaries and a smooth and

sustainable transition to the CSC was made impossible by the early closure of the project and due to the tight timelines of the electoral process - adequate methodologies for maintaining and promoting their retention have yet to be fully identified and developed.

#### CONTRIBUTION OF OUTPUT ONE TO THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE IEC

ELECT II has developed various systems which have the potential to improve the institutional capacity of the IEC, however due to a lack of an adequate and realistic timeline, and the operational nature of the work of the project, these systems are yet to be firmly institutionalized. **An important lessons learned is to obtain buy in well in advance of implementation of the varying systems developed,** and while ELECT II has created some very important tools for the institutionalization of the work of the IEC, their creation have not always necessarily involved the contributions of key persons from the IEC, thus

<sup>50</sup> it should also be noted that the financial and procurement departments within the IEC did not benefit from direct capacity building and individual advisors were not assigned to these particular departments

minimizing their impact on the future work of the IEC due to a fundamental lack of understanding on how to acquire the maximum usage of these tools.

With regards to the procedures and the development thereof, the IEC is of the opinion that this section is still weak, and they still require international support in the designing of procedures and policies, although many of the procedures now exist and will only need adaptation once the electoral reforms are approved, and come into force.

The contribution of activity 1.4 to the overall and long term capacity of the IEC is still to be fully developed and while the IEC enjoyed core on the job learning activities during the implementation of the elections, **long term sustainability still needs to be built.** BRIDGE is a professional development tool which primarily affects participants at the individual level. The BRIDGE workshops use an activity-based approach that maximizes retention of knowledge and skills learned. In addition, the workshops are designed to promote or reinforce professional confidence, ethics, understanding of principles of best electoral practice, and access to networks of peers. Afghanistan has undergone various BRIDGE trainings, however it is not a core tool for sustained capacity development.

Afghanistan has a relatively high number of BRIDGE trainees and at present has a total of 83<sup>51</sup> persons trained under the BRIDGE system. However, it is unclear as to how many of these currently work in the IEC. While a large number of persons have become semi accredited ie undergone the equivalent of two weeks training, very few have acquired accredited status (i.e 30 hours) and only two persons are accrediting, ie 150 hours of training and have the capacity to accredit other participants with official certificates of BRIDGE. Of the 23 available modules, IEC has only received training in eleven of these modules, with only eight modules actually being translated and contextualized into Dari and/or Pashtu.

Total	Semi Accredited – Inactive	Semi Accredited	Workshop	Accrediting	Expert
83	38	28	15	2	0

While it is not necessarily useful for an electoral commission to undertake the study of each module, EMBs should be able to use the BRIDGE methodology and tailor it to their needs and circumstances. – thus choosing the modules which are of proper pertinence to their activities. The IEC expressed a desire to continue with BRIDGE training and would like to undergo training in some of the other modules, which are important to the sustainable development of the institution and have the potential to professionalize the staff of IEC in all key aspects of election management.

#### INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE BENEFITS OF OUTPUT ONE

As mentioned above, the “buy in” (and therefore Afghan ownership) of these important tools has not been institutionalized and although these systems will soon be available, **it is of vital importance that key persons are made aware of their usage and how they were developed.** Ownership is key for the usage of these systems in the future independent of UNDP or other international intervention.

While ELECT II supported the development of key procedures and policies, **further capacity building support is required to enhance the skills of the IEC.** Moreover, it is unclear to what extent the procedures and policies will need to be revised and redesigned due to the pending electoral reform process. What is more, internal procedures including **addressing the disconnect between the**

<sup>51</sup> Statistics according to BRIDGE as at 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015

**Commission and the Secretariat and ensuring the enhancement of the capacity of the newly selected commissioners is essential.**

The early closure of the ELECT II project resulted in over 750 staff being removed from ELECT subsidized funding and has resulted in vital institutional capacity being potentially lost. In order to counter this, the IEC has already proposed and received approval for about 270 people to be retained under the government payroll and to be converted to the tashkeel. It is unclear as to whether all these posts will be occupied by those who worked previously under the IEC, especially given the ten fold reduction in their salaries, and the uncertainty surrounding the institutions' credibility and future at the moment. Nevertheless, all department heads have now been taken off the super salary scale and are working under the tashkeel system and to date has not suffered any loss in personnel.

Acknowledging that the project was unable to fulfill its mandate with regards to this activity falls somewhat out of the implementation parameters of the project, given the operational nature under which the project worked and its subsequent early closure. A future project will also run the risk of not addressing some of these important gaps, should it be implemented concurrent with preparation for the next parliamentary and district elections. **This gap will need to be acknowledged and a strategy developed to minimize the risks of losing vital time in further providing sustainable capacity development for future electoral cycles.**

While recognizing that enough time might not be available prior to the next elections to build institutional and individual capacity, the additional possibility of recruiting quality international staff in a timely manner should also be factored in. To this end, **using resources already available is paramount for the sustained development of the organization.** This could include BRIDGE, whereby the possible accreditation is used as an incentive for promoting ownership for training while offering this to a wide range of IEC staff, including commissioners. Undergoing BRIDGE training, and obtaining full accreditation not only allows IEC staffs capacity to be enhanced but future accredited persons can be called upon for training of other countries where internationally recognized trainers are scarce. BRIDGE training is also a way for IEC to reach out to other important stakeholders such as civil society, media and political parties. To promote inclusiveness, it is essential that BRIDGE training is not only focused on the IEC, however **IEC should involve other stakeholders in their training programs, to not only promote further education in electoral issues but to encourage inclusiveness and outreach and cooperation amongst all important electoral stakeholders** which momentarily at least is still quite weak.

In addition to BRIDGE Training, experiences from countries such as Bangladesh, and Nepal can offer important lessons learned, especially with regards to their respective UNDP projects. In 2015, in Bangladesh the UNDP project Strengthening Electoral Management in Bangladesh (SEMB) was closed down due to the lack of desire among donors to support an election commission which was not perceived as neutral. While this is a negative development, ELECT II as well as IEC could draw important lessons from their experience and look towards the respective commission to see how it is addressing this issue for the future. Furthermore, while the Election Commission of Nepal is highly developed, retention of staff remains an acute problem as well as the difficulty in working towards an established timeline, given the political insecurities in the country, further exacerbated by the 2015 earthquake, which have created comparable operational challenges. The IEC would benefit from looking towards Nepal to take lessons learnt and best practices on how best to retain staff and look at how to build institutional memory and capacity. **Strengthening IECs south-south cooperation is essential to promote institutional ownership and sustainability** as well as allowing all levels of the IEC to draw lessons from other countries at a similar level of development and to contribute to the building of their own institution rather than an individual project developing a new strategy without the full involvement of the IEC. IEC's membership in the Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBOSA) should be

strategically supported to allow efficient share of best practices, enable Afghanistan to comply with their international obligations towards the Forum and to promote ownership within the IEC in addressing and solving their own internal problems especially with regards to professionalizing the IEC and addressing issues of integrity and transparency.

#### SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT ONE

Institutional capacity was built through staff training, the deployment of advisors, and the formulation of a compendium of all operational, procedural and procurement processes. However, the critical disruption of the NUG formulation process and allegations of fraud and malfeasance within the IEC undermined the UNDP's ability to fully realize a sustainable development process within the EMBs. Likewise, staff resignations, untimely death, high staff turnover, Afghan budgetary constraints, and the persistent "culture of impunity" have minimized the immediate impact of the project. The project compendium is currently in process, and due for delivery to the IEC in 2016. This document and CD Read only Memory (ROM) compilation will provide the IEC with the ability to maintain a degree of institutional memory during subsequent Afghan-led elections and serve as a training tool for staff over time. The work accomplished in terms of staff training, in-house mentoring, on-site consultations, and direct technical assistance in planning and implementing the 2014 elections during the project implementation period has had a positive impact on the IEC, but it remains to be seen whether that impact will result in the ability of new staff to conduct elections more or less independently in 2016/2017. It is important to consider the question of how to maintain capacity while turnover remains high, operational circumstances deteriorate, and donor funding levels are anticipated to decline—particularly in reference to the formulation of a proposed "ELECT III" project. **The core ELECT II staff still resident in the UNDP CO in Kabul could be activated immediately upon approval of a follow-on project, but there is the question of the time required for UNDP, donors, and the Afghan government to agree upon a follow-on project document and to secure the necessary funding, human resources, and operational capacity to do so.**

#### OUTPUT TWO: A SUSTAINABLE, LONG TERM APPROACH TO VOTER REGISTRATION IN AFGHANISTAN, WHICH ALSO PROMOTES MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION OF ELIGIBLE CITIZENS IN THE 2014 AND 2015 ELECTIONS, IS DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED

The lack of a comprehensive voter registration system is a major impediment for the IEC to administer efficiently the electoral process without full knowledge of the electorate distribution. **Final Report – EUEAT 2014**

The output has achieved its indicative activity results, however the ET has gauged this output as only partially achieved, The evident lack of a sustainable accurate and comprehensive voter register which does not allocate the individual voter to polling stations has been acknowledged as one of the key reasons for fraud and ballot stuffing, and disenables the IEC from effectively eliminating mass fraudulent behavior.

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
<b>Output 2: A sustainable, long term approach to voter registration in Afghanistan, which also promotes maximum participation of eligible citizens in the 2014 and 2015 elections, is developed and implemented</b>						
2.1. Support the IEC in the implementation of its voter registration operational plan	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	4	2	3	2
2.2. Support the IEC in synthesizing its work with the MOI so that the E-Tazkira database becomes the long-term solution for the generation of voter registration data	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	4	3	2	3

Table 2: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

The development of a reliable and accurate voter register (VR) has long been a serious concern amongst all electoral stakeholders, and a persistent call from all sides has advocated for a long term solution. Such a long term solution is considered to be found in the development of E-Tazkira which will generate voter registration data as well as serve as a future national ID card. Nevertheless, the launch of this initiative has taken many years to evolve, and is still at a very initial stage for it to have any sustainable impact for the immediate or even mid term future.<sup>52</sup> To this end, despite a high number of voter cards being available in the 2009 and 2010 elections, the IEC had no option but to provide a top up solution to the already 17 million cards which were already in existence. While the perception of the circulation of an abnormally high number of voters cards is considered a principal contributing factor towards fraud, it is contended that “the principle cause of fraud in past elections was ballot stuffing, rather than multiple voting using multiple of fake cards”<sup>53</sup>.

## OUTPUT TWO ACTIVITY 2.1. – MAXIMIZING PARTICIPATION IN THE 2014 AND 2015 ELECTIONS VIA ISSUANCE OF VOTER CARDS – SUPPORT THE IEC IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS VOTER REGISTRATION OPERATIONAL PLAN AND UTILIZING THE E-TAZKIRA CARDS IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS/2.2. VOTER REGISTRATION SUSTAINABILITY – SUPPORT THE IEC IN SYNTHESIZING ITS WORK WITH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE E-TAZKIRA TO EMERGE AS A SOLUTION TO FUTURE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

### Indicative Activity Results:

- Maximum participation of eligible citizens in the 2014 and 2015 elections is facilitated through issuance of IEC voter cards and through use of e-tazkira in areas where it has been issued.
- Maximum coordination between the IEC and the MOI is achieved to ensure nationwide issuance of IEC voter cards

### Indicative Activity Results:

- Support IEC in providing collaborative assistance to the MOI to facilitate E-Tazkira to become basis for generation of voter registration data in Afghanistan.

### IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES 2.1 AND 2.2.

Various options for a registration drive were presented subsequent to the independent expert team commissioned by the IEC to conduct a Voter Registration Feasibility Study in June 2012. A full voter registration exercise option had nonetheless been recommended as a key step in improving the credibility, cost effectiveness and sustainability of future electoral events, however this was rejected by the government and to some extent by donors. ELECT II thus supported a top up exercise which would not have the potential to reduce fraud but did in effect provide inclusiveness and a certain amount of integrity for the Afghan people. The registration exercise also served as an important tool for measuring the capabilities of the IEC to conduct

<sup>52</sup> In 2005 in the PESG preliminary report, it was alleged that several projects for a national ID card has been proposed to the government and this might be the time to focus on the feasibility of such a joint venture of generating a voter list at the time when citizens are duly identified. Joint planning on this aspect should be pursued by the IEC and the Ministry of Interior

<sup>53</sup> Report of the Electoral Needs Assessment Mission Afghanistan – 2012/2013

elections and important lessons learned were drawn to ensure better efficacy during the conduct of elections.

