UNDP Nepal

Electoral Support Project Phase II

Final Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report

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Contents

Abbreviations

AEC	Australian Electoral Commission	JTF	Joint Electoral Task Force
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections	KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
		MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
CA	Constituent Assembly	MEDEP	Micro-Enterprise Development Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organization		
CP	Country Programme	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Accord	NAB	Nepal Association of the Blind
CRO	Chief Returning Officer	NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor	NDFN	National Federation of the Deaf
DEO	District Election Office	PA	Provincial Assembly
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality	PAC	Project Advisory Committee
DPA	Department of Political Affairs	PMU	Project Management Unit
EAD	Electoral Assistance Division	PR	Proportional Representation
ECN	Electoral Commission of Nepal	PLWD	Persons Living with Disabilities
EDR	Electoral Dispute Resolution	RO	Returning Officer
EEIC	Electoral Education and Information Centre	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
		SCDP	Social Cohesion and Democratic Participation Project
EMB	Electoral Management Body		
ESP	Electoral Support Project	TA	Technical Assistance
EWG	Election Working Group	UK	United Kingdom
EU	European Union	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FPTP	First-Past-The-Post		
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion	UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
GIS	Geographic Information System		
GON	Government of Nepal	UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
HoR	House of Representatives	UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
ID	Identity		
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems	UNV	United Nations Volunteer
		USAID	United States Agency for International Development
JEOC	Joint Electoral Operation Centre		
JICS	Japan International Cooperation System	USD	US Dollar
		VE	Voter Education

Language notes:

ESP II: ESP and ESP II are used interchangeably in this report for ease of reporting purposes. All references to ESP Phase I include "I" to differentiate them from the current phase under evaluation.

Region: The administrative structure of Nepal changed in the new constitution. There are now provinces instead of regions. The ESP II project pre-dates the new constitution and used the term "regional" for its offices and region-level activities. For consistency and to avoid confusion, this report still uses the term "region" in most cases.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The *Electoral Support Project in Nepal (ESP) Phase II* was originally a USD 24.6 million three year electoral cycle project (2013-2016) to continue the strengthening of the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) started under ESP Phase I, its administration of the elections and the democratic participation in the process, especially for under-represented and disadvantaged persons. ESP II also provided support for Nepal's second constituent assembly (CA) election held in 2013 as part of implementing Nepal's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and for the local, provincial and national elections that followed the adoption of the new constitution. These were eventually held in 2017 and completed in 2018.   ESP II was extended several times to ensure coverage for this extended process, most recently to take it to the end of 2018. The project budget was also increased to USD 26.8 million.

The project was funded by the Governments of Denmark, United Kingdom (UK), the European Union (EU), Norway and UNDP. It was fully funded. ESP used a direct implementation modality (DIM) and was managed by a Chief Technical Adviser (CTA)/Project Manager under the guidance of a Project Executive Board with UNDP providing quality control.

FINDINGS

Relevance. The project design was highly relevant to the 2013 - 2018 context, Government of Nepal (GON), ECN and UNDP objectives. Nepal was coming out of conflict and in the middle of a democratic transition. The holding of elections was an integral part of this process and it was important to strengthen their administration, credibility and the participation of its citizens. UNDP was well placed to provide this assistance having successfully implemented Phase I with a team already embedded within the ECN. The electoral cycle and capacity building approaches used are best practices and ensured focus on the ECN's institutional development and on participation issues such as voter education and gender and social inclusion (GESI) in the years between the main elections.

The ESP regional office concept was also extremely relevant to support ESP efforts and ECN offices outside the capital, but was limited in scope by the centralized nature of election administration and project implementation. ESP's relevance for the ECN varied over time, types of support and among different ECN officers. It was extremely high at the start but more mixed over time. The context, frequent changes of ECN counterparts, and the physical separation of the two since the earthquake are also factors. Nevertheless, the ECN still saw ESP II as a valuable asset and obtained an extension of the project from May to December 2018 during this final evaluation.

Effectiveness and impact. Many factors affected ESP's ability to function and shaped the nature of its response. These included: the commitment of the ECN to hold timely, credible elections; collaborative partnerships, uncertainties and short timeframes; rotations of ECN staff and managers; and an activity focused nature for some components.

Output 1: Strengthened capacity of ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance. ESP's support for the ECN's strategic planning processes helped the institution to develop and institutionalize a shared vision and plans across its nationwide structure. ESP's provision of a wide range of trainings and international exposure visits helped build the professional capacity of ECN staff which was evident in their ability to handle the 2013 and 2017 elections. Its provision of Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) trainings was found by its impact evaluation to have contributed to modernizing ECN training methodologies. However, there was not enough data to know the extent of any changes in knowledge or skills as a result of ESP's efforts or how many trained officials still remained in the ECN.

Many trainings appeared activity-driven and not part of a comprehensive professional development plan which likely limited their institutional impact, especially over time.

The Geographical Information System (GIS) support resulted in electoral mapping for the 2013 election, substantially improving the ECN's capacity for electoral planning, logistics, operations and security planning. However, the system has not been updated or used since. ESP II's continued support for voter registration resulted in a more trusted and accurate voter registry (compared to 2008) and reduced the potential for fraud. The new voter registration system, including the voters ID and voter lists with photos, is still widely seen as an important achievement. ESP II efforts to provide a critically needed software update for the ECN have been problematic. This is still a need despite ESP's sizeable investment as the ECN does not believe that the product developed meets its needs.

Output 2. Electoral cycle conducted in an effective, sustainable and credible manner. A significant level of support was provided for the 2013 election which was reduced significantly for 2017. ESP II helped to create the ECN's Joint Election Operations Centre (JEOC) and media center which the ECN re-opened and ran on its own in 2017. ESP helped to strengthen and facilitate ECN trainings and its regional offices supported the ECN officials within their regions. Electoral dispute resolution (EDR) was not a main project focus as it was also supported by others, but ESP's efforts contributed to updated codes of conducts and increased awareness on the EDR mechanisms for election day. However, much more still remains to be done. ESP support for grass roots discussions for peaceful elections and to stem electoral violence done through UNDP's Social Cohesion and Democratic Participation Project (SCDP) was an interesting collaboration that could be deepened in the future.

Output 3: Increased democratic participation for the next cycle of elections, particularly for the under-represented and disadvantaged segments of Nepali society. ESP II provided a significant level of support for the ECN's voter education efforts for the 2013 CA and 2017 local elections, including technical assistance (TA), strategy development and the production and dissemination of print and broadcast materials and messages. Although almost 75% of respondents in ESP's 2014 baseline survey were aware of ECN voter education materials, there was not enough data to be able to determine the effectiveness or impact of this effort. The same was found for the training of social science teachers and the grants to civil society organizations (CSOs). Both are needed and seemingly good initiatives capable of reaching first time voters, women and marginalized groups, but their one-off nature, largely generic content and the late start for the CSOs, limited their effect. The efforts for persons living with disabilities (PLWD) were limited but still significant appearing anecdotally to have increased their awareness, understanding of and confidence in participating in the electoral processes.