While the project has not yet been able to address a long term solution to the issue of voter registration, the project did fulfill its results and enfranchised an additional 3,842,504 people with 34% of women being registered in time for 2014 elections. The exercise was considered to be particularly inclusive and outreach to persons in remote areas as well as security restricted access points. The use of mobile registration stations was heralded as a best practice and was especially relevant in enabling women to register. Afghanistan now has over 21 million people registered, with 100% potential registration of eligible voters in some provinces. Although the registration of newly eligible voters as well as others who had lost their cards was recognized as positive, the issue of shortage of ballots in some districts and the surplus of ballots in others remained, given IECs inability to allocate voters to polling stations. The difficulty in controlling the number of ballots distributed to each polling station continues to encourage ballot stuffing and the absence of a polling station voters list inhibits the IEC from conducting a new poll in the event of allegations of fraud in a particular polling station. **The lack of a comprehensive voters list means that the IEC is unable to carry out the usual checks and balances that a voters list tied to polling stations allows.**

To support the proposed long-term solution of tying the voter's list to the civil register, ELECT II provided essential support to the IEC to ensure coordination between the IEC and Ministry of Interior (MOI) in planning for the future E-Tazkira. The Project also facilitated the discussion between the two institutions to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and to enable the work to progress in the future. To date the MOU has not been amended or signed. A pilot project by the GoIRA and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has taken place whereby approximately 100,000 individuals' information have been collected at the household level as noted previously in this report. In addition, approximately information on 400,000 civil servants (and their families) has been collected. All target beneficiaries are from Kabul city. It is still unclear as to how much the E-Tazkira initiative will cost. Indications are that approximately USD\$300 million for the complete national roll out will be necessary, the current contract that the government signed with the Grants Technology Resources (GTR) is around USD 120,000. To date the European Union (EU) has committed EUR 8.1 million, the United States (US) had provided USD\$ 6.5 million but USD\$ 3.98 million has been returned. The decision to continue the project is still pending as of December 2015. With this reduction in activities and indeed funding of the E-Tazkira project, the coordination between IEC and MOI has been delayed, but **will need to be continued for the future should a definitive decision be made to ensure proper collaboration** between the two entities to provide a viable long-term solution to the voter register issue.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT TWO**

The invalidation of voter ID cards and the lingering uncertainty of what interim (or permanent) solution will be implemented by the Afghan government in 2016<sup>54</sup> have made it less likely that a comprehensive system of voter registration with a valid and inclusive voters list will be realized in the near term. This was not accomplished during the 2012-2015 ELECT II implementation period, nor was there a unified voice within the donor/international community or in concert with the Afghan government to allow for practical progress in this output. There is an ongoing debate as to whether the Afghan government (with US and EU support) will adopt the E-Tazkira biometric identification system or whether the new (2016) IEC will adopt a temporary measure providing for a tamper-resistant sticker to re-validate existing voter

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<sup>54</sup> The SERC Recommendations indicate the preparation of a new voters list and assign voters to specific polling centres

ID cards with an estimated expense of USD\$30 million.. These revalidated cards could then potentially tie an individual voter to a single polling station for the anticipated 2016/2017 parliamentary elections.

The issue of establishing and maintaining an accurate voters list with a voter registry that ties individual voters to a proximate polling station or polling center has been a constant in Afghan electoral capacity development since the establishment of international development assistance in the country a decade ago. Electoral fraud ties directly into this issue because without knowing how many potential voters are resident within a given electoral district, how many polling stations or centers actually exist (e.g. “ghost centers”), and where and in what quantity to send ballots as a consequence, the system will remain open to ballot stuffing. Furthermore, the inexistence of an accurate and sustainable voters register has had an important impact on the long term financial sustainability of the process.

**In this regard, creating a valid voter registry—if even a low tech door-to-door canvassing<sup>55</sup> version in the short-term—is a vital and necessary step toward restoring public confidence in the IEC, the electoral process, the validity of the ballot box, and the democratic process in Afghanistan overall. High-tech solutions in a decidedly low-tech operational environment may appeal to donors and the government alike but should be viewed more as a long-term solution in a country where a short-term operational solution is urgently needed.** The uncertainty and for many unacceptable outcome of the 2014 elections is exacerbated by the SERC reform process, IEC corruption allegations, alleged ballot stuffing, and the fact that foreign intervention was necessary to formulate a government. Those who risked their lives to vote in 2014 may not do so again in 2016/2017. In a transitional and fragile democracy where there is no tradition of democratic governance, that is a very destabilizing and potentially dangerous result for the Afghan people after a costly decade-long experiment in nation-building.

### **OUTPUT THREE: THE IEC’S ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATIONAL OUTREACH WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING THE ELECTORATE IS ENHANCED**

In two key areas; to promote voter and civic education to the Afghan public and voters; and to engage with key stakeholders such as civil society organizations and political parties/independent candidates in a two way structured dialogue. Under this output both the public outreach department as well as external relations had key responsibilities in this regard, with both departments charged with the responsibility to promote greater women’s participation in the electoral process. The Gender Unit is an independent department but is not yet recognized as a formal individual unit under the Civil Service Commission Structure. IEC is currently waiting on approval for it to be recognized as such.

Upon examination of the output, the ET concludes that activity 3.1 and 3.3 have been achieved while the other two activities were only partially achieved.

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
<b>Output 3: The IEC’s engagement and informational outreach with key stakeholders, including the electorate, is enhanced</b>						
3.1. Support the development and implementation of the IEC’s public outreach campaign and activities	<b>Achieved</b>	5	4	4	4	4
3.2. Support the IEC’s structured engagement with key stakeholders, including political parties, and the IEC’s strategic media communication	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	4	4	3	3

<sup>55</sup> That is, provided that this exercise were considered logistically feasible and considerate of the security constraints for those participating.

3.3. Support the IEC's management and implementation of the candidate registration process	<b>Achieved</b>	5	4	4	4	4
3.4. Support the IEC's Gender Unit and the Public Outreach Department gender focal point in promoting gender mainstreaming in the electoral process, as well as in institutional practices	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	3	3	3	3

Table 3: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

### OUTPUT THREE: ACTIVITY 3.1. – IEC PUBLIC OUTREACH – SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IEC'S PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGN AND ACTIVITIES

#### Indicative Activity Results:

- The IEC is supported to conduct effective nationwide civic and voter education campaigns, at various stages of the electoral process, to promote the fundamental right to participate in elections;
- Marginalized segments of the electorate are sensitized to electoral participation by the IEC's targeted voter and civic education campaigns

The public outreach campaign combined different types of messaging to reach as many people as possible. This included radio and television Public Service Announcements (PSAs). A call centre was also set up from August 2013 to December 2014 which received over 2,080,049 calls enabling concrete questions on the electoral process to be answered. 11.9% of the calls came from women. 1,450 (33% women) civic voter educators (CVEs) were able to reach out to 2,092,991(42% of women) voters in the run up to

Election Day. 55,444 face-to-face sessions were conducted nationwide. IEC also conducted numerous provincial stakeholder meetings as well as the running of mobile theaters and the distribution of public outreach materials.

#### IMPACT OF OUTPUT THREE ACTIVITY 3.1.

While there were some comments that due to security and logistical difficulties, many hard to reach areas were not reached, a record number of voters turned out on E-Day – a trend, which has increased with each electoral cycle. The public outreach campaign was well researched and respected the principles of neutrality, universality and equality and covered all aspects of the electoral process. While mainstream media was used for outreach to many potential voters, the IEC was able to engage with local CSOs in the harder to reach areas as well as using other channels of communication through local and religious leaders which proved very effective in carrying voter information message to the more inaccessible areas. Key messages penetrated the public domain and were able to change the general shift of perceptions of elections and even women's role in the electoral process as demonstrated by many of the surveys carried out during the elections.<sup>56</sup> Prior to the release of the results, the election process was deemed to be democratic which inevitably contributed to the high turnout in both elections. Outreach extended to female voters and specific campaigns were directed at women although persons with disabilities (PWD) were less targeted and could have benefitted from special campaigns and polling station access plans specifically designed for them.

The setting up of the call centre was innovative and served as a useful public outreach tool.<sup>57</sup> Men<sup>58</sup> tended to use the service more than women, and many more persons in Kabul accessed this service than any other province.<sup>59</sup> **In future elections, it would be important to examine the possibility of**

<sup>56</sup> In 2013 51% cited lack of awareness of elections as an impediment to women's participation. In 2015 just 30% of the respondents considered this a challenge in 2014. – Democracy International Survey.

<sup>57</sup> The IEC-operated Call Centre availed 30-90 operators, trained to respond directly to queries, every day from 7am – 8pm from July 2013 to November 2014.

<sup>58</sup> According to statistics men were seven times more likely to call than women

<sup>59</sup> Those living in Kabul were 535 times more likely to call than those living in Nuristan. Calls from Nuristan, Kunar, Zabul, Badghis and Nimroz taken together, represent just 1.5% of the calls – a stark contrast to 38% received in Kabul. (Statistics taken between 15-20 March 2014)

ensuring a better outreach of the call centre so that it serves more equally the entire population rather than just voters in the capital.

### OUTPUT THREE: ACTIVITY 3.2. – IEC EXTERNAL RELATIONS – SUPPORT THE IEC’S STRUCTURED ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING POLITICAL PARTIES, AND THE IEC’S STRATEGIC MEDIA COMMUNICATION

#### Indicative Activity Results:

- Key stakeholders groups (political parties, candidates, CSOs and Media) are regularly engaged in a two-way dialogue with the IEC, receiving electoral updates and offering feedback;
- Effective, informative and strategic media communication mechanisms are established within the IEC, including strengthening the role of the IEC spokesperson and enhancing press availability

The support to the external relations department was heralded to be weak and much of the advice offered was not accepted. The perception of the transparency of the messaging and coordination with stakeholder groups was mixed. The IEC was recognized as having shown significant improvements in the communication of the policy making procedures though the regular publication of the IEC decisions and procedures however the late publication of detailed results of the first round of the presidential elections, the absence of communication on the full scale audit conclusions and the final results did not necessarily meet with

international obligations.

### IMPACT OF OUTPUT THREE: ACTIVITY 3.2

A key role of the external relations was to “ensure consistency of public messaging, establishing consensus on a strategic approach, to which all designated IEC spokes people adhere.”<sup>60</sup> Strategic messaging especially in the light of flagrant fraud and consistent messaging by the commission was absent and advice was not sought. This was despite the admission by the Commissioners that credibility and acceptance of election results depended on public confidence in the IEC. The disconnect between the Secretariat and the Commissioners as well as the weak relationship at the time between ELECT II and the Commissioners - the lack of adherence to the advice is perhaps not surprising. **Building key relationships between the project, IEC and the Commission is imperative and should feed into a more nuanced strategy to ensure that commissioners and the secretariat alike build a strategy together and buy in of said strategy is accepted well in anticipation of the elections.**

While concerted efforts to involve political parties and candidates in the process were made and stakeholder liaison officers organized regular meetings with political entities at the IEC headquarters, some observers considered that candidate representatives did not enjoy the same treatment as international and domestic observers who were provided with wide ranging information and meetings and thus suffered serious limitations to their rights to receive an institutional response from the IEC.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the absence of political parties or persons representing provincial council candidates and in the future even parliamentary and district council elections, **IEC would need to extend their external relation services to the provinces and the districts in order to have a greater impact on the electoral process and in the future for resolving complaints and issues surrounding the results.**

Compared to 2009, more than triple the number of domestic monitoring groups applied for IEC accreditation this year.

Compared to other elections, a record number of entities and observers were accredited with 2,325 entities and a total of 362,780 observers being accredited<sup>62</sup> with 23% of these being female. The majority of the observers were made up of 246,740 provincial council candidate agents and 80,645 presidential candidate agents. Despite the very high

<sup>60</sup> IEC Independent Election Commission: External Relations Department Strategy 2014 – 2015 Kabul 2014

<sup>61</sup> Final Report of the EUEAT 2014

<sup>62</sup> An additional number of observers, especially international, were recruited for the Audit.

number of observers, their presence was not a total guarantee to assure the transparency of the election, especially with regards to their lack of understanding of procedures and the fact that many of the observers congregated in the same polling stations, and hard to access and security compromised areas were not covered as well. Only 9,916 (2,78%) of the 362,780 observers were national election observers and thus were unable to cover the whole of the country, and although nearly half of these were women, there were not enough observers to cover all the polling stations and poor preparation meant that many of the organizations were unable to collate information in time which resulted in poor reporting. They were thus unable to deter and detect fraud as was envisaged.

**Indicative Activity Results:**

- The constitutional right for Afghan citizens to stand for elected office is ensured through effective candidate nomination procedures (including the capture of required data for the accurate production of ballot papers)
- Candidates are registered for both elections in a manner that maintains the trust of key stakeholders (including the candidates themselves) in the IEC.

**OUTPUT THREE: ACTIVITY 3.3. – CANDIDATE NOMINATION – SUPPORT THE IEC’S MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CANDIDATE NOMINATION PROCESS**

The candidate nomination process was well supported, and carried out according to the established timeline. By the closure of the candidate nomination period, there were 11 presidential candidates (all male) and 2,713 provincial candidates. In both type of elections, the number for the candidates had dropped substantially in

comparison to the former electoral cycle. There were no female candidates for the Presidential elections and although in percentage terms the number of women for the provincial council elections had increased 0.4% on 2009, the actual number of women applying had dropped.

Presidential Candidates			
Year	Total	Total Female	No of Females
2004	18	1	5.5.%
2009	41	2	4.8%
2014	11 <sup>63</sup>	0	0%
Provincial Council Candidates			
2004	3,201	285	8.9%
2009	3,180	333	10.6%
2014	2,713 <sup>64</sup>	296 <sup>65</sup>	11%

**Table 4: Number of candidates approved in the three elections in 2004,2009 and 2014.**

In order to facilitate the process and to encourage women to participate as candidates, the required level of formal school education was removed allowing for the fact that less women than men were likely to have completed formal school education. Furthermore, the IEC allowed female provincial council candidates to have their deposits reimbursed, even if they failed to reach the minimum requisite of 2% voter support. Election observer groups all heralded the process as inclusive and “voters enjoyed a genuine choice between distinct alternatives on E-Day.”<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> 27 candidates originally applied

<sup>64</sup> 3059 candidates originally applied to become candidates

<sup>65</sup> 308 female candidates had applied

<sup>66</sup> IDIHR final Report 2014

### OUTPUT THREE: ACTIVITY 3.4.. – GENDER - SUPPORT THE IEC 's GENDER UNIT AND THE PUBLIC OUTREACH DEPARTMENT GENDER FOCAL POINT IN PROMOTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, AS WELL AS IN IEC INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Various initiatives were undertaken to promote gender within the IEC, which also included regular gender coordination meetings with the support of UN Women. The work mainly focused on promoting women's participation as voters, candidates, electoral

Both the IEC and IECC had difficulty meeting their targets for recruiting female personnel across the country. The IEC, in particular, invested significant resources toward hiring women as election personnel and searchers. However, it encountered challenges in hiring eligible female polling staff due to several factors, including a lack of educated women, competition with political parties and civil society groups from the same pool of eligible candidates, and security threats. (NDI Preliminary statement)

representatives, electoral staff, observers, candidate agents and media personnel among others. While acknowledging some of the positive statistics that do imply improvements in female participation in the electoral process, it is also necessary to recognize that many of the reasons for an unequal participation of women in key electoral activities are outside of the scope of the project. Entrenched patriarchal norms invariably affect the ability of women to successfully engage on the same level as men in the process. This is particularly pertinent in areas which tend to be more conservative in their attitudes towards women as well

as the deteriorating security environment which has minimalized the ability of women even further to participate at any level in the political process, and has dissuaded women to register as well as vote. Furthermore, although attempts were made to gender mainstream the institution, a lack of a strong willingness to address gender issues in such a challenging context was apparent and **means that the IEC in the future will need to strengthen their resolve to mainstream gender and lead by example by promoting and advocating for gender equality within the institution itself.**

*The IEC showed considerable commitment to reinforce women's involvement in the organization of the elections. The IEC board itself saw the nomination of three women commissioners, above the two seats recommended by the Law. EUEAT Final Report 2014*

### IMPACT OF OUTPUT THREE: ACTIVITY 3.4.

While it is difficult to gauge the real impact of the project on gender equality, statistics do demonstrate some notable improvements. This include a record 37% of the electorate who voted were women, approximately one million more women than in 2010. The process also experienced an increase of District Field Coordinators (DFCs) to approximately 21% (increase of 5% on 2010), 34% Civic Voter Educators (5% increase in 2010) and in total 29% of women were employed overall (eight per cent increase over 2010). While these figures are encouraging, IEC as a permanent institution still falls short of achieving its 30% target with only 7% of all positions occupied by women. Women account for 12% of the Taskheel staff, 9% of National Technical Assistance (NTA) temporary staff and 5% of the non NTA staff. Only two women out of ten department heads are women and no woman has ever held a senior leadership position at the Secretariat (CEO, DCEO). Five IEC departments/units have no permanent female staff at all – including the Gender Unit which is at present a temporary unit.