ESP II expansion of ECN's Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC), to two regional locations and three mobile EEICs extended the EEIC's reach, provided an interactive learning experience for more than 28,000 visitors. However, the two EEIC centres visited were being used for other things and the number of visitors to the main EEIC has declined every year since its initial peak in its first six months of operations and the concept needs revitalization. ESP II efforts on GESI resulted in the ECN expanding its focus beyond gender with it adopting a Gender and Social Inclusion policy, creating a GESI Unit and integrating GESI into its *2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan.* GESI and voter education are still needs within the electoral and political processes*.*

Efficiency and project management. These were also directly affected by the context and other factors. Being embedded in the ECN at both national and regional levels was an efficient and effective way to deliver TA and capacity building to an electoral management body (EMB). These also strengthened the sense of joint efforts and ECN ownership and appreciation for activities and products. Frequent changes of ECN counterparts interrupted the continuity of some efforts, requiring re-introductions and repeating some activities. Delays in requests and decision making affected costs as short timeframes limited options and required expedited action. The centralized

nature of ECN and ESP management constrained a more efficient use of ESP regional advisors and offices.

There were no major ESP II management issues raised during the final evaluation interviews and the current management seemed extremely well organized. Procurements seemed to have been done in a timely manner and the UNDP made good use of its global procurement unit in Copenhagen that specializes in electoral commodities. One major contract (voter registration software) was cancelled for non-performance although only after a very protracted period. Coordination with other assistance providers (primarily the International Foundation for Electoral Systems or IFES and International IDEA), development partners and others was good. There was good use of existing networks which allowed for the rapid implementation of the CSO subgrant component and the peaceful elections activities. Programmatic synergies beyond these seemed limited. There was limited use of social media and networking to enrich project activities and build networks among participants. The cost of elections and capacity building efforts were raised in interviews and should be assessed in the future.

Sustainability. The ECN demonstrated its capacity to administer credible elections despite the many challenges of the 2017 electoral process by leveraging the foundations built by the earlier ECN managers with ESP and other support. Maintaining this foundation through staffing changes in the periods between elections will be a challenge for the institution. The strategies, systems, and manuals supported can be expected to remain for the near to medium term however, these will need to be continually updated to remain useful. The JEOC and media centres are still there and were used by the ECN for 2017 without ESP support. The electoral mapping system was not used, and the GIS system needs further support to be functional. The main EEIC is not operating as it is still housing the ECN's data center moved there after the earthquake. The EEIC's equipment and information also requires maintenance and updating to be useful. The voter registry software is still a need although it appeared during the final evaluation that the ECN may procure this on its own.

CONCLUSIONS

1. *Electoral cycle support was needed and relevant for the 2008 – 2018 democratic transition* to build the ECN's professional capacity and ability to more effectively administer the elections that were an integral part of this process.

2. *ESP II played a valuable role in supporting the ECN to hold credible elections.* This resulted in the election of the CA body that developed the new constitution, and the elections for all of the elected positions in the new federal system, successfully concluding that part of the democratic transition.

3. *The context directly affected ESP II's effectiveness and results* including uncertainties over election dates, short time frames and frequent ECN staff changes. On the positive side, the commitment of the ECN to hold well administered, on time elections and the flexibility of ESP, UNDP and development partners to meet the needs of the process.

4. *Attribution for impact level results is difficult due to the number of actors and factors involved in the processes, but major ESP II accomplishments include:*
   ✓ *Strengthened ECN institutional and professional capacities and confidence*; expanded efforts for GESI; and increased visibility and profile for the ECN internationally and with other EMBs;
   ✓ *Continuing voter registration system* with a more accurate voter registry that increased stakeholder confidence;
   ✓ *EEIC concept expanded* to two additional locations with mobile capacity to extend its reach;
   ✓ *New signs invented* to better explain the electoral process for persons with hearing disabilities and a sense of empowerment for those engaged in that effort;
   ✓ *Electoral mapping and GIS introduced* that strengthened logistics, operations, security planning and understanding of the 2013 election.

5. *Other initiatives were useful and show promise but need better grounding and programmatic perspective to become more effective efforts.* These include: CSO subgrant activities for voter information and increased participation for women; outreach and information for PLWD; outreach to political parties, media and CSOs; and, social study teacher trainings.

6. *The status and sustainability for some of ESP II efforts are of concern,* especially for the GIS and EEIC systems and the IT aspects of the voter registry.

7. *Overall project management was good, and the long term national staff added significant value.* The regional office system added value but was constrained by centralization.

8. *The context has changed.* The original ESP assumption that the ECN needed external support to deliver the elections is no longer valid. Future assistance should focus on consolidating the gains made since 2008, the decentralization efforts and improving the quality of the processes.

9. *The next cycle of elections is as important to support as the last ones.* They will consolidate the democratic transition and their quality will set precedents for the future. Expectations and stakes will be high and the environment likely not as forgiving.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Stay engaged and support ECN, GON and CSO efforts to consolidate the progress made with ESP support and to: further strengthen the ECN through TA and institutional capacity building; support the decentralization of the electoral process and its administration; and support the inclusive and knowledgeable participation of voters, especially women, youth, PLWD and marginalized groups.

2. For the ECN, ensure continued focus on its strategic planning processes including those of its different departments and district offices; institutional capacity building done on the basis of institutional needs assessments and development of an institutional capacity development plan; reviving the GIS system, revitalizing the EEIC and strengthening the ECN's GESI efforts.

3. Adopt a project profile that fits the post-transitional context, is outcome-driven and ensures a more strategic engagement and value added for the institutions supported. Ensure a programmatic approach with follow up for all activities.

4. Decentralize project implementation and empower the project's provincial offices if the concept is kept for the future. Support these offices to develop and implement province specific workplans.

5. Maintain the DIM mechanism and provide direct support to the range of partners in the electoral processes. Beyond the ECN, this could include the National Identity (ID) Unit, other ministries and CSOs. Ensure the different components, implementation modalities and roles are clear in the project design.

6. Continue close collaboration with IFES and broaden outreach to other projects working on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 (Gender) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) to develop programmatic synergies and strengthen project activities and results.

7. Use participatory approaches for project design and implementation. Embed TA and foster team perspectives, and incorporate ECN staff persons into all product development teams.

8. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, and in particular ensure the collection of baseline data at the start and end of project. Incorporate Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) indicators and show targets and actual level of performance over time in reporting.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Final Evaluation of the Electoral Support Project Phase II

UNDP Nepal commissioned this final evaluation of the Electoral Support Project Phase II. It is intended to provide UNDP and its project partners with an independent assessment of the project that is expected to be used to strengthen future programming.

In particular, the evaluation was asked to:

1. Assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of ESP taking into consideration the objectives of the ESP, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and UNDP Country Programme (CP);

2. Assess the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of ESP; and

3. Document key lessons learned, best practices and provide recommendations for future programming.

The final evaluation took place in April – May 2018 with the field work done in Nepal from 1 – 16 May 2018. The evaluation was conducted by Sue Nelson, Evaluation Team Leader and Dr. Prakash Bhattari, National Expert, both experts in democratic governance and electoral assistance. It undertook a qualitative assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, impact[1], efficiency and sustainability of the project's assistance and results and the factors that affected project performance. It used a triangulation methodology and mixed methods of analysis to draw conclusions and make recommendations based on stakeholder perceptions and the information available. In particular it:

- Collected information and perceptions of the project through interviews with UNDP, former and current ESP staff and technical advisors, current and former ECN commissioners and staff, development partners, implementing partners, CSOs, electoral observers and other relevant actors and institutions. The interviews were done in Kathmandu and Pokhara in person and people in other locations were reached by Skype, phone and email (Annex 1);

- Reviewed project documents and other relevant documentation on the project, and on the electoral and political processes in Nepal (Annex 2); and,

- Validated information through interviews and document reviews as well as through the use of additional data sources and third-party interviews.

The methodology for the evaluation is provided in the Final Evaluation Inception Report (Annex 3). The final evaluation's Terms of Reference are provided in Annex 4. The evaluation was limited by the time available for the review and reporting, and the availability of project staff, partners and stakeholders for interviews. The project was in its close-out phase during the final evaluation[2] so the evaluators were not able to see the project in action and had to rely on the recollections of those interviewed and the information provided in reporting and its veracity.

The evaluation findings are organized in this evaluation report according to the criteria stipulated in the terms of reference: relevance, effectiveness and impact, efficiency and sustainability. It includes discussions of the project's contribution towards the achievement of the key outputs as intended in the project documents. These are covered in the section on effectiveness and impact. It also discusses issues of project design, management and implementation. The evaluation report closes with the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.

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[1] Impact is used in the general sense.
[2] It was subsequently extended to the end of 2018.

2.2 Political and electoral context

The Electoral Support Project Phase II was implemented in the context of a complex transition resulting from the signing of the CPA in 2006 after a decade of internal armed conflict. The CPA called for long-term structural reforms and the development of a new constitution through the holding of CA elections and creation of an Interim Parliament, Interim Government and Interim Constitution.

The holding of the elections and the inauguration of all of the elected officials was critical to the continued development of the country. According to the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Progress Report for Nepal*, the absence of elected representatives at the local and national levels negatively affected the quality of development, especially at local levels[3]. "*Only after a new, truly democratic constitution is written and representatives are elected at all levels of government will the country see a real exit from the prevailing uncertainty.*"[4]

The CA election was held in 2008 with electoral support from the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) which had an electoral mandate from the UN Security Council. It was held after a number of postponements and within a volatile context of political party disputes, disruptions by ethnic groups demanding increased rights and by active armed militant groups.[5] The 2008 constituent assembly was unable to deliver a new constitution which required the holding of a second CA election. This was ultimately held in 2013 (Table 1).

Table 1: Constitutional and Electoral Timeline		
Election	**Date**	**Comments**
CPA	21 November 2006	
Constituent election	April 2008	1st CA election
Constituent election	19 November 2013	2nd CA election
Earthquake	April 2015	More than 8,000 dead, millions homeless
Constitution	20 September 2015	
Local elections	14 May 2017	Phase 1
	28 June 2017	Phase 2
	18 September 2017	Phase 3
HoR, Provincial Assembly elections	26 November	Phase 1: 32 districts in hill & mountain regions
	7 December	Phase 2: 45 districts mostly in Terai region.
National Assembly election	7 February 2018	By Electoral college
Government installed	5 March 2018	
President elected	13 March 2018	By electoral college
Next electoral cycle	2022	

The CA was a unicameral body of 601 members that used a mixed electoral system: 240 were elected with a first-past-the post (FPTP) for single mandate constituencies; 335 from the proportional representation (PR) system from a single national constituency; and 26 members nominated after election day by the Council of Ministers. There was also a quota system that required the representation of women, ethnic minorities, historically disadvantaged groups and others such as PLWD on the PR candidate lists, based on the census. For 2013 this was 50% for women.

The second constituent assembly was able to deliver the new constitution which was enacted in September 2015. This established a federal republic with a bicameral federal parliament, indirectly elected president and powers decentralized to provinces (7 provincial assemblies) and local levels. The number of local bodies was set by the Restructuring Commission and Government and reached 753 cities, sub-cities, municipalities and sub-municipalities by the run-up of the third phase of the local elections. The Federal Parliament was to be made up of the lower House of Representatives (HoR) whose 275 members serve a five year term and the National Assembly whose 59 members are to be elected by an electoral college[6] for a six year term, with a third renewed every two years. The federal and provincial level elections use a mixed electoral system adapted from the one used by the

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[3] Government of Nepal and UNDP, *Nepal MDG Progress Report 2013,* p 8
[4] Ibid, p 5
[5] EU Election Observation Mission to Nepal, *Final Report on the Constituent Assembly Election 10 April 2008,* p 11
[6] Three of these are appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Government.

Interim Constitution. 60% of the seat are first-past-the-post and 40% are from proportional representation. The use of quotas was continued, with the women's quota kept at 50% for the PR candidate lists for the HoR and Provincial Assembly (PA) elections. There is also a minimum of one third women in the Provincial Assemblies and across the Federal Parliament.

The holding of these elections was delayed by political discussions and tensions over boundaries, official languages and the devolution of power. Local elections had not been held in almost 20 years and required a new municipal structure as did the provinces which did not exist previously. The elections were eventually held in phases in 2017 with the indirect elections for the National Assembly held in early 2018. According to observers, the elections overall went well despite the short timeframe for preparations, with 97% of the polling sites visited by one observer group for the November - December elections assessed as positive.[7] The election results were accepted, and all of the elected officials were inaugurated into office.[8]

The elections in Nepal are administered by the ECN. It is an independent constitutional body made up of five appointed commissioners who serve six year terms and a secretariat comprised of civil servants. The ECN is responsible for the administration of elections, the registration of political parties, monitoring the implementation of the regulations and codes of conducts and ruling on complaints of code violations. It has 77 permanent district election offices and for the HoR /PA elections had 165 Returning Officers (RO). ROs are temporary appointees responsible for the elections at constituency level. They are from the Nepal Judicial Service and are frequently judges. They work under Chief Returning Officers (CRO) (one per province/PR constituency) and one additional CRO for the nationwide federal PR constituency. District electoral officers (DEO) are responsible for voter registration and managing the electoral operations in their district, including voter education, training of polling personnel and the delivery of materials.