The IEC held gender coordination meetings on a regular basis, and advocated for increased participation of observers and media personnel. Female observers were the highest in 2014 (5260)<sup>67</sup> comparing to 2009 Presidential Election (3758), however, there is a decreasing trend of female media personnel. The percentage of female national and international observers improved on 2009. With respect to the

#### Indicative Activity Results:

- Consideration of gender perspectives are effectively and consistently incorporated in IEC regulations and procedures for the conduct of elections, as well as personnel policy and public outreach initiatives.

<sup>67</sup> 29% - increased in numbers by 200, but decreased by 12 per cent

registration, registration rates of women in urban areas improved significantly in the 2013-2014 top up exercise. Furthermore, the percentage of female candidates for the provincial council (PC) also improved, although the actual numbers fell (See Table Four above). 18 female PC members won without the help of the quota, and the four top winners in Kabul were women, as well as the topmost winner in Dakiundu was a woman. It should be noted that the revised electoral law reduced the number of quota seats from 25% to 20% and the gender quota still represents a ceiling rather than a threshold. The only female presidential candidate failed to qualify, as she did not collect the eligible 100,000 signatures.

While it is acknowledged there was a commitment by the IEC to target women in public outreach campaigns and training and gender was taken into account in all of the messaging, **much of the work of the gender unit is aimed at improving the number of women working in the institution rather than addressing key issues affecting the political participation of women.**

### CONTRIBUTION OF OUTPUT THREE TO THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE IEC

According to the IEC, there are different claims on the level of capacity development built in the area of public outreach and external relations. The public outreach campaign was considered as successful by many of the interlocutors spoken to, and the difficult task that the IEC faces in reaching out to such a diverse society and especially the logistical and security obstacles that stand in the way for many of these areas to be reached is recognized. The high turnout was testament to a successful public outreach campaign. The various MOUs signed amongst key ministries as well as the use of religious and community leaders were imperative for the campaign's success. While international observer groups noted the transparency extended to other electoral stakeholders, **key stakeholder meetings especially with candidates and local CSOs needs to be replicated throughout the country.** With the use of the EDSS system, it would be interesting to examine which places had higher turnout compared to other areas, and whether this could be attributed to a more robust public outreach campaign. While the call center was very successful taking up to an average of 11,091 separate inquiries per day, many of these calls were taken in Kabul and less hard to reach areas received very few calls. **It would need to be ascertained as to the reasons why the call center was less used in these areas:** Was it lack of mobile phone coverage, a poor public outreach campaign on the availability of the call centre, or a general reluctance to make phone calls in those particular areas?

### INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE BENEFITS OF OUTPUT THREE

Many of the procedures and quality outputs produced by the public outreach campaign are already available in-house. Lessons learned on what worked and what did not, according to **target group, area and gender should be scrutinized, and plans adapted to ensure that adequate planning is carried out prior to the next elections. Key relationships** with the ministries, especially Ministry of Education, Ministry of Haji and Religious Affairs (MOHIA) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) **should be reinforced to maintain the momentum and explore new and innovative ways of enhancing already on the work done. Key relationships with CSOs, political parties and messaging with the general public all need to be strengthened, and support afforded to the IEC to enhance these relationships.** The IEC acknowledged that this area is still very weak, and would require support in the future. The IEC acknowledges the importance of improving these relations especially prior to the lead up in preparations of the next elections. Furthermore, the need for key and consistent messaging emanating from the commission is evident, and the new window of opportunity that the selection of a new commission offers should not be ignored, and **ELECT in concert with IEC should explore ways of institutionalizing a comprehensive, inclusive and consistent communication and Gender strategy from the inception of their mandate.**

## SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT THREE

Interlocutors engaged in the Kabul and distance interview process acknowledged that the IEC's voter education and outreach campaign was comprehensive and successful in informing the electorate of their rights and responsibilities as citizens in Afghanistan's emerging democracy. The outreach campaign in the run up to the first round 2014 elections did provide voters with a better understanding of what their vote meant in accordance with Afghan electoral law and their responsibility as citizens in an emerging Afghan democracy.<sup>68</sup>

Engaging external stakeholders including civil society, future political parties and candidates is essential for the IEC to re-gain trust amongst its many interlocutors and for the institution to be perceived as an independent, transparent and trustworthy organization. While a future ELECT cannot nor should directly support external actors capacity to engage in the electoral process, support for improved cooperation and collaboration to engage proactively and meaningfully is important. **Regular meetings with external actors should be encouraged as well as engaging in joint BRIDGE trainings with domestic observers, civil society, media, women's groups and representatives of other vulnerable groups such as IDPs and persons with disabilities would demonstrate IEC's commitment towards inclusivity as well as allowing a better relationship to be built between the institution and external actors. This would also enable all key electoral stakeholders to take responsibility for a more transparent, inclusive and credible process instead of laying the entire responsibility on the IEC. These should be replicated at the provincial level in order to maximize inclusiveness.**

## OUTPUT FOUR: THE IEC'S DAILY OPERATIONS AND ITS OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS, AS WELL AS THE PROJECT SUPPORT SERVICES ARE STRENGTHENED

This output comprises both the daily operation support to the IECs functioning and the management of the projects own resources mobilized to support the IEC. The output has a three pronged focus: a). Enhancing the operational capacity of the IEC through advisory support in the areas such as Finance, Procurement, HR and Administration etc; b) Proper management of project resources and c) providing support for electoral resources.

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
<b>Output 4: The IEC's daily operations and its operational management functions, as well as the project support services are strengthened.</b>						
4.1. Support the operational costs of the IEC as well as the enhancement of the IEC's operational management systems and procedures	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	3	3	3	2
4.2. Conduct efficient and effective management of project resources	<b>Achieved</b>	5	3	3	3	4
4.3. Provide direct operational support to electoral activities	<b>Achieved</b>	5	4	3	4	4

Table 5: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

## OUTPUT FOUR: ACTIVITY 4.1. – IEC OPERATIONS – SUPPORT THE OPERATIONAL COSTS OF THE IEC AS WELL AS THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE IEC'S OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

Almost 99% of the electoral budget had been funded by the international community until the closure of ELECT II in June 2015. In order to promote ownership, and the development of a strong administrative

<sup>68</sup> See for example USAID report "Review of USAID/Afghanistan Electoral Assistance Program" [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdacy194.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacy194.pdf) and "Transitional Support to Elections in Afghanistan" (UNDP), [http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/operations/projects/democratic\\_governance/elect.html](http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/elect.html).

and financial infrastructure, a change of implementation modality from DIM to NIM was proposed in 2012 which was intended to strengthen IEC's future oversight of funds while providing the intended opportunity for enhanced Afghan ownership of the project. While much of the project continued to be implemented under DIM, the GARMIN report recommended some items to be on-budget. It concluded that in line with the Presidential Decree 45 which called for the election to be on budget and that IEC should undertake the financial implementation of certain activities so that by 2015 they would be able to handle a lot for the budget. The report did recognize that significant tasks should remain off budget given the time bound obligations and to avoid the risk of disrupting the process. These included procurement that was time bound and where UNDP procurement services would provide a clear comparative advantage; procurement/actions that had already started or will have started by the time that part of the election budget would be "on-budget" ; and other sensitive tasks such as ink and the tally center. The project concluded that approximately 40% of the election budget could be on budget with minimal risk to the timely delivery of the election. These would include payments to temporary staff in the field and HQ, and procurement that is not particularly time sensitive.

Due to time constraints and a lack of staff, the IEC did not receive direct capacity building in this regard, and as was stated previously in this report, IEC did undertake the procurement of "soft items" and was responsible for payments to staff. Unfortunately, the UNDP audit and the concurrent investigations carried out on the finance departments of the IEC. (see the section under *Project Management – Impact of the Financial Modality*) revealed key discrepancies and a mishandling of some of these funds.

Previous evaluations on the project recommended that ELECT II should not only assist strengthening the IEC's financial HR and asset management systems, but also the procurement department. While IEC did take on some local procurement, they were not afforded international expertise and had limited access to the following of international procurement process carried out by the Project in conjunction with the Country Office and PSO. A limited number of staff were given access to a study visit to Project Services Offices in Copenhagen (namely one commissioner) accompanying the process of the procurement of key ticket items, however key staff involved in procurement did not attend. As outlined in the section of efficiency, some of the key items could have been procured locally<sup>69</sup>, and national ownership of the process could have been enhanced. Nonetheless, due to the operational mode of the project, very little time was left to ensure capacity building opportunities for the IEC and thus procurement, as well as human resources and administration as well as finance still lack opportune capacity building to ensure sustainability and Afghan ownership of the process for the future.

#### OUTPUT FOUR: ACTIVITY 4.2. – PROJECT MANAGEMENT – CONDUCT EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF PROJECT RESOURCES

##### Indicative Activity Results:

- Project resources are managed effectively and efficiently

While this activity was achieved, as was highlighted under efficiency, some of the procurement activities could have been approached in a different manner to improve efficiency and to enhance ownership of the IEC of the process and to assure sustainability for the future.

The Project Management Unit not only provided key procurement services, but also afforded other services such as the financial oversight of the project and human resources management. The fact that the project had these in-house services was important for its efficiency, especially given the fact the project was handling a large sum of funds, and a considerable number of donors were involved in supporting the project. The direct financial oversight of the project also meant that they were able to prioritize key payments, especially with regards to procurement and the execution of long term agreements. This level of efficiency was also extended to the human resources management of the project

<sup>69</sup> This is in line with the recently announced SERC Recommendations to ensure future sustainability of the electoral process

which necessitated a quick turn around on getting consultants and advisors on board as quickly as possible. Nonetheless, there were still some delays in recruitment, but this was mainly to do with the lack of adequately qualified candidates rather than any particular problem in recruitment. While maintaining independence over the recruitment process, IEC has mixed feelings on whether they should be involved in the hiring of advisors and consultants. The general consensus concluded that it would be useful to sit on interviews in order to gauge the quality of the staff from candidate interviews. Nonetheless, there have been occasions when IEC members have sat in on interviews, and they were not entirely satisfied with the incumbents' performance thereafter.

While the quality of the advisors and consultants were deemed generally good by evaluation interlocutors, there were some problems with certain personnel, whereby complaints were made and they were still retained. One suggestion to expedite the recruitment process and to perhaps counter the problem of satisfaction on a certain advisor's performance is to bring new advisors on a short-term contract to ensure general satisfaction with their performance and to ensure that they are on board in a timely manner. Nonetheless, such a recruitment modality could also deter quality candidates from applying. A balance will need to be struck as part of a new electoral support project.

#### **OUTPUT FOUR: ACTIVITY 4.3. – DIRECT ELECTORAL OPERATIONAL SUPPORT – PROVIDE DIRECT OPERATIONAL SUPPORT TO ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES**

##### **Indicative Activity Results:**

- Key operational tasks delegated to ELECT II by the IEC are implemented smoothly and efficiently

While this activity was achieved, as was highlighted under efficiency, some of the procurement activities could have been approached in a different manner to ensure sustainability. Part of the mandate of this particular activity was to enhance a more structured and regular engagement between UNDP CO, IEC and ELECT II procurement units. While the relationship between the UNDP CO and ELECT II was greatly enhanced and in essence the ELECT II supported UNDP CO in their procurement endeavors, the relationship and capacity built with IEC is still somewhat lacking.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT FOUR**

Efficient project support is evidenced in the progress reports and periodic internal evaluation and assessment reports provided to the evaluation team by UNDP and further through the direct interaction with the IEC on two occasions in Kabul, including a self-assessment and presentation prepared and presented by the IEC and attended by current management and staff. Obstacles to the long-term sustainability of this process persist, however, and in particular as it relates to the continuing high turnover, persistent uncertainty as to how the recently-announced SERC recommendations will be realized in final form after presidential review and approval, and the 2016 Commission will emerge (structurally, operationally, financially), and whether key staff in place as of December 2015 will be in place in 2016.