Nepal has 15 million registered voters spread out across the country. A significant segment of its population is young (Box 1) with a youth literacy rate of 85%.[9] Forty-four percent are under the age of 19.[10] Two percent of the population is living with disabilities according to the census. More recent estimates tend to place this higher. Nepal has a diverse culture, with 123 languages 62 indigenous groups and 125 castes and ethnic groups.[11] The UNDAF 2013 – 2017 consistently identified caste, ethnic and gender discrimination as core challenges faced by these vulnerable groups,[12] and the GON has committed to ending "*all forms of discrimination and inequalities such as legal social, cultural, linguistic, religious, economic, ethnic, physical, gender and regional*."[13]
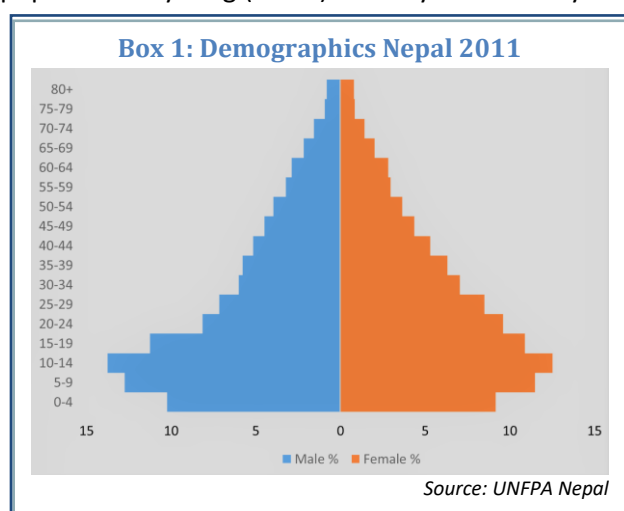
Nepal has a mobile population with rapid urbanization within Nepal and migration

Box 1: Demographics Nepal 2011

Source: UNFPA Nepal

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[7] Carter Center, *Election Observation Mission, Nepal, Federal and Provincial Elections 2017, Preliminary Statement,* p 4

[8] Except for one official who was not sworn in as the result of a criminal conviction.

[9] The World Bank Group, *Systematic Country Diagnostic,* p 5

[10] United Nations, *2018-2022 United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Nepal,* p 8

[11] UNFPA Nepal, *Population Situation Analysis of Nepal,* p 2

[12] United Nations, *2013 – 2017 United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Nepal*, p 7

[13] Ibid, p 2

abroad, mostly for employment.[14]   According to the Ministry of Finance, remittances made up almost 30% of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product in 2014/2015.[15] Voters abroad have to come home to register and vote.

Nepal had made significant strides in its socio-economic development which was interrupted by the earthquakes and political instability. It ranks 144 out of 187 countries on UNDP's *Human Development Index*[16] and has a national development goal to become a middle-income country by 2030 by building a peaceful, prosperous and just Nepal.

2.3 Assistance to the electoral process

The international community was a strong supporter for the peace process and democratic transition, including support for the electoral processes, women's political empowerment, increased participation and GESI.

It addition to ESP II, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided sizeable support to the electoral processes through its USD 26.5 million project *Strengthening Political Parties Electoral and Legislative Processes project* (2010-2015) and its continuation project (USD 20 million) *Niti Sambad* (2017 – 2022). The electoral component was implemented by IFES which provided TA and other support to the ECN on a range of issues including electoral law reform, training, voter education and voter registration.[17] The National Democratic Institute supported the USAID political party component, providing training to parties on ECN requirements for elections, codes of conducts, etc., as well as supporting domestic observation and voter education efforts done through its coalition of NGOs, the Democracy and Elections Watch. International IDEA provided support to the ECN on electoral risk mitigation, piloting its electoral risk tool in the JEOC in 2013 as well as supporting some BRIDGE courses.

The ECN also received punctual support bilaterally from other donors, such as the Japan International Cooperation System (JICS). JICS provided a ¥ 149 million grant (about USD 1.3 million) under its Japan's Grant Aid for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding to purchase electoral materials for the 2013 CA elections including ballot boxes. This followed a similar grant done in 2008.[18] The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) also provided support for the construction of the EEIC and two advisers from the Australian Civilian Corps worked with ESP on voter education and training for the 2013 elections.[19]

The EU was a major donor to the ESP project and a strong supporter of Nepal, funding more than 90 projects in different sectors. It pledged € 360 million from 2014 to 2020 to support a more prosperous, democratic country with better opportunities for all.[20] The EU has partnered globally with UNDP to create the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force (JTF) on Electoral Assistance which is one of the largest areas of EC-UNDP programmatic cooperation.[21] The JTF website has a dedicated page on ESP II which the project kept updated. In addition, the EU undertook long-term election observation missions for the 2013 and 2017 elections. Long term observation was also undertaken by the Carter Center and other international and domestic organizations for the 2013 and 2017 HoR and Provincial Assembly elections. With funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The

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[14] UNFPA, Op Cit, p iv. Study shows a declining share of the population in the mountain regions and an increasing population in the Terai region in the south. The number of urban municipalities also increased from 58 in 2011 to 217 by 2018, corresponding with a 42% increase in the proportion of people living in urban municipalities.

[15] Ibid, p 48

[16] UNDP, *Human Development Report, Nepal*

[17] USAID Nepal, *USAID Support to Elections*, and *Niti Sambad Factsheet*

[18] JICS, *Nepal Ballot boxes and other election materials procured by JICS were utilized in the Second Constituent Assembly Election*

[19] AEC, *Australia lends support for Nepal's Constituent Assembly election*

[20] EU, *EU Projects Nepal*

[21] JTF website, *The EC-UNDP Partnership on Electoral Assistance*

Asia Foundation also supported long term domestic observation and partnered with the Democracy Resource Center Nepal and the Collective Campaign for Peace to monitor electoral violence and provide incident analysis updates.

2.4 Electoral Support Project

The *Electoral Support Project Phase* II was designed originally as a USD 24,630,000 three year project (January 2013 – January 2016). This was increased to USD 26,834,781 in 2017[22] and its end date extended to May 2018. This was further extended after this final evaluation's field work to the end of 2018. The project was developed as a continuation of UNDP's 2008 – 2012 *Electoral Support Project* (ESP I), using the same objectives and outputs. ESP I itself had followed the large scale electoral assistance provided within the UNMIN context and the holding of the 2008 CA election.

<table>
<tr><td>Box 2: Expected Outcomes</td></tr>
<tr><td>UNDAF Outcome
5. Institutions, systems and processes of democratic governance are more accountable, effective, efficient and inclusive.

CP Outcome
5. Increased access to and participation in constitution building.

UNDAF/CP Outcome
5.1 ECN has the capacity to conduct, credible, inclusive and transparent elections</td></tr>
</table>

ESP Phase II was done at the formal request of the GON and following a needs assessment mission (NAM) undertaken by UNDP and the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) in the United Nations Department of Political Affairs which recommended continuing the assistance. This process is required for all UN electoral assistance projects.