As noted elsewhere in this report, there has been a substantial effort conducted by the UNDP (and UNOPS) to enhance EMB operational and management functions. However, there is an outstanding and unresolved question as to the longer-term Afghan-led motivation for what the IEC will be over time in comparison to other EMBs globally. In most countries, an IEC is intended to effectively, efficiently, professionally and transparently manage and implement periodic elections in accordance with an established set of standard operational procedures. It tracks, compiles, evaluates and maintains a nation's electoral memory and responds to the needs of domestic partners in accomplishing successful and hopefully uneventful elections.

**In Afghanistan at present, the IEC is working toward establishing a sustainable operational capacity and as important, a neutral role in facilitating a free, fair and transparent process in**

future Afghan elections. Again, the recently-announced SERC recommendations and their final form after presidential review and approval are a key consideration moving forward.

#### OUTPUT FIVE: - THE CONDUCT OF KEY ELECTORAL OPERATIONS FOR THE 2014 AND 2015 ELECTIONS BY THE IEC IS IMPROVED

This particular output was added to the revised PRODOC to provide support for the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections and the 2015 Wolesi Jirga elections. The support included elements of electoral operations including the primary tasks of opening of polling centers to facilitate the casting of ballots by Afghan voters, and the counting of ballots in the same polling centers. It also involved support for the tallying, processing and announcement of the election results. Activity 5.1 was achieved and 5.2 was only partially achieved. Activity 5.3 is not taken into consideration as there was no boundary delimitation process which is necessary primarily for district council elections.

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
<b>Output 5: The conduct of key electoral operations for the 2014 and 2015 elections by the IEC is improved</b>						
5.1. Support the development and implementation of the IEC's electoral operational plan and procedures, and provide direct implementation support to the 2014 and 2015 elections	<b>Achieved</b>	5	5	4	4	4
5.2. Support the IEC's design and implementation of a robust, secure and timely results management system that enjoys the confidence of key electoral stakeholders	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	5	3	4	3	3

Table 6: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

#### OUTPUT FIVE - ACTIVITY 5.1. – ELECTORAL OPERATIONS PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IEC'S ELECTORAL OPERATIONAL PLAN AND PROCEDURES AND PROVIDE DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT TO THE 2014 AND 2015 ELECTIONS

##### Indicative Activity Results:

- The IEC electoral operational plan is robust, coherent and thorough;
- The 2014 and 2015 elections are implemented in a manner that allows as many Afghan voters as possible (depending on security challenges) to participate and cast their ballots;
- Ballots are cast, and votes are counted, under an integrity regime that both deters electoral fraud, and detects it where occurring.

The 2014 elections were perceived to be very well organized and allowed for a “remarkable voter turnout across the country despite the determined efforts of extremists groups to disrupt the process and quell participation.”<sup>70</sup> Following on from the experience of 2009 and 2010, ELECT II supported the IEC to further enhance its anti fraud measures, particularly focusing on the chain of custody of sensitive election materials and procedures for identifying any tampering. It is unclear how much fraud occurred in the first round, but in the

second round, after the 100% audit, approximately 10% of the votes were thrown out compared to 26% of votes in the 2009 elections in a sample audit of approximately 10% of the 3376 ballot boxes<sup>71</sup> which were held to be suspicious. While robust anti fraud methods were developed and in some instances served as an adequate deterrent, the afghan elections are still fraught with fraud. Although, ELECT II was able to support the IEC in implementing key technical deterrents of fraud, **ballot stuffing** and the inherent **culture of impunity** that is rife amongst persons committing fraud are by far the biggest problems facing

<sup>70</sup> NDI Preliminary Statement

<sup>71</sup> Source – ECC Final Report 2009

the IEC. This is out of the scope of the project and will need to be addressed in the electoral reforms, although punitive measures are noted earlier in this report.

### IMPACT OF OUTPUT FIVE - ACTIVITY 5.1.

The 2014 elections were the first Afghan Led elections in its democratic history. ELECT II supported the operational plans of the IEC, this included the procurement of the materials, fraud mitigation and security. Key procedures such as registration, polling, counting, delivery and retrieval of materials as well as the tally process were also supported. Many of these procedures were drafted and approved over 18 months prior to the election, allowing sufficient time to enable sound planning and were scrutinized to make sure they were in line with the newly approved electoral law. Upon the expansion of the project in 2013, 24 international advisors were deployed in the provinces, which facilitated the process at the provincial level. The identification of polling stations was enabled using the Geographic Information System (GIS), whereby for the first time. 99% of polling stations were mapped to villages, and 65% of these mapped to buildings within those villages. The use of GIS is very technical, and there are numerous uses of the system for the future, including using the system for issuing results, identifying hot spots for security and fraud, and using it to create maps for the results, turnout etc. With the polling stations mapped, the IEC worked closely with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to determine viability on whether they could be secured for 24 consecutive hours.

Acknowledging that **fraud has undermined the credibility of all the previous elections**, the IEC enlisted IFES to assess vulnerabilities and to recommend effective fraud mitigation measures. As was stated above, relatively less fraud was detected in the 2014 elections, however it is unsure whether this can be directly attributed to the anti-fraud mitigation measures or whether less fraud was committed compared to the former elections. Nonetheless, while many of the new measures were correctly implemented, many of those involved in the project recognized that the current measures were not enough to prevent ballot stuffing and the culture of impunity which has been bestowed on persons committed fraudulent practices.

### OUTPUT FIVE - ACTIVITY 5.2. – RESULT MANAGEMENT – SUPPORT THE IEC’S DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A ROBUST, SECURE, AND TIMELY RESULTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THAT ENJOYS THE CONFIDENCE OF KEY ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

#### Indicative Activity Results:

- The results of both the 2014 and 2015 elections are tallied by the IEC, in a transparent, consistent and coordinated manner, so that the legitimacy of the provisional results is accepted by key electoral stakeholders.
- The results of the 2014 and 2015 elections are announced in an expedient and transparent manner

The elections were perceived as reasonably free and fair up until the announcement of the results. The manner in which results are announced can have a profound effect on the process, and despite many of the procedures being written well in advance of the elections, the tally center (TC) was not always perceived as being transparent and for some time, observers were not allowed to observe the tallying process.

### IMPACT OF OUTPUT FIVE - ACTIVITY 5.2.

The tallying framework was endorsed in a timely manner and included the necessary controls and measures guaranteeing the reconciliation of results through a seven step process. Nonetheless, the transparency in the actual decision making process was opaque and candidate agents and observers alike were not able to gain adequate access. Despite procedures already put in place, the provincial election commissioners did not always follow them and it was therefore very hard to keep track of the results’ progress. In total, the IEC investigated 3,226 results representing 17.1% of the polling stations open on E-Day. In total, after subsequent investigations, 234,674 votes were invalidated.

- The late endorsement of audit procedures, the significant number of needed clarifications and the difficulties to segregate valid and invalid votes within the same ballot box tarnished the credibility of the process. As a consequence, the IEC failed to present public and detailed conclusions in the absence of a political acceptance of the outcome of this exercise.

**EUEAT – Final Report 2014**

Despite the first round of results being largely perceived as an opaque process, improvements were made to make the results management process more transparent and observers were able to access the tally center completely. The delay in providing transparency led to a crisis of confidence and on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014, Dr Abdullah withdrew from the tallying process. The results process suffered a number of audits and mistrust expressed by both camps competing in the second round of the presidential elections. This mistrust resulted in a

full-scale audit whereby every single ballot box was brought to Kabul and audited by a team of international and national auditors. The audit was conducted in front of national and international observers. While a full scale audit had not been foreseen, new procedures outside the existing framework were developed and each and every detail was negotiated amongst the two winning candidates of the second round. The audit result was intended to determine a clear electoral winner, notwithstanding, negotiations culminated in a National Unity Government (NUG) being proclaimed and the technical result of the audit was never finalized or publicly announced,

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT FIVE**

The technical aspects of the 2014 presidential elections are acknowledged as having been successful despite the potentially disastrous procedural outcome and the subsequent fraud and invalidation of the popular will through the brokered formation of the NUG by the US Government. 2015 did not see a constitutionally-mandated parliamentary election nor is public confidence in EMBs improved. The outcome of the presidential elections in 2014 and the subsequent electoral audit make it particularly important to ensure that electoral process is supported as part of a comprehensive electoral cycle approach from 2016. While steps have been taken during ELECT II to move the process of sustainability of electoral processes forward, the short-term SERC recommendations of December 2015 provide for substantial changes to the management of elections via the IEC, improved transparency and accountability of electoral and government officials in preparation for future election cycles, and proposed reform to the electoral system away from exclusively SNTV and toward a parallel proportional representation (PR)/SNTV or multiple dimension representation (MDR) system.<sup>72</sup> In all aspects of electoral reform, it is anticipated that presidential approval and thereafter adoption and implementation of electoral reforms in 2016 will improve the transparency and accountability at most levels of IEC elections management, and that increased public accountability and disclosure will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the EMB.

**With continued handover of SOPs, increased institutional memory and anticipated longer-term staff recruitment and enhanced staff development<sup>73</sup> over time, the IEC will incrementally increase in Afghan-led and managed electoral planning and implementation capacity.**

<sup>72</sup> The Special Electoral Reform Commission (SERC) began the second (final) phase of its work on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015, based on the presidential decree number (83) dated 6 September 2015. For the purpose of fulfilling the assigned duties in accordance with that decree, the Commission conducted consultative meetings and seminars with various stakeholders in the electoral process in Afghanistan and published the first set of short-term recommendations on December 23, 2015. The MDR is a comprehensive, inclusive and consensus making system, and can respond to majority of the requests and demands in this area. In this system the geographical, political, gender, and personal dimensions of representation have been given due attention, and MDR accommodates political parties, coalition of political parties, coalition of individual candidates and independent candidates in the electoral process. MDR has been implemented successfully in a number of countries.

<sup>73</sup> Proposed continuation of Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) training for certified trainees and certified trainers in Afghanistan to build domestic sustainable capacity: <http://www.bridge-project.org/en/>

## OUTPUT SIX – THE ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM IS ENHANCED

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
Output 6: The electoral dispute resolution mechanism is enhanced						
6.1. Provide effective support to the electoral dispute resolution mechanism	Achieved	5	4	4	4	3

Table 7: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

### OUTPUT SIX - ACTIVITY 6.1. – ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION – PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM

The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission was established as a permanent body in the 2013 Election Law and the Law on the Structure, Duties and Authorities of the IEC and the IECC. In order to avoid a conflict of interest both with the IEC and the ELECT II project, services were sub contracted to two external agencies that specialize in providing support to electoral management bodies (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) and UNOPS to provide procurement and logistical support in a timely and efficient manner.

#### Indicative Activity Results:

- The electoral dispute resolution mechanism is facilitated to execute its mandate through the provision of expert technical and operational assistance

#### IMPACT OF OUTPUT SIX

Both IFES and UNOPS enjoyed excellent collaboration with IECC and ELEC II as well as with the donors. In order to ensure a timely establishment of the IECC within two weeks of the nomination of the five commissioners,<sup>74</sup> UNOPS HQ in Copenhagen authorized the use of Emergency Procurement Procedures to minimize the time

required to mobilize resources during the start-up. With the naming of the commissioners taking place in September 2013 and the start of the candidate nomination period only two weeks thereafter, the two subcontracting agencies had the mammoth task of establishing procedures, hiring of staff, and establishing working mechanisms for an election that would take place less than six months later. Due to the extremely short time period, IECC often found itself working alongside the creation of procedures while implementing the same. Miraculously, despite building the physical, human legal infrastructure more or less from scratch, they were able to provide adequate support to the organization.

UNOPS took on the complex and logistically challenging task of recruiting over 450 persons for the headquarters and provincial offices and the majority of these were in place prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> April Elections. The ability to recruit female staff was difficult and women only made up a relatively small percentage of the staff. Given time constraints and scarce resources, the majority of the provincial IECCs were housed in the same building as the IEC which in some instances led to problems of perceived partiality; it is unclear as to whether this deterred persons from submitting complaints at the provincial level. Nevertheless, there was a tendency for provincial offices to pass the complaints on to headquarters for adjudication<sup>75</sup>.

Facilitating IECC Procedures for the Adjudication of Complaints and Challenges, a case management database was finalized on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014, ensuring the accuracy of data collection and management. Its design was based on forms and reporting templates developed by the IECC Registration and Statistics

<sup>74</sup> The same scenario occurred in 2009 whereby the commissioners were appointed only two weeks prior to the commencement of the candidate nomination period.

<sup>75</sup> The EU EAT insinuated that there was an inability of the PIECCs to conduct substantive investigation in the first round. The investigations that did take place were largely conducted by the IECC Board in Kabul.

Department. On 3 April 2014, only two days prior to E-Day, a MOU was signed between the IEC and IECC defining their respective roles and responsibilities.

The IECC was able to effectively deal with complaints, it received 2,133<sup>76</sup> in the first round on E-day complaints as compared to 2,639<sup>77</sup> in 2009 and 921 (as opposed to 815) were classified as category A.<sup>78</sup> The adjudication of results were televised. However according to observers, the complaints process (especially at the provincial level) was “characterized by a general lack of organization and low levels of capacity on the part of officials.

The second round elections recorded 2,558 complaints, an increase of 20% from the first round. 1,550 were registered at the PIECCs and 1,009 at the IECC. Of the original 2,558 complaints, a total of 2,194 were dismissed, fines were issued in 27 cases and 59 cases were decided in which results had been revalidated. It was noted that the investigative capacity of the PIECCs had improved between the two rounds after intense training, however the PEICCs tended to dismiss the complaints. 135 appeals were received however these decisions were suspended in light of the imminent audit. Decisions emanating from the audit were arbitrated in open sessions however the actual decisions taken were behind closed doors. With regards to IEC decisions, IECC did not interfere, and this lack of reaction was considered by some as falling short of their legal obligations and contributed to an erosion of trust in the institution.