The overarching goal of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the ECN to conduct credible inclusive and transparent elections at national, provincial and local levels in order to strengthen the institutions, systems and processes of democratic governance (Box 2).[23] To accomplish this objective, ESP II focused on achieving three outputs:

1. *Strengthened capacity of the ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance.*

2. *Election cycle conducted in an effective, sustainable and credible manner.*

3. *Increased democratic participation in the next cycle of elections, particularly for under-represented and disadvantaged segments of Nepali society.*

ESP II used a basket fund/cost-sharing model with contributions from the Governments of Denmark (USD 738,575), EU (USD 11,973,480), Norway (USD 4,259,414), UK (USD 8,761,106), and UNDP (USD 1,102,206). The donors did not earmark their funds for any particular activity and the project was fully funded.[24]

**Table 2: Anticipated Project Budget**
by Output Activity Areas

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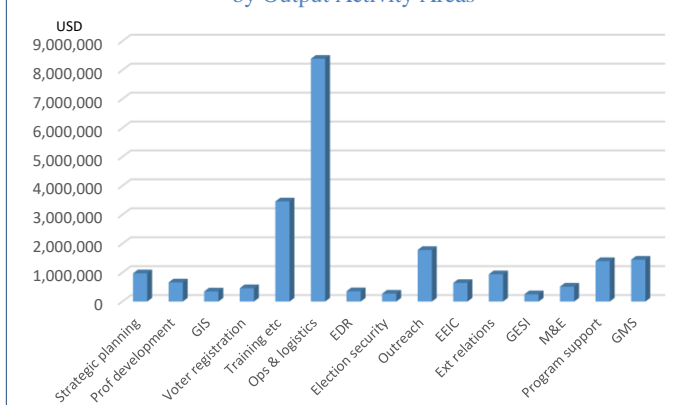
[22] To ensure it could serve as a "safety net" for the ECN if required for the 2017 elections and to expand ESP II's work on inclusion through CSOs for the local elections. ESP II, *Annual Report 2017,* p 4

[23] ESP II, *ESP II Project Document, Project results and resources framework*, p 32

[24] Financial information provided by ESP

The basket fund was intended to cover the costs to achieve the three outputs and its sub-output activity areas as illustrated in Table 2.[25]

ESP II was executed through a direct implementation modality. According to the project document, UNDP was to establish an Electoral Support Team in the ECN's main building in Kathmandu, with additional national and international consultants hired as needed. The team was to be led by Project Manager/CTA who was responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the project, supported by a project management team (PMU) (Box 3). The CTA reported to a project Executive Board (referred to as "Board" in this report) led by UNDP and included the "Senior Beneficiary" (ECN) and "Senior Suppliers" (donors) (Box 3). The Board was to meet quarterly or as needed and to ensure flexibility of the project in the evolving context. The Board was able to amend project activities and make budget revisions by consensus.[26]

Box 3: Project Organizational Structure

Source: ESP II Project Document
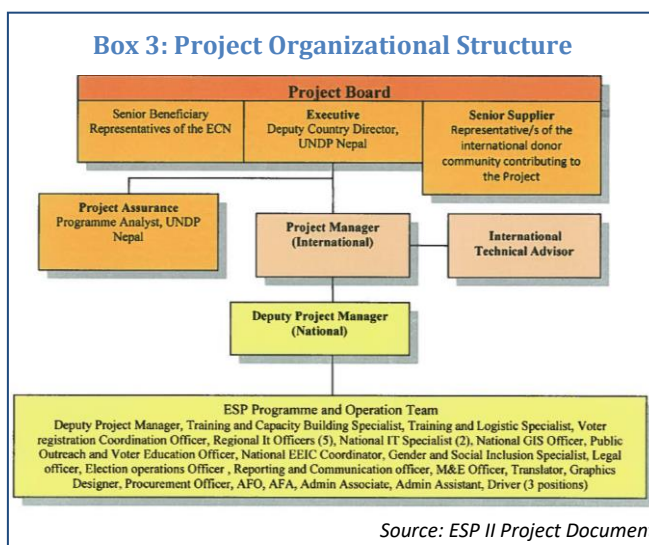
The project document also envisioned a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) called bi-annually with the ECN, UNDP, EU, donor representatives, Ministry of Finance and others as appropriate to provide strategic guidance for the formulation of workplans and on policy matters. UNDP was to provide ESP II with project support and quality assurance.

The project anticipated having a midterm and a final evaluation. The midterm evaluation was done in 2015.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance

This section looks at the project and its relevance to the country context and best practices of electoral assistance. It also looks at its relevance to the UNDP country programme, UNDP's comparative advance, national priorities and the relevance of its intended outputs and activities.

The project was highly relevant to the 2013 - 2018 context, GON, ECN and UNDP objectives. Nepal was coming out of conflict and in the middle of a democratic transition, The holding peaceful, credible elections was an integral part of this process. It was important to strengthen the administration of the elections, the credibility of the process and the participation of its citizens. The 2013 CA election was the first election held during the transition without a UN mission and an electoral mandate from the Security Council. This further heightened the importance of strengthening the EMB as this made the ECN fully responsible for election administration.

UNDP was well placed to deliver this assistance as it was already positioned within the ECN through its implementation of ESP I. Its team was already embedded and had existing working relationships and ongoing activities with the ECN commissioners, officials and other stakeholders working on the electoral processes and the up-coming elections. UNDP also has extensive experience in

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[25] The estimated budget and expenditures tables used in the report are for illustrative purposes only. Planned expenditures are based on the estimates in the project document.
[26] ESP II, *ESP II Project Document*, p 48

implementing election support and cycle projects. It has a global network of electoral practitioners, projects and relations as well as a unit based in Copenhagen that specializes in election-related procurement. UNDP's technical efforts are also widely perceived as impartial given its status as a multinational organization. This also helps to raise the profile and credibility of the efforts assisted. This is important when providing assistance within a highly politicized and competitive process such as elections.

The project design primarily targeted support to the ECN and its administration of the electoral process. This corresponded with the UNDAF outcome of "*Institutions, systems and processes of democratic governance are more accountable, effective, efficient and inclusive*" and the UNDP Country Programme Output 5.1: "*Election Commission of Nepal has the capacity to conduct credible, inclusive and transparent elections.*"[27] This also corresponded to the Nepali national development goals and those of the CPA. The project design also intended to support marginalized and under-represented groups to participate in the process. This was extremely relevant given the core challenges of caste, ethnicity and gender discrimination faced by Nepal's most marginalized groups.[28] These outcomes also correspond to the SDGs adopted in 2015, in particular SDG 5 on *Gender Equality* and SDG 16 *Peace Justice and Strong Institutions.*

The project document itself lacked a clearly articulated theory of change. It notes the challenges to the consolidation of the electoral process which helps to situate the assistance and justifies the choice of an electoral cycle approach, and a theory can be extrapolated from its results framework. But it does not lay out a clear vision that ties the three outputs together and how they would collectively contribute to a higher level outcome. This higher level, project-specific outcome is missing in the design. It uses the UNDAF and CP Outcome 5.1 for this purpose (*ECN has the capacity to conduct, credible, inclusive and transparent elections)* but this is at the level of ECN administration while many of the project elements contribute towards a higher level objective of a credible, inclusive and transparent electoral process. Stating this in the project document would have helped to tie everything together, clarify the purpose and justify all three outputs and their activities.