Subsequent to the audit, the institution has embarked on a lessons learned workshop, publishing said report on the website, has drafted a five year strategic plan and finalized the IECC annual report. The institution continued with trainings and Training of Trainers programme to create a pool of long term in-house IECC trainers. Unfortunately due to the closure of ELECT in June 2015, many key persons were lost and the institution is currently awaiting its fate.

#### **INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE BENEFITS OF OUTPUT SIX**

The speed in which the IECC was able to get established and the relative efficacy in which it was able to deliver its mandate are acknowledged. Prior to the closure of ELECT II, the IECC was funded using project funds, and thus the majority of persons trained under output six were paid with NTA contracts. While an important pool of staff was formed in areas of electoral dispute resolution and the overall mandate of the IECC, much of this capacity has been lost. IECC has been able to assure that some of these posts will now be under the Taskheel, however this was not confirmed considering the uncertainty of the future of the IECC.

Unfortunately, many of the lessons learnt from 2009 and 2010 were cited in 2014/2015. The IECC was unable to institutionalize its capacity due to its previous temporary nature. With the important capacity built during the 2014 electoral cycle, a future IECC should have a mechanism to tap into this acquired knowledge and use it for future elections. Unfortunately, at the moment, the capacity built is present in a few persons remaining within the IECC. SERC Recommendations have suggested that the IECC will lose its independent status and will eventually become an autonomous body within the IEC (however with budgetary, secretariat independence from the IEC), it is therefore imperative that crucial information and lessons learned are not lost, and a physical handover in the interest of preserving institutional memory needs to take place.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT SIX**

The IECC became functional within two weeks of receiving a mandate and began accepting and processing complaints in accordance with legal constraints and its nascent institutional capacity. The UN (UNOPS)

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<sup>76</sup> Source – EUEAT Final Report 2014

<sup>77</sup> ECC Final Report 2009

<sup>78</sup> Meaning that if allegations, if proven, would have affected the results.

and IFES are recognized for having accomplished an extremely challenging operational, logistical, and procedural technical assistance project during that time. However, given that the short-term recommendations provided by SERC call for a substantive reconfiguration of the IECC as likely part of the IEC from 2016, there will be a need to refocus the project parameters of a follow-on electoral support effort.

**This will include ensuring affording capacity to all areas of a future established election dispute mechanism.** The likelihood that in the short term a future ECC will be embedded within the IEC will have important considerations. The provision of technical assistance and its perceived neutrality will have to be examined to ensure that there is no perceived conflict of interest. Furthermore, given the inherent weaknesses in the non-permanent ECC, and **the possibility of elections complaints management being an integral part of the work of the IEC, consideration could be given to providing temporary support to the regions/provinces especially given the fact that the next elections will be conducted at a local level.**

Finally, the establishment of a special court will need to be supported, it should be ascertained whether such support should emanate from a UNDP funded basket fund or could be provided by a more specialized entity dealing with Election Dispute Resolution (EDR). It should also be emphasized that the future court will only deal with electoral crimes and will not have any impact of the results of any given election.

#### OUTPUT SEVEN - THE MEDIA REGULATORY MECHANISM FOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IS ENHANCED

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
<b>Output 7: The media regulatory mechanism for the electoral process is enhanced</b>						
7.1. Provide effective support to the Media Commission so that it can implement its terms of reference	Achieved	5	4	4	4	3

Table 8: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the revised ProDoc

“The Media Commission (MC) is a temporary body established for each election under the IEC to monitor the performance of media during the election period. The five-member professional body was appointed by the IEC in December 2013.<sup>79</sup> Prior recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR EST regarding media regulation during the campaign, including granting the MC representation at provincial level to better fulfill its mandate, have not been implemented. The IEC is responsible for staff recruitment and allocation of budget means to the MC and exercised significant control over these processes during the whole electoral process. The MC reported a lack of transparency in the recruitment of commissioners by the IEC and called for more emphasis on professional merits in the recruitment process. Furthermore, delays in staff appointment and in the allocation of budget means to the MC had a negative impact on the MC’s ability to commence monitoring of media activities in a timely manner.”—excerpt from OSCE report on 2014 presidential elections - Source: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/afghanistan/129761?download>

#### OUTPUT SEVEN - ACTIVITY 7.1. - MEDIA REGULATORY BODY - PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TO THE MEDIA COMMISSION SO THAT IT CAN IMPLEMENT ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE

Under the electoral law, the media commission is a temporary body<sup>79</sup> and is mandated to “oversee the reporting and fair broadcasting of the electoral campaign and address violations relating to reporting and fair broadcasting of electoral

<sup>79</sup> Under the electoral reforms, the MC is mandated to become a permanent body

**Indicative Activity Results:**

- The media commission is facilitated to execute its mandate through the provision of expert technical and operational assistance

campaign or other offences related to the aims, policies and procedures of the mass media. The IEC Media Commission was established on 4 December 2013 and a five member Media commission chaired by a well-known female journalist.

### IMPACT OF OUTPUT SEVEN

Through the support of ELECT II, the media commission was able to execute its mandate and demonstrated full *transparency and accountability*<sup>80</sup>. ELECT II advisors were able to offer advice on drafting of rules and procedures and afford advice on referral procedures for media houses that violate the provisions of the law. Nevertheless, despite this advice, not all aspects of its mandate were executed in the manner prescribed and thus had a lesser impact on the electoral process as a whole. The MC in the main was regarded as a weak institution and its mandate had very little consequence on the transparent conduct of the media in the elections.. Article 60 affords the MC the ability to fine violators of the electoral law. However, the existing data set clearly demonstrates significant breaches in this protocol,<sup>81</sup> fines were only introduced to the media outlets after the elections, thus having little impact to correct their behavior during the campaign.

### CONTRIBUTION OF OUTPUT SEVEN TO BUILD THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF MC

There is no doubt that ELECT II helped build the capacity of the MC and enhanced its effectiveness to a certain extent, however given the fact that the body is a temporary one, much of the capacity built has been lost, and despite requests for the maintenance of the commissioners to be maintained for the next electoral process, the uncertain electoral timetable provoked the dismantling of the MC which is mandated to cease operations within 45 days following the announcement of final certified results,<sup>82</sup> and as a result capacity has been lost and there was no ability for the media commission to be institutionalized.

### SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTPUT SEVEN

It is acknowledged that the media regulatory mechanism was enhanced at least in part during the curtailed implementation period of ELECT II. Given that the MC will likely be a permanent body in accordance with the December 2015 SERC recommendations, a follow-on electoral support programme may want to consider the portfolio and duration of media advisor(s) in accordance with the extent and amount of direct GoIRA funding for the MC from 2016. Due to the uncertainty regarding parliamentary elections, the Media Commission is currently non-operational and vital capacity built during ELECT II has been lost. .

### CONTRIBUTION OF ELECT II'S ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE OVERALL OUTCOME OF DEEPENING DEMOCRACY AND ENSURING PEACE AND STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN.

The presidential electoral process was deemed to be credible, inclusive and enjoyed commendations by national and international observers alike, by being heralded as the best elections technically to date. Elections (and electoral preparation) are technical in substance however, and as evidenced by the post-Audit international involvement of the process outcome, they are political by nature. The "true measure of the elections is whether the public has confidence in the process and trust in the outcome. Elections run honestly and transparently, respecting basic rights, with effective and neutral support of state institutions, and responsible conduct of participants (leaders, candidates and voters) is most likely to achieve an accepted and peaceful outcome."

<sup>80</sup> Final Report – Presidential Election – 5 April and 14 June 2014 – European Union Election Assessment Team

<sup>81</sup> Subsequent to two weeks of media monitoring, the IEC MC had data on 17 broadcasters allotting more than 75% of the total time developed to the political communication to only one presidential candidate and his team. The same situation was observed during the run off- Information Source – Final Report EUEAT 2014

<sup>82</sup> Election Law Art 61.

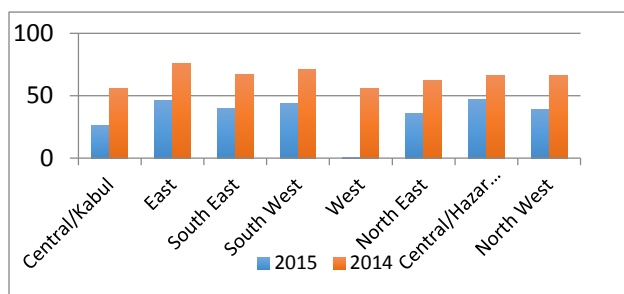
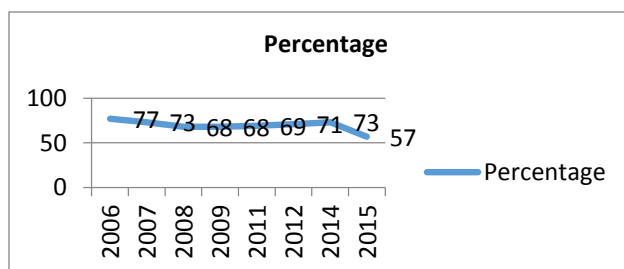


Figure 4: Perception whether 2014 Presidential Elections were free and fair



Unfortunately, contrary to best international elections practice,<sup>83</sup> the final results of the Audit were never published. The 2014 Presidential Elections did pave the way to the country's first ever peaceful transfer of power, however the technical process ended in a political outcome and thus perceptions of the overall process and its legitimacy and impact on deepening democracy has been somewhat eroded. A survey that was

conducted by the Asia Foundation shortly after the ballots were counted, concluded that 63.3% considered the election to be free and fair, however the same survey which was conducted a year later, this dropped to only 36%<sup>84</sup> illustrating a decline in the confidence in the electoral process and IEC as a professional, independent and efficient election management body.

Figure 5: Satisfaction with democracy

## IX. SUSTAINABILITY

### SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RESULTS

Sustainability does not simply mean a reduction in costs. It must incorporate the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It was foreseen in the ProDoc (revised) that ELECT II would tackle the important issue of future sustainability of the IEC in the last year of its implementation, however due to the early closure of the project, many of the planned activities were not carried out. The loss of a large number of staff who had been contracted and employed under the 'salaries' line item of ELECT II both in the IEC and the IECC has left both institutions with only key skeletal staff remaining. While staff have understood the need to cut ELECT II funds for this purpose, the void has had devastating effects on the morale of the staff from both institutions. ELECT II had originally foreseen the gradual transfer of salaried staff to civil service salaries, however such an abrupt shift to the lower scale tashkeel<sup>85</sup> may deter some staff from staying within the institutions should they be able to secure other posts with a higher salary level. This is especially pertinent with regards to the IECC as its future is uncertain and will not be resolved until the pending outcome of the electoral reforms which will decide whether it will remain a permanent electoral institution or not.

<sup>83</sup> Election officials should ensure that the results of the counting of votes are aggregated, recorded and transmitted accurately. EU Handbook for European Union Election Observation – Third Edition 2015

<sup>84</sup> The 2015 survey asked three questions about the 2014 presidential election that were also included in the 2014 survey. The 2014 survey was administered after the elections but before allegations of fraud became widespread, resulting in the recount and ultimately, the decision to for a power-sharing government. By asking these questions again, after the full election process has been completed, the 2015 survey reveals how the post election controversy may have impacted public perceptions of the electoral process – Source A Survey of the Afghan People – Afghanistan in 2015 – The Asia Foundation

<sup>85</sup> Both institutions have been able to guarantee that a number of positions (270 in the case of IEC) will now be converted to Taskheel.

The production of SOPs, manuals and guidelines which were used in the previous elections, is imperative, however emphasis needs to be placed on ownership, and the PIP should be weary of just handing these over. A full and acknowledged handover has to be initiated.

To this end, only a few key staff who were trained under ELECT II remain in the two institutions. In order to ensure that the transferred capacity remains within the organisation, **continued dialogue with the department heads of IEC needs to be maintained and improved at the IEC in the interim.** This should include at least weekly meetings with the heads of departments to keep them informed and to ensure ownership of the next stage of their

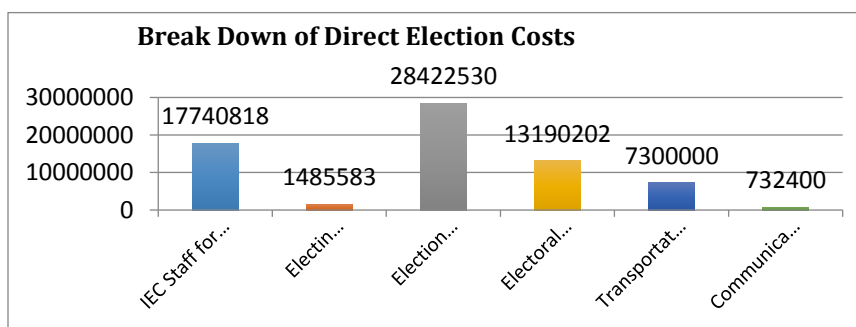
development. While the IEC acknowledges the important role ELECT I and II have played in building their individual capacities and indeed recognises the importance of future technical assistance, the relationship with current and potential new advisors will need to be reinforced. Furthermore, there are a number of systems that have the potential to strengthen the institutional memory of the IEC, and are now awaiting approval. Therefore it will be imperative for the Project Initiation Plan (PIP) to implement a thorough handover of systems and ensure that the IEC “owns” them and is able to effectively, transparently, and efficiently use them, and update them should the need arise.

In order to strengthen the role of the future election’s complaints commissions, the PIP should also assure that procedures, and the handover given to the IEC is archived in an accessible way for the future use of the institution and future staff. Lessons learned have been conducted, and unfortunately many of the recommendations made in 2014/2015 reiterated and supported those made in 2009 and 2010. An effective handover of materials and assets as well as procedures and lessons learned is imperative so that the institutional memory is not lost. Any loss of institutional memory will not result in a reduced international assistance for the institution and will only mean that future endeavours will be a duplication of the work that has already been carried out in 2014.

With the view of reducing international technical assistance to the IEC in the future, due to the transition of many of the key financial obligations such as salaries being under the Civil Service System, there should be less financial responsibility for operational costs by a future project. As was foreseen in the ProDoc, a future ELECT project should **make the transition to a fully-fledged technical assistance project rather than supporting operational costs**—the latter being intended for full responsibility over time by the Afghan government and in line with the ‘Afghanisation’ of the process.

**ELECT II was till now charged with the operational costs of the IEC. This responsibility should inevitably fall under the charge of the Afghan government, and while many of the key positions are now under the Tashkeel, it is unclear as to how much of the added costs for the successful implementation of future elections will actually be taken over within the Afghan National Budget.**

Figure 6: Breakdown of Direct Election Costs



At present these costs alone stand at just under 70 million USD, and it is highly unlikely that the Afghan government will be able to absorb all of these costs. It is essential that a future project looks at how these costs can be reduced over time, looking at other countries to gather best

practices and cost effective implementation ideas. Recommendations to use teachers/or government officials as polling staff could reduce costs by 6.7 million USD, however there are still inherent risks, which will need to be assessed prior to making a final decision on this issue. Procurement is one of the most expensive items, and much of this cost will not be reduced until a long term solution to the voter register is found and emphasis is focused on local procurement for key items which could reduce the overall costs and contribute to effective and efficient Afghan ownership of the electoral process (See section under Project Management).

## LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDEPENDENT BUDGETING CAPABILITY, HUMAN RESOURCES, PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, AUDIT AND PROCUREMENT

As aforementioned in the evaluation, the core administrative departments of the IEC have lacked direct capacity building, and are in dire need of efficient systems and exposure to recognized best practices in accountable administrative management. While there were various procurement procedures under the IEC which followed government rules, big ticket items such as ballot papers, indelible ink and even public outreach materials were procured abroad. Key persons under the procurement departments were not exposed to on the job (sustainable) training, and although IEC staff are able to follow some specifications, they are unable to apply international procurement rules independently over time. It is understood that it is not always possible to involve the IEC in all procedures under tight deadlines, however the UNDP country office in partnership with ELECT have sufficient localized procurement expertise to ensure that IEC in the future is involved in the process, even if they are not responsible for it at this time. Study visits to Copenhagen are useful, however constant exposure with exercising due diligence is advisable. Enabling local vendors' capacity is also key to ensure that the quality of their financial and material proposal is on par to those offered by international vendors.

In the light of allegations of mishandling of funds under the NIM modality, it is advisable to transition back to DIM (which is the default of most UNDP Electoral Support Projects worldwide). Nonetheless, the fact that many of the expenses for elections are now transferred back to the Afghan government and the IEC will have to follow government rules, there is still plenty of opportunity for on the job learning, and a future ELECT can help provide that kind of sustainable support. Future ELECT advisors could help with establishing key human resources, financial and other administrative systems, while supporting trainings with key government institutions on the rules of procedures to ensure accountability and necessary oversight of funds.

## STRATEGIC PLANS OF THE TWO ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

The IEC Strategic Plan 2011 -2016 is considered to be weak and has not guided ELECT II's activities adequately or accountably. Furthermore, given the electoral reforms and the impending elections, plans to conduct the drafting of a new strategic plan are currently on hold.<sup>86</sup> Notwithstanding, support should be provided to the IEC to at least design a two -year action plan to get them through the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The reduced number of staff and the available timeframe prior to the implementation of the electoral reforms presents an important opportunity for extensive consultation and to build key IEC members' capacity. Consultations should involve not only IEC members at headquarters but should also reference and include Provincial Electoral Officers (PEOs). Ideally, the IEC should also engage other key election stakeholders including key women's groups, observer groups and civil society. Such a process could be supported by PIP.

While designing the two year action plan, consideration should also be given not only to establishing **SMART indicators, provision of baseline data and benchmarks, but could also include reference to key international standards for elections as well as best practices and equally important, should**

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<sup>86</sup> Talks have already commenced to draft a new strategic plan, but the IEC are waiting upon the electoral reforms and decisions on a new technical assistance project before reacting.

**include a budget for each activity including the source of funds, and whether it will emanate from the government or from donors.** Such a document could feed into a new ProDoc and should be aligned with the key needs of the IEC and the electoral process for at least the next two years. Should the electoral timeline err on the generous timeframe and implementation side, consideration can be given for a two year action plan and a five year strategic plan putting emphasis on future sustainability of the electoral process following an electoral cycle approach.

While IECC has at present no approved strategic plan, the uncertainty surrounding its future disallows the project from looking forward to the future. Cognizant of the SERC recommendations, it is **important to look at the lessons learned from the last two election cycles in order to see what can be mitigated in time for the next establishment of the ECC or its future incarnation pending the outcome of presidential review and approval of recent SERC recommendations.** It is essential that gains are consolidated and built upon to ensure that institutional memory is not lost.

## X. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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In sum, since the conclusion of the 2014 electoral process and the cessation of donor funding in July 2015 and as a consequence of the political, operational, and implementation uncertainties emerging from the National Unity Government (NUG) formation process, Afghanistan has faced a number of critical challenges, including security, economic and fiscal challenges, and a protracted government formation process.

The situation has led to delays in the electoral reform process envisaged in the NUG agreement, and to the postponement of the Parliamentary elections which, according to the Constitution, should have been held no later than May 2015. As recognized by the Lower House of Parliament (*Wolesi Jirga*) and the President's office, the current parliament will continue until the political uncertainties are resolved and the reform process under SERC are accomplished. This means that parliamentary elections, despite Constitutional mandate, will not likely occur until late 2016 or early 2017.

As noted in the ProDoc (revised) for ELECT II: "2014 will mark the initiation of a complex transition process in Afghanistan which will entail significant draw down of security forces followed by presidential elections on April 5 (2014). This is to be followed by the 2015 Parliamentary elections, and then what has been referred to as a 'Decade of Transformation' running from 2014 to 2024. This therefore underscores the need to strengthen the political and electoral processes, including ensuring the engagement of voters, followed by significant investment to rebuild the social contract and broaden the democratic focus from institution building to state building. The 2014 presidential elections and the need for it to be an Afghan-led, credible process is of paramount importance at the cusp of such a transition."<sup>87</sup>

The obvious contradiction to that intended process outcome is that while the security situation continued to erode during ELECT II's implementation, the lack of Afghan *sustainable* capacity to organize and independently implement elections necessitated increased UNDP and international intervention, and the credibility of the 2014 elections was lacking with the necessity for subsequent external/international intervention to form the NUG after the second round and audit.

Therefore, although designed to support the parliamentary elections in addition to the presidential and provincial council elections, the ELECT II project was unable to fulfill its originally intended mandate and achieved at least partial success in accordance with the original project objectives and the project document, (47% of its activities were assessed as being achieved while 53% only partially achieved) and as recognized by Afghan and international interlocutors during this final evaluation process.

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<sup>87</sup> UNDP Afghanistan ELECT II Project Document (revised)/2012—2015.

These external factors are particularly important because had there been a clear and unambiguous (or at least presidential candidate accepted outcome) in the first round of elections in 2014, it is likely that a single mandate presidency without a CEO and in accordance with the current Afghan Constitution may have resulted in a clear parliamentary elections timeline and no urgent need for the formation of SERC, immediate electoral reforms, or significant disruption in the electoral process—or at least not prior to the end of the intended implementation period of ELECT II and in accordance with the project document as originally formulated and subsequently revised.

With this in mind, it is important to align expectations of a future project with the process. The two cannot be separated, given the fact that the overarching objective of the project is to support the IEC to plan and administer afghan-led credible elections with reduced external support. Credible elections which are perceived to be inclusive, transparent and credible must be in line with international standards. Therefore, it is imperative that key indicators of a future project align with international standards and best practices for elections and not only key indicators which do not necessarily represent whether a particular activity has obtained its desired impact. Furthermore, it should take careful consideration of the National Priority Programme. Given the outcome of the OAI report and the need for sustainable capacity building support, The National Transparency and Accountability Programme is well placed to guide the project.<sup>88</sup>

The beneficiary needs to be cognizant of their commitment to promote elections meeting international norms. For this to happen, both the government and the electoral institutions will have to commit to implementing the electoral reforms, and where shortfalls are to be found, or no remedies can be offered in the short term, beneficiaries with the project will have to manage expectations. Political and security risks will inevitably persist as Afghanistan makes its way through its decade of transition and inherent risks have the potential to hamper or even distort the democratic process. The project lens must be removed and the international community with key electoral stakeholders including the government ministries involved in the implementation of the elections will need to play a more collaborative and transparent role in the implementation and managing of the project. All parties need to be brought to the table from the start of the process, and not a few months prior to the elections, all stakeholders need to acknowledge the important role they have to play in the sustaining of democracy. IEC cannot shoulder this burden alone.

To this end, the ET **recommends the following key points for a subsequent electoral assistance project:**

1. Given the numerous evaluations and lessons learned reports undertaken in the lifetime of the project, a **compilation of key recommendations** should be collated and compiled into a single document ensuring ease of reference and identification of essential recommendations, probability of implementation and their priority. Reference can also be made to evaluation reports from all elections as many recommendations made in 2005 are just as valid today.
2. **Institutional memory should be maintained** to ensure a smooth transition to a new project. This should include specialized expertise on procurement, financial and human resources aspects. Expertise can be sought in-country for human resources and finance. The expertise gained by the ELECT projects as well as UNDP country office in electoral procurement should be used in order to further the capacity of the IEC including in capacitating local vendors with a particular attention being paid to sustainability of costs and capabilities for the future.

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<sup>88</sup> This programme is comprised of three components which include:- Component 1 – Further Legal and Institutional Development; Component 2 – Strengthening accountability mechanisms and Component 3 – Introducing Transparency Initiatives

3. A future ELECT project should **concentrate on technical advice** and only support financially areas of the process that are not supported by the Government. Salary costs should not be financed by a future project and should be under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance. Support should be provided to the IEC to encourage a reasonable transfer of financial responsibility to the government.
4. Impending **Electoral Reforms should be factored in to a new project** and support should be aimed at assuring their implementation. All electoral stakeholders responsible for their implementation and application should be involved and an implementation plan with an effective monitoring and evaluation plan should be initiated with the support of a future ELECT
5. **National Ownership** of the project is key, therefore key IEC members of the Secretariat and Commission should be actively involved in the formulation of a new project document – where possible this should be along the lines of a imminent Two year Action Plan and where possible in conjunction in designing a Five Year Strategic Plan which includes the conduct of the next elections, and addresses a mid to long term plan of sustainability and sources of funding (national or international). Any plans drawn up should emanate from an all-inclusive and consultative process and include SMART indicators, bench marks and targets as well as involve key electoral stakeholders and responsible ministries to ensure effective “buy in” and implementation thereof
6. A future Election Support Project should **support the IEC to engage key electoral stakeholders** in the process, including domestic observers, civil society organizations, media, women’s groups and representatives from other vulnerable groups including IDPS and PWDs.
7. While Afghanistan has a high number of BRIDGE trained persons, Afghans have only been exposed to eleven modules of which only eight of these are translated and contextualized into local languages. In order to ensure sustainability of training, promotion of inclusiveness with other electoral stakeholders and to promote an elite of persons trained in electoral management, **BRIDGE training should be implemented in the curriculum of IEC** whereby, key and motivated staff are offered the possibility of becoming accrediting trainers whereby they are able to gain international recognition and use their knowledge to train others. Training of BRIDGE should be offered to IEC with other key stakeholders, to improve their electoral knowledge and to create an “electoral family” amongst the different stakeholders
8. More **emphasis on vulnerable groups, including women, PWDs and IDPs**, this should include developing a gender and disability policy within IEC which not only addresses the number of women and other vulnerable groups working in the electoral institutions, but informs, educates and promotes ways of ensuring a more inclusive participation of all these groups in the wider democratic process.
9. The apparent **disconnect between the Commission and the Secretariat** needs to be addressed, examples of good practice whereby the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) is placed to be a liaison between the Commission and the Secretariat can be replicated, however emphasis should be on sustainability and national ownership and ensuring that commissioners and secretariat staff have a fluid working relationship including clear and implementable procedures which govern decision making for the whole of the organization. Commissioners should all undergo BRIDGE training and be encouraged to participate in as many sessions as possible especially in key areas.
10. **Neighboring countries with similar issues** such as poor staff retention, national identification cards, or perceived lack of transparency and trust in the EMB should be looked upon to carry out studies and study tours to gather best practices and lessons learned. Afghanistan which is a member of FEMBOSA should be supported in their obligations to this organization and study exchanges for key and motivated staff should be given. IEC should be encouraged to draft rules and regulations for study visits and access to trainings. While it is important that commissioners

attend study visits to other countries, operational staff should also attend as should a member of the UNDP project to ensure that key knowledge transfer is shared and retained.

The main recommendations highlighted in this report are expanded in Annex Six.