A theory of change box was added to the project's annual reports for 2016 and 2017 which alludes to this. It uses the UN's rationale for electoral assistance which is based on the principles that "*every citizen (has) the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including through freely chosen representatives, and to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections*." It adds, "*in the context of Nepal's post-conflict transition, the Electoral Support Project strengthens the capacity of the Election Commission of Nepal to put these principles into practice. It also helps overcome other potential obstacles to the conduct of genuine periodic elections and assists national institutions working for inclusive participation in the election process.*"[29]

The electoral cycle and capacity building approaches used in the design are best practices. The provision of assistance over time, and for the process instead of an election event, allowed the project to focus on the ECN's institutional development, informational outreach and GESI aspects while waiting for the new series of elections that were expected to be required by the constitution.

The mechanisms used to support the process, including the basket fund to channel assistance from multiple donors to the electoral process, the provision of technical and procurement support, the use of the DIM management mechanism and UNDP's quality control were appropriate and needed in the context. The use of a multinational basket fund, managed by a UN agency that was widely seen as impartial, provided safeguards to the donors that their funds would be used for the intended purposes and meet UN standards for accountability and integrity. UNDP's global electoral network, fast-track mechanisms and long-term agreements for election-related procurement meant that the

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[27] UNDP Nepal, *UNDAF for Nepal 2013 – 2017*, p 40
[28] Ibid, p 7
[29] ESP II, *Annual Report 2017 draft,* p 3

project could be responsive to the compressed needs of the electoral timeline and helped it to ensure its relevance in most situations. UNDP and the ESP II donors were flexible which was needed in the context.

ESP II's robust presence of international and national advisors in 2013 was appropriate for the time as a large focus of ESP II's initial work was operational and logistical support for the holding of second CA election. This number decreased over time as the project, and other electoral assistance efforts, helped strengthen the ECN's institutional capacity and procedures for electoral administration. The concept of having ESP regional offices to support ECN administration and build local capacity was also extremely relevant as it extended the project's reach and supported ECN's efforts within the region. However, their relevance overall was limited by the centralized nature of ECN and ESP operations and management which in turn limited the ability of the regional ESP II staff to initiate local level activities and adapt efforts to the local context.

ESP II's relevance for the ECN varied over time, types of support and among different ECN officials and commissioners. There was high relevance for the project in the first years as they felt they had driven the project, having been involved in its development and the nature of its efforts. ESP II was also extremely responsive in the context of a post-conflict CA election and the importance of having them go well.[30] They saw the assistance as meeting their needs and priorities which facilitated ESP efforts and strengthened its results. Being embedded within the ECN also increased ESP II relevance allowing continual interaction, both formally and informally.

This closeness in some respects has faded over time. Factors include the different context and changes in ECN commissioners and staff, the relocation of the ESP II team and the more measured ESP II responses in the post CA environment, which in some cases has led to ECN disappointment and what they perceive as inconsistent responses and a "*bad design*" of the project.[31] They noted the "gap" between the ECN and ESP and that the software offered by ESP for the voter registry had not been the subject of any formal communication between UNDP and ECN and was not accepted because it did not meet their needs. "*We need a close relationship with ESP, and we need to go together. We don't want to be a passive receiver.*"[32] Nevertheless, they still see the assistance as valuable and requested the project's extension to the end of 2018 and look for assistance beyond that "*for the electoral cycle.*"

3.2 Effectiveness and impact

This section starts by identifying some of the key factors found that affected project effectiveness and its impact, and continues with the findings on project performance for each of its output areas. Some of these factors facilitated project efforts while others were constraints.

Key factors

ESP II's ability to provide assistance during the context of the 2013 – 2018 democratic transition was affected by a number of factors. These shaped the nature of its response and affected the efficiency, relevance and sustainability of its assistance. Some of these factors were:

- *Commitment of ECN to hold timely, credible elections:* The ECN's commitment to fulfill its tasks despite the tight timelines was essential to ESP II being able to provide effective

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[30] As noted by one ECN official from that time "*If we needed something, ESP was there. It was a big campaign. It provided a significant number of laptops, trained personnel and incentives to ECN officials and district office staff. This helped us in our work and was a major contribution to free, fair and credible elections.*"

[31] Examples given included only offering bids from overseas vendors for the printing of the voter ID cards for the 2017 elections (which UNDP says was one of several options provided for printing and was required if procured due to the short delivery time), limited number of international exposure visits and delays in building the data centre.

[32] The software issue is discussed in more depth in Section 3.2.1 under voter registration.

support. Without a committed partner, ESP II could not have achieved the same level of success that was evident during this final evaluation.

- *Uncertainties and short timeframes:* ESP II worked within the political context of the transition and the inability of the first constituent assembly to come to a political consensus on the content of the new federal constitution. This resulted in the need for a second CA election and delays in holding the elections that were required by the new constitution. There were also uncertainties over the dates for these elections, late decision making and requests, all of which affected effectiveness and efficiencies.

- *Collaborative partnerships:* Overall, ESP II had a good working relationship with the ECN, its primary partner. This was especially the case with the ECN in the 2013 elections given the more significant operational and logistical role ESP II played at the time. This period set the foundations for many of the ECN's institutional procedures and systems building on the achievements of ESP I. The relationship was more distant later, but it still remained collaborative in most cases. ESP II also had very close collaboration with IFES and IDEA which helped to avoid duplication of efforts and consistency of advice. There were also good relations with the ESP II donors which met formally and informally as required. ESP II position as secretariat for the Election Working Group (EWG) (with IFES) formed under the International Development Partners Group (IDPG) gave it regular access to the broader range of election actors and facilitated the sharing of information. UNDP also ensured collaboration with other UN agencies and its own projects which helped to ensure some synergistic activities.

- *Rotation of ECN staff and managers:* The staff of the ECN at all levels are public servants who are rotated routinely. This resulted in frequent changes of counterparts for ESP II. For example, there were six ECN Secretaries during the tenure of the first CTA (2013-2016) and four during the second (2017 – 2018). Each change required the building of new relationships and trust, and explaining of the project and its purpose. This rotation is beyond the control of the project, but directly affected its implementation and the effectiveness and sustainability of efforts.

- *Activity-focused nature for some activities:* Many activities, especially those related to Output 3, were one time efforts, lacking follow up and integration into a larger more programmatic effort. Some of this was a result of the context and factors noted here or elsewhere in the report. However, some was also due to the lack of a programmatic perspective in the project design and during implementation.

3.2.1 Output 1. Strengthened capacity of ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance

The objective for Output 1 was *strengthening the capacity of the ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance.* ESP II intended to strengthen ECN capacity through *support with strategic planning* (Output 1.1), *support with staff retention and professional development* (Output 1.2), *support with geographic information and electoral mapping systems* (Output 1.3), and *support with the creation and display of a new voter registry* (Output 1.4).