## Annex 1: Afghan and International Interlocutors for the Consultancy

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### **Kabul Meetings, November 28—December 7, 2015**

Mir Nadia Nivin  
Programme Specialist, Political Governance Portfolio  
UNDP Country Office

Jocelyn Mason  
Senior Deputy Country Director for Programmes  
UNDP Country Office

Alim Rama  
Election Information Management and Voter Registration Advisor  
ELECT Project Team

Peter Mann  
Procurement Advisor  
ELECT Project Team

Carolyn Williams  
External Relations Specialist  
ELECT Project Team

Soraia Ghani  
Public Outreach Advisor  
ELECT Project Team

Shohrukh Abdulloev  
Procurement Specialist  
ELECT Project Team

Ahmad Yousef Nuoristani  
Chairman  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Awrang Zeb  
Acting CEO  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Dr. Ahmad Jawed Habibi, Deputy CEO  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Dr Shalha Haque  
Head of 'Training  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Monema Mansoor  
Head of Planning  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Milsmail Qani  
External Relations  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Ezatullah Arman  
Training Department Deputy Manager  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Dr Abdul Khabir Momand  
Acting Head of Public Outreach  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Engineeer Ahmad Shah Rafique  
Head of Finance Department  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Sayed Ibrahim Sadat  
Director of ICT  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

Imam Mohammad Warymoch  
Senior Advisor for IEC Chairman  
Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC)

Dr. Mohammad Ali Sategh  
CEO  
Independent Electoral Complaints Commission of Afghanistan (IECC)

Walid Akbar Sarwary  
Deputy for Operations  
Independent Electoral Complaints Commission of Afghanistan (IECC)

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Deputy SRSG  
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

Nicholas "Fink" Haysom  
SRSG  
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

Bill Kilby, Beth Cadman, Shoja Shaham  
PCR Team  
UK Department for International Development (DFID)

Franziska Johanna Albrecht  
Political Affairs, Protocol and Press  
Embassy of the Republic of Germany in Afghanistan

Dr. Arina Schröder  
Counselor for Political Affairs

Embassy of the Republic of Germany in Afghanistan

Mr. Eugenio Carlucci  
First Secretary  
Italian Embassy in Afghanistan

Ms. Dania Cossa  
Programme Manager  
Italian Embassy in Afghanistan

Roy Fenn  
Elections Advisor ODG/USAID  
US Embassy in Afghanistan

Harald Jepsen  
SERC Team and Former EU Donor Representative

Mikko Lainejoki  
Representative/Operations Center  
UNOPS

Visar Vrenezi  
AFOH Human Resources Specialist  
UNOPS

Fred van Hese  
Controller  
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Afghanistan

Bart de Bruijn  
First Secretary  
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Afghanistan

Hon. Jean-Michel Marlaud  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of France in Afghanistan

Julien Cats  
Counsellor  
Embassy of the Republic of France in Afghanistan

Gaelle Deriaz  
Programme Officer  
UNAMA

Dawn Del Rio  
ELECT II mid term review team member  
UNDP Country Office

M. Yousef Rasheed  
Executive Director  
Foundation for Free and Fair Elections (FEFA)

Shahim Ahmad Kabuli  
Survey Manager  
The Asia Foundation

Abdullah Ahmadzai  
Country Representative (CEO of IEC –Former)  
The Asia Foundation

Chris Foulkes  
Project Development Officer  
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Ghazzali Fathima Nasrat  
Project Officer for E-Tazkira  
IOM

Shah Sultan Akifi  
Director and Chairman  
Special Electoral Reforms Commission of Afghanistan (SERC)

Abdul Qadeen Karyab  
SERC Member

Frederick Runsten  
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

Mohammad Daad Serweri  
National Political Affairs Officer  
Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Afghanistan

Hussain Akhlaqi  
National Programme Officer  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Ann Marie Skjolv  
Political Counselor  
Norwegian Embassy

### **Skype Conversations, November 30—December 13, 2015**

Darren Nance  
Chief Technical Advisor  
ELECT II Project Team

Daniel Hinchcliff  
Former Chief Electoral Project Advisor  
ELECT II Project Team

Mario Giuseppe Varrenti  
European Union Representative in Afghanistan

Mr. Zekria Baraksai

General Director and Acting CEO IEC (former)  
Afghanistan Democracy Watch

Azhar Malik  
ELECT Project Operations Advisor

Staffan Darnolf  
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

Typhaine Roblot  
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

Oskar Lehner  
Former ELECT II Project staff

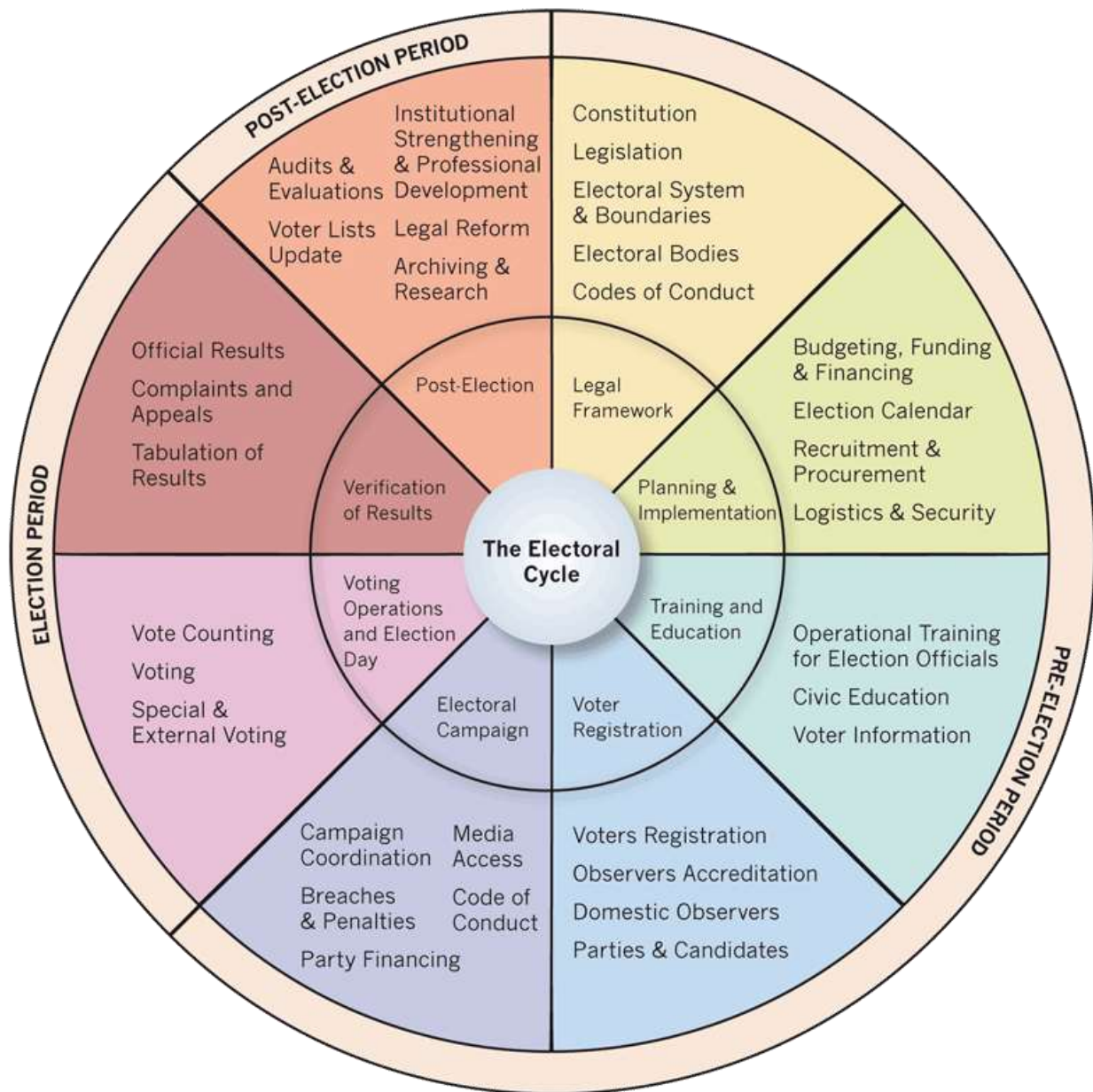
Luis Castellar  
European Union Representative in Afghanistan (former)

Dominic W. Grant  
Project Manager, UNOPS (former)

Deryck Fritz  
CTA for ELECT II (November 2011-December 2014)

Susana Grau Battle  
USAID Elections Specialist (former)

## Annex 2: The Electoral Cycle



## Annex 3: Bibliography, References, and Resources

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Minutes of the Project Board Meetings 2013/2014/2015

Value for Money Analysis

## **Internet Resources**

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US Embassy/Afghanistan: <http://kabul.usembassy.gov/>

## Annex 4 BRIDGE Criteria

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Semi Accredited	Accredited/Workshop	Accrediting –or Expert
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has attended a BRIDGE module workshop as a participant</li> <li>• Has attended all 10 days of a BRIDGE Train the Facilitator workshop</li> <li>• Has been assessed as satisfactory by the TtF lead facilitator against all the TtF Learning Outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <u>minimum</u> of 30 hours supervised customisation, preparation and facilitation of BRIDGE <u>module</u> workshops in the field.</li> <li>• Facilitation of only modules (and not TtFs or Implementation Workshops) to enable the facilitator to gain experience and confidence in using and modifying the BRIDGE curriculum documents, and to become conversant with the content of BRIDGE modules.</li> <li>• Again be assessed as satisfactory by the supervising Accrediting or Expert Facilitator against all TtF Learning Outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <u>minimum</u> of 30 hours supervised customisation, preparation and facilitation of BRIDGE <u>module</u> workshops in the field.</li> <li>• Facilitation of only modules (and not TtFs or Implementation Workshops) to enable the facilitator to gain experience and confidence in using and modifying the BRIDGE curriculum documents, and to become conversant with the content of BRIDGE modules.</li> <li>• Again be assessed as satisfactory by the supervising Accrediting or Expert Facilitator against all TtF Learning Outcomes.</li> </ul>

## Annex 5: ELECT II Project Management meetings

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Meeting	Purpose	Chair	Participants	Level	Frequency
ELECT II Project Board	Decision-making forum and steering committee for ELECT II Project	IEC Chairman/UNAMA DRSG1	ELECT II Donors, IEC and UNDP	Head of Development Agency/Deputy Ambassador	Quarterly
ELECT II Technical Working Group	Technical Discussion forum on ELECT II Project related issues	IEC CEO/ELECT CTA	ELECT II Donors, IEC, UNDP, UNAMA	Development Advisor/Political Officer	Monthly or as required
ELECT II Donor Meeting	Discussion Forum for Project related issues between ELECT II and its international partners	UNDP Deputy Country Director	ELECT II Donors, UNDP, UNAMA	Development Advisor/Political officer	Monthly or as required

## Annex 6: Key Recommendations

Recommendations	Key Stake-holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 1: Sustainability of the IEC is enhanced via the development of both its institutional and staff capacities</b>					
<b>1.1. Support the IEC in sustainable strengthening of its institutional capacity, via its strategic plan and upgrade of its knowledge information, decision-making and data management systems</b>					
<b>Development of a two year action plan</b>	IEC with support of PIP/or future ELECT Project	In the next quarter	Ensure that lessons learned and recommendations emanating from previous assessments are taken on board, involvement of key stakeholders including CSOs, political parties and observer groups as well as provincial and headquarter staff	Conduct a series of workshops and round tables to develop an action plan for future implementation for the upcoming elections	An action plan aligned with a new project document will ensure buy in from the IEC and enable a future ELECT project to support the key needs of the IEC
<b>Possible support towards a five year strategic plan</b>	IEC with support of Future ELECT Project	Under the future PROJECT and time allowing			A strategic plan should be designed with sustainability of the institution in mind, complimenting the SERC recommendations and outlining which activities should be funded by which entity (project, government etc)
<b>Ensure the handing over of current systems and their usage</b>	ELECT II/PIP to IEC	In the next quarter	Ensure that all new systems developed under ELECT and finalised under PIP are handed over and their usage is understood and acknowledged by the key users	Handing over of key tools developed under the project and PIP	IEC will have access to a more sustainable institutional memory of documents and systems
<b>Strengthen and reinforcement of a future projects engagement with the Commissioners</b>	Commissioners/Secretariat and a future ELECT	Under the future project from its inception	Commissioners and Secretariat are able to work alongside each other and Commissioners have full understanding and technical knowledge of the electoral process and operations	Reinforcement and training of commissioners in support of key SERC recommendations and procedures put in place to allow for transparent and informed decision making by the commissioners	The Commission will be strengthened and key decisions will be based on technical knowledge and understanding as well as enhancing the relationship between the IEC Secretariat and the Commission

Recommendations	Key Stake-holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 1: Sustainability of the IEC is enhanced via the development of both its institutional and staff capacities</b>					
<b>1.1. Support the IEC in sustainable strengthening of its institutional capacity, via its strategic plan and upgrade of its knowledge information, decision-making and data management systems contd.</b>					
<b>Support the strengthening of IECs south-south cooperation</b>	FEMBOSA and IEC supported by a future project	Under the future project from its inception	IEC are able to learn from other EMBS in the form of south-south cooperation and taking of best practices	Support of study visits and exchanges with FEMBOSA members	Key strategic obligations under the IEC's membership to FEMBOSA are adhered to and supported and ownership of future sustainability and recommendations are truly afghanised via south-south cooperation
<b>Ensure key and sustainable relationships are built with key ministries</b>	IEC with key ministries supported by a future ELECT Project	On-going and eventually supported by a new project	IEC are able to maintain good relationships and all relevant ministries carry their responsibility for the successful implementation of the electoral cycle	Support of meetings and relationship building between IEC and Key ministries	This will ensure responsibility is held by all actors in the process, and that IEC does not carry the entire burden for the success of the electoral process
<b>1.2. Support the IEC's engagement in legal reform and improvement of its regulatory framework</b>					
<b>Support IEC in implementing and adhering to the key SERC Recommendations</b>	IEC with the support of a future ELECT	Under the future project from its inception	IEC are able to adhere and implement to SERC Recommendations including during election time with regards to electoral violations and the punishment therefore	Technical assistance to the legal department and key department heads to implement the key recommendations	IEC adheres to the SERC recommendations and confidence is enhanced in the institution's performance.
<b>1.3. Support the upgrade of the IECs infrastructure and security at HQ and in the provinces</b>					
<b>Continuation of upgrades to the provinces and conduct of a proper inventory of stock</b>	IEC with support of PIP/Future ELECT	On-gong	IEC are able to maintain offices and ensure that all equipment in the warehouses are accounted for and inventoried	Financial support to continue works and asset management	The running of the IEC continues to be sustainable and costs are reduced in the long term after ensuring that equipment is accounted for and is safe
<b>1.4. Support the Professional training and development of IEC permanent and temporary staff</b>					
<b>Support the training of personnel using BRIGE</b>	IEC and other key electoral stakeholder s supported by a future ELECT project	Under the future project from its inception	IEC are able to provide key election training to staff and are able to acquire long term skills which can be passed onto staff and other key stakeholders to build technical knowledge of elections and their management	Train different members in BRIDGE allowing them to become qualified enough to accredit others and to ensure that key BRIGE modules are used not only in the IEC but other stakeholders such as women's groups, disabled groups, observers, CSOS, political parties are trained professionally in election management	The involvement of other stakeholders in the process will allow all key actors to become familiar with election management and to build a relationship between al the key actors in the election process.

Recommendation	Stake holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 2: A Sustainable long term approach to voter registration in Afghanistan, which also promotes maximum participation of eligible citizens in the 2014 and 2015 elections, is developed and implemented</b>					
<b>2.1. Support the IEC in the implementation of its voter registration operational plan</b>					
<b>Support of IEC voter registration for future and upcoming elections</b>	IEC with the support of ELECT Project	In order to ensure efficacy in this output, support needs to be extended as soon as possible	Individual voters are allocated to polling stations	Conduct of a voter registration exercise taking into account the recommendations from the SERC	A voter registration exercise which is held to be credible and is able to allocate voters to polling stations will dissuade persons from ballot stuffing and will allow IEC to conduct individual re-polls in the event of fraudulent activities in a given polling station
<b>2.2. Support the IEC in synchronizing its work with the MOI so that the E-Tazkera databases becomes the long-term solution for the generation of voter registration data</b>					
<b>Support IEC in its work with the development of the E-Tazkeera</b>	IEC with MOI and other relevant ministries and entities	On-going	Ensuring key coordination and collaboration between IEC and the relevant agencies to facilitate the development of e-tazkeera and a comprehensive VR	Support IEC to maintain a good and sustainable relationship with the MOI and other key entities involved in the development of the E-Tazkeera	The process of the link between the E-Tazkeera and the Voters register will be facilitated

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 3: The IECs engagement and informational outreach with key stakeholders, including the electorate is enhanced</b>					
<b>3.1. Support the development and implementation of the IECs public outreach campaign and activities</b>					
<b>Examine the possibility of ensuring a better outreach of the call centre</b>	IEC with the support of the ELECT Future Project	Under the implementation of a new project	Enable the call centre to receive more calls from the provinces and gain a better outreach to women	Conduct research on how the call centres reach can be enhanced	Call centre can serve as a tool which nationally is able to inform the general public and be accessible to all
<b>3.2. Support the IECs engagement with key stakeholders, including political parties and the IEC's strategic media communication</b>					
<b>Support the building of key relationships between the project, IEC and the Commission</b>	IEC Secretariat and the Commissioners with the support of a new project	Prior and during the implementation of a new project	is imperative and should feed into a more improved strategy to ensure that commissioners and the secretariat alike build a strategy together and buy in of said strategy is accepted well in anticipation of the elections.	Liaison and development of key procedures to enhance decision making at the level of the commissioners	A communication strategy is enhanced and supported by all layers of the EMB and buy in in the dissemination of key messages is agreed upon prior to the conduct of elections

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 3: The IECs engagement and informational outreach with key stakeholders, including the electorate is enhanced</b>					
<b>3.2. Support the IECs engagement with key stakeholders, including political parties and the IEC's strategic media communication</b>					
<b>Support the IEC external relations department to enhance their relations with external stakeholders (both at headquarters and in the provinces)</b>	IEC and other stakeholders with support from a future ELECT project	Upon initiation of a new project document	Enhanced relations with key external stakeholders at HQs and in the provinces	Engage IEC to conduct trainings for and with external stakeholders and to strengthen relations via support of meetings and other information sessions with stakeholders at HQs and in the provinces	With enhanced relations the IEC's external relation services to the provinces and the districts in order to have a greater impact on the electoral process and in the future for resolving complaints and issues surrounding the results.
<b>3.4. Support the IECS Gender Unit and the Public outreach department gender focal point in promoting gender mainstreaming in the electoral process, as well as in institutional process</b>					
<b>Support the IEC Gender Unit in becoming a permanent department/unit within the IEC</b>	IEC/ Gender Unit with the support of PIP and a future ELECT project	On-going	The CSC accepts that Gender Unit is a permanent part of the IEC	Support the IEC in submitting proposal to the CSC to ensure that the Gender Unit is a permanent part of the IEC	The Gender Unit is better placed to carry out its work and is able to positively influence the work of the commission under gender
<b>Support the Gender Unit in developing and implementing a gender policy</b>	IEC/ Gender Unit with the support of a future ELECT Project	At the initiation of the next future Project	A gender policy is developed and implemented	Support to developing and setting targets for the IEC to achieve with regards to gender and possibly other vulnerable groups such as PWDs	IEC and the Gender Unit will become accountable and will better ensure that the institution is gender mainstreamed
<b>Provide support to the Gender Unit to carry out research and to collect gender statistics for further action</b>	IEC/ Gender Unit with support of future ELECT	At the initiation of the next future project and supported throughout	Reliable gender research is carried out and reliable statistics are collated	Assistance to conduct research on best practices and support to collate gender statistics from former elections	Will enable the IEC to identify key activities to enhance women's participation in the electoral process

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 4: The IEC's daily operations and its operational management functions, as well as the project support services are strengthened</b>					
<b>4.1. Support the operational costs of the IEC as well as the enhancement of the IEC's operational management systems and procedures</b>					
<b>Provide and support key administrative departments of the IEC to enhance their capacity</b>	IEC procurement, finance and HR department	During the implementation of a future ELECT project	Ensure that these departments are provided with effective support and to ensure the establishment of suitable systems to ensure their efficacy	Provision of technical assistance to the various departments with both international and national advisors	The administrative side of managing the IEC is strengthened, operations are more transparent and less susceptible to corruption
<b>Ensure capacity building support to the procurement department<sup>89</sup></b>	IEC procurement Dept supported by ELECT future project	During the entire implementation of a new Project	Procurement department is able to transparently carry out and manage local and international procurement	Technical assistance and support	The IEC will not rely on international advisors to carry out procurement
<b>Provide capacity building to local vendors to promote their participation in tenders and afghan ownership of the process</b>	IEC and local vendors supported by ELECT future project	During the entire implementation of a new Project	Enable local vendors to compete in procurement process	Technical assistance and guidance to local vendors	Greater afghan ownership of the process and future sustainability of the process is ensured
<b>Provide capacity building to the HR department</b>	IEC and HR Department	During the entire implementation of a new Project	Enable the human resources department to be more efficient and able to promote efficient recruitment of permanent and temporary staff – including effective management of black listed staff	Development of systems and provision of technical assistance on local government rules	The Human Resources Department will be strengthened to better aid the IEC to be a lead organisation and have the ability to encourage the retention of staff at the IEC

<sup>89</sup> This recommendation is also valid for activity 4.3.

Recommendations	Key Stake Holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 4: The IEC's daily operations and its operational management functions, as well as the project support services are strengthened</b>					
<b>4.2. Conduct efficient and effective management of project resources</b>					
Explore local options for procurement of non sensitive material	IEC with support of New Project	During the entire implementation of a new project	Promotion of local vendors to procure non sensitive material	Identify and provide support to possible local vendors of non sensitive material	Ensure future sustainability and afghan ownership of the process
Exploration of new and innovative possibilities of making savings – ie the ink			Use of alternative products which could reduce costs compared to the 2014 elections	Explore costing's of innovative products which could improve efficiency	Using innovative products can increase efficiency
Reduce the use of PSO in the future for provision of all procurement items			PSO is used to a lesser extent in the next electoral cycle	Ensure local vendors are afforded the capacity to submit competitive tenders	The increase in local vendors will increase sustainability, efficiency and promote local ownership
Future project should only provide technical assistance and not operational support			Future project should provide mainly technical support and reduce to the extent possible the provision and support of IEC operational costs	The government should be encouraged to the extent possible to undertake all operational costs	Project would be more in line with other UNDP election support projects and would reduce donor costs as well as promoting the sustainability and ownership of the electoral process by the afghans
Promote the use of a DIM project			Project should convert back to DIM	Operational costs should be on budget and project should revert back to DIM unless certain timelines and preconditions are met	This would enable the project to take back proper oversight of the funds and will ensure efficiency with regards to procurement and recruitment of staff
Consideration of different recruitment modalities to increase efficiency	ELECT Project	At the initiation of a new project	Project should use the most efficient recruitment modality in order to reduce delays in recruitment and to improve the quality of international staff	Examination of different modalities according to the post and urgency of the recruitment for said post	Combat delays in recruitment and potentially allow flexibility in recruitment of key electoral staff

Recommendation	Stakeholders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 5: The conduct of key electoral operations for the 2014/2015 elections by the IEC is improved</b>					
<b>5.1 Support the development and implementation of the IEC's electoral operational plan and procedures, and provide direct implementation support to the 2014 and 2015 elections</b>					
<b>Support IEC to conduct an evaluation of the success of the anti fraud measures in 2014</b>	IEC with the support of a new ELECT Project	During the implementation of the project	Ensure that lessons learned and recommendations emanating from previous assessments are taken on board and conduct of an evaluation of these lessons learned in the last cycle of elections	Production of a compilation of lessons learned with regards to anti fraud measures	The IEC will be able to apply lessons learned and adapt an updated or a new anti fraud strategy for the upcoming elections
<b>5.2. Support the IECs design and implementation of a results management system that enjoys the confidence of key electoral stakeholders</b>					
<b>Ensure that the results management system is developed in advance of the next elections</b>	IEC with the support of a new ELECT Project	During the implementation of the project	Development of a comprehensive and transparent results management system in advance of the next elections which is perceived as transparent by key electoral stakeholders	Provision of technical assistance	The IEC will better be able to ensure trust in the system and allow observers and political parties alike to observe the process in a transparent manner

Recommendation	Stakeholders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>OUTPUT 6: The electoral dispute resolution mechanism is enhanced</b>					
<b>6.1. ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION – PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM</b>					
<b>Support adequate handover of materials and lessons learned to the IEC</b>	IEC and IECC with the support of PIP/Future ELECT project	During PIP and future ELECT Project	All documents and key know how is handed over to IEC and utilised for future adjudication of electoral cases by the successor of the IECC	Support of physical handover of documents and provision of information sharing meetings to ensure important information is not lost	The institutional memory of the IECC will be preserved and utilised for the next cycle of elections
<b>Extend support/technical assistance to the regions/provinces</b>	IEC and future PECC with the support of future ELECT project	During the implementation of a future ELECT project	Provision of support to the regions/provinces to improve capacity of the PECC in the next elections	Provision of technical assistance / training to the PECC	Enhanced PECC and improved ability to adjudicate effectively and efficiently

Recommendation	Stake-Holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Output 7: The media regulatory mechanism for the electoral process is enhanced</b>					
<b>7.1 Provide effective support to the Media Commission so that it can implement its terms of reference</b>					
<b>Provision of continued technical support to the media commission</b>	IEC and media commission supported by ELECT	During the implementation of a future ELECT project	Enhance the performance of the MC as compared to the 2014 elections	Provision of technical assistance	MC is perceived as a neutral and efficient oversight mechanism

Recommendation	Stake-Holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Project Management</b>					
<b>Reporting</b>					
<b>Improve the overall quality of reporting</b>	UNDP	From the inception of the new project	future reports will have a centered results based management approach which closely discusses the achievements of the project and could provide alternative approaches to ensure compliance with the overall objectives is on track.	Enhance the quality of the reports	Donors are better able to gauge progress of the attainment of the outputs
<b>Project Design</b>					
<b>Future project should concentrate on technical assistance</b>	UNDP and IEC	During the design of the project	Project supports technical assistance rather than operational assistance	Design the project to concentrate on technical assistance and only providing operational financial support in exceptional circumstances	Enhancement of the sustainability of the IEC and ensures accountability and ownership by the Afghan government and IEC
<b>Impending electoral reforms should be factored into a new project</b>	UNDP and IEC	During the Design of the Project	Electoral reforms and the implementation and adherence thereof are incorporated into the design of the project	Inclusion of key recommendations in the design of the project	Ensure that the project supports the electoral reform process and improves sustainability and transparency of the process
<b>Ensure key stakeholders are involved in the oversight of the project</b>	IEC and key ministries with support by UDNP	During the design and implementation of the project	Key ministries are involved in the project and are accountable for their participation in the electoral process and the success thereof	Ensuring key ministries are involved in all aspect so the design of the project and buy in is sought from these institutions from the beginning	Enhanced ownership of the process
<b>Ensure that project has a more gender mainstreamed approach to all activities in the future project</b>	UNDP in cohorts with IEC		The project's activities are mainstreamed throughout and proper oversight is ensured to track progress	Usage of SMART indicators and incentives to promote gender mainstreaming in the design of the project	Enhanced gender mainstreaming in all areas of the electoral process

Recommendations	Key Stake-Holders	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
<b>Project Management</b>					
<b>Project Design</b>					
<b>Ensure national ownership and buy in of the project</b>	IEC with UNDP	Prior to the design of the new project and during the design process and beyond	During the design of the project, both commission and secretariat are involved and full buy in are activities are approved	IEC should provide their needs and possible areas of support and ensure this is in line with the SERC recommendations and other key international and national commitments	Buy in will enhance sustainability and transparency of the electoral process
<b>Compile key recommendations from key reports</b>	UNDP	Prior to the design of a future project	Key recommendations are compiled and prioritized according to relevance and applicability	Compilation of key recommendations	This will enhance the quality of a future report and will be able to provide a situational analysis as to where we are with all the recommendations made thus far.
<b>Ensure that the design of the indicators and activities are in line with international and national commitments</b>	UNDP	During the design and implementation of the project	Key indicators of the project are in line with international obligations and national priorities and commitments	Key indicators coincide with international and national obligations	The electoral process will be seen as more transparent and impact of the activities will be more measurable