The evaluation team is uncertain why the project design intended to strengthen the "permanence" of the ECN since it had been a permanent and independent constitutional body since 1996[33] although it may have been because Nepal was using an Interim Constitution at the time. However, it is evident that a more professional body can become a more credible and independent institution of electoral governance.

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[33] ECN, *Inclusive Electoral Justice through informal education channel,* Powerpoint.

The project design had a long list of intended activities for Output 1. These included TA, training, commodities, international exposure and engagement with other EMBs, IT support and warehouse construction. It also intended to support ECN strategy development, a comprehensive learning

curriculum for professional development and courses for a number of different areas including IT, budgeting, human resources management, procurement and archiving. ESP II also intended set up an ECN GIS unit and the development of a new voter registration system.

Table 3: Expenditures Output 1
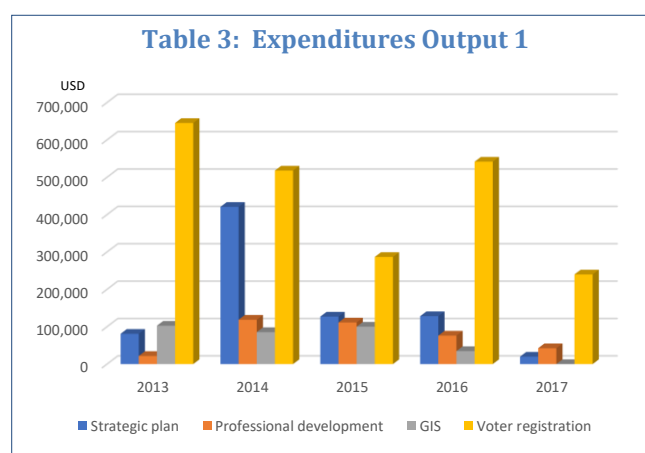
The anticipated budget for this Output was USD 2,446,339 (11% of the project's budget). Actual expenditures as of the end of 2017 were USD 3,702,221 (17% of all project expenditures). Sixty percent of the expenditures were for voter registration (Table 3).

Strategic planning. ESP II spent almost a quarter of its expenditures for Output 1 on activities related to strengthening ECN's strategic planning process and its implementation of the plan. This resulted in the development of the ECN's second *Strategic Plan (2015 – 2019)*, a two year action plan (2015-16) and the methodological guidelines for the plan's monitoring and evaluation.

The strategic plan adopted is a useful document, covering the basic needs for the institution and broadly outlining its strategic goals and measurable objectives.[34] GESI was incorporated in all of the plan's thematic areas as a key feature and is a best practice. ESP II supported a participatory process for its development including several rounds of consultations of central and district level ECN officials and relevant stakeholders. The project also supported the ECN's review of its progress towards meeting the plan's 18 goals, which also facilitated ECN efforts to update its commitments and declarations based on the lessons learned from the plan's first two years and to align the plan with the requirements of the new constitution.

The evaluation found the strategic plan served as an effective foundational document for the ECN. The ECN was using it to implement its programmes, check its progress, and take corrective measures as needed. The plan also facilitated the development of the ECN budgets as it had already identified the different sets of activities anticipated over the plan's five year timeframe. This strategic planning process was not repeated at provincial or district levels. District offices use the central plans and are dependent on the ECN's central office financially and programmatically. This is an area for future support as these offices can be expected to have more scope for initiative under the new federal system.

Staff retention. The project design was ambitious in regard to its intentions to address the issue of staff retention and it appears that ESP II did not work on this issue. This is a systemic issue that affects all Nepali public servants. The ECN is not able to independently recruit its own permanent staff and does not have the legal authority to retain its staff for more than two years. Although some suggested that the ESP offers of international study tours and training acted as incentives to remain within the commission, most senior ECN officials are transferred within the two years and there is very narrow scope for ESP II to affect staff retention at the technical level without a policy in place that would allow for the ECN to recruit its own staff.

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[34] Its strategic pillars are: Institutional Development of Election Commission, Organization and Capacity Building; Registration and Election Technology; Electoral Education and Organizational Outreach; and, Logistic Management and Electoral Operations

Professional development. About 10% of the expenditures for Output 1 were for spent for training. Activities included BRIDGE,[35] thematic trainings, and a significant level of international exposure trips for the election commissioners and ECN officials (Tables 4 and 5). As of 2014, about 60% of the ECN headquarters and district-level staff had received training.[36]

BRIDGE was seen as a successful professional development program by the BRIDGE impact evaluation conducted in March - April 2018.[38] The introduction of BRIDGE (which predated ESP II) was responsible for a paradigm shift in the development and implementation of training in the ECN, contributing to the modernization of its

Year	# EVENTS		BRIDGE		OTHER		TOTAL PERSONS
	BRIDGE	Other	M	F	M	F	
2017	0	163			4,243	1,941	6,184
2016	4	77	56	44	2195	538	2,874
2015	8	55	123	68	1,562	278	2,031
2014		52			1,112	441	1,553
2013		54			1,117	173	1,300
TOTALS	18	401	179	112	10,229	3,371	13,891

Table 4: In-Country Trainings [37]

training content and methodologies. Likewise, that evaluation found it significantly contributed to an improvement in ECN's human resource capacity and the quality of ECN relationships with electoral stakeholders, such as the political parties, media, and civil society.[39] Senior ECN management still highly regarded BRIDGE as a professional development tool for its staff and in the 2014 ECN survey nearly all said that the trainings had enhanced their capacity to fulfill their responsibilities.

The BRIDGE evaluation team identified a number of potential challenges for its continued use. As an example, the ECN policy documents, including its *2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan,* do not mention BRIDGE. This makes it difficult to argue the importance of BRIDGE in the ECN for its overall professional development strategy. The selection of facilitators and participants lacked transparency and resulted in uneven access to opportunities. The lack of consultation, particularly with district-level staff, regarding what got run, by whom and for whom likely resulted in some staff not getting the BRIDGE modules they needed. In ESP's 2014 ECN survey, only 10% of the ECN staff asked for continued BRIDGE training but all of these were at district level.[40]

ESP also organized a substantial number of non-BRIDGE professional development trainings at the central, regional and local level for ECN and non-ECN officials. These ranged from election management and security, to EDR, GIS and IT, public finance and procurement management to regional EEIC implementation and operational training. It also provided training on the election code of conduct, voter registration, logistics and accounting. Some of these are discussed as well in other output sections of this report.

ESP also sponsored 57 international trips for 174 persons from 2013 to 2018 (Table 5). Many of these were in the form of international conferences, trainings, study tours, celebrations and observations to many different countries. Among these, 132 were for ECN officials, 27 for UNDP/ESP staff, five for judges from the districts courts, and three for government officials from various ministries. ECN officials stated that most of these trips were highly beneficial for their professional development as they were able to learn from the best practices in the field of electoral management and to build good relationship with other EMBs and electoral stakeholders in South Asia and other parts of the world. However, others felt there was a lack of proportional distribution for these opportunities at the district levels and expressed the concern that not all of

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[35] From 2013 – 2016, ESP II organized 18 BRIDGE workshops and trainings, two of these were done jointly with other partners (1 with IDEA, 1 with IFES). Four related to electoral administration and management, 10 to gender, inclusion and elections, 1 to civic education and voter information, and 1 on leadership. In the same period 17 workshops were done without ESP engagement, 16 by IFES and one joint IFES/IDEA.

[36] ESP II, *Baseline Survey of Electoral Support Project,* p ix

[37] Data from ESP II. Chart includes trainings provided under other ESP II outputs.

[38] *BRIDGE Impact Evaluation Draft Report*

[39] Ibid

[40] ESP II, *Baseline Survey of Electoral Support Project,* p 94

these trips, particularly the study tours, were useful professionally because of their limited time and superficial nature. They felt these trips would be more effective if they had the opportunity to work in the other EMBs for one to three months so that they could have an on-the-job learning experience. This exchange approach is also endorsed by this evaluation. UNDP's global electoral networks and emphasis on South-South cooperation makes it well places to support this type of an EMB-EMB effort. However, care needs to be taken that the individual is able to remain long enough within the ECN upon his/her return to make it a valuable experience for the institution.

Table 5: International Trips														
Purpose	**2013**		**2014**		**2015**		**2016**		**2017**		**2018**		**Total**	
	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P
Study tours			3	7	1	6	7	26	2	6			13	45
Courses			2	8			2	2					4	10
Regional Trainings	2	6	1	8	1	5							4	19
Region Conference	1	2			1	1							2	3
Int'l Conference	7	10	6	22	4	5	5	13	1	2	1	2	24	54
Procurements	1	5											1	5
Visit to EAD/UNDP			1	1									1	1
Election observation			2	15	1	5	2	10					5	30
Celebrations					1	3	1	2	1	2			3	7
Total	**11**	**23**	**15**	**61**	**9**	**25**	**17**	**53**	**4**	**10**	**1**	**2**	**57**	**174**
											T = Number of trips, P = Number of persons			

The effectiveness of the trainings is difficult to determine without more data. Although ESP's 2012 annual report noted that it had supported the ECN to develop a capacity building strategy, training did not seem to follow a comprehensive professional development plan and many of the trainings seemed to be conducted on an ad-hoc or on-demand basis. These also lacked follow up.

In the 2014 survey, 87% of the respondents said the trainings were useful and 90% of these said they were able to transfer the knowledge and skills to their colleagues.[41] In the few cases where a pre and post knowledge question was asked, most showed an increase in post-training knowledge, such as the public finance and procurement training. Here the average score increased from 38% to 67%.[42] However beyond these responses, and as noted by ESP's midterm evaluation, it was unclear as to how the trainings were being used in the individual's work and how these trainings strengthened the institutional development of the ECN.[43] In fact, 36% of the headquarter staff respondents and 57% at district levels in the 2014 survey said future trainings should be based on the needs of the organization.[44] There is also no recent data on how many of those trained still remained at the ECN. ESP II estimated that around 67% of the trained staff from 2013 was still there at the time of the Midterm Evaluation. The project also assessed the number of officials remaining in the ECN who had gone on an international visit from 2009 to 2016 sponsored by ESP. It found that 44% were still at the ECN, with 40% still working at the same post and 4% promoted. 50% of the officials had moved out of the ECN and the rest retired.[45] This assessment was done after two years with a high number of visits (2014 and 2016) which increased the likelihood that the officials would still be there given the usual two year rotation period. ESP intends to update this analysis which would be useful, especially if it is expanded to cover the range of other trainings supported.

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[41] Ibid, p ix
[42] ESP II, *Public Finance and Procurement Training, Pretest and Posttest Report,* p 1
[43] ESP II, *Midterm Evaluation Report,* p 18. The demand for training, according to the 2014 survey, was for computer skills (67%) followed by planning and project management skills (54%) and English language (51)%. *Baseline Survey,* p 94
[44] ESP II, *Baseline Survey of Electoral Support Project*, p 93
[45] ESP, *International Visits Supported by ESP 2009 – 2016*, p 3

ESP II did plan to undertake an institutional needs assessment of the ECN in its 2018 workplan. If this is accomplished, it could help to inform the development of an updated institutional capacity development plan and a more systematic approach to building institutional staff capacity. It would also help to determine how many of those trained by ESP remained at the ECN to assess the sustainability issues inherent in this output.

Electoral Mapping. Based on the lesson learned from the 2008 CA elections, ESP I and II intended to support the ECN to set up a GIS centre, train ECN staff and provide TA for the best use of the GIS system. It was intended to be a sustainable infrastructure for use in managing future elections.

The GIS unit was established within the ECN in 2012 with ESP I support. Training and the initial mapping of the polling stations also started under ESP I and was completed under ESP II. This work enabled the ECN, for the first time, to develop electoral maps that incorporated a comprehensive set of information gathered from the almost 10,000 polling stations set up for the 2013 CA election. Information included the location and picture of each polling station, the location of nearby security posts, the availability of drinking water, electricity and communication facilities, and the distance from one polling station to another.

There was extensive use of GIS for the 2013 election. It was used to plan and monitor electoral operations in the JEOC with information displayed on a big screen. The system also enabled the ECN to produce accurate voter turnout and election results on digitalized maps within 24 hours of the results being announced. And with ESP assistance the ECN published the first *Electoral Atlas of Nepal.* This provided district level electoral maps, information and election results from 2008 and 2013 (Box 4). The data was also used to map areas with high levels of invalid votes which was used later to better target voter information efforts.

At the time of ESP II's midterm evaluation, the ECN was able to independently plot GPS coordinates and input all relevant data needed for mapping. The midterm though found no ECN ownership for the system given the technical requirements for its maintenance.[46] ESP II turned the equipment, GIS data, and software licenses over to the ECN in 2016 and refurbished the GIS office located near the JEOC to ensure its secure housing. The 2016 ESP II *Annual Report* noted that the ECN had started "*independently using GIS technology*" capturing data and "*restating its strengthened in-house capacity on GIS and electoral mapping.*"[47]

Box 4: Electoral Mapping CA Election 2013

Source: ECN, Electoral Atlas Nepal .

At the time of this final evaluation, the GIS system was in limbo and had not been used for the 2017 elections. This was reportedly because the data in the GIS system had not been updated to reflect relocated or new polling stations because of time constraints. During the final evaluation interviews, the ECN IT Department requested training on the GIS system and assistance to get the system up and running which it thought was not functional and had expired licenses. After the evaluators followed up with ESP, it checked on the GIS equipment. The IT technician stated it was functional and that the licensing should still be good, but the equipment was split

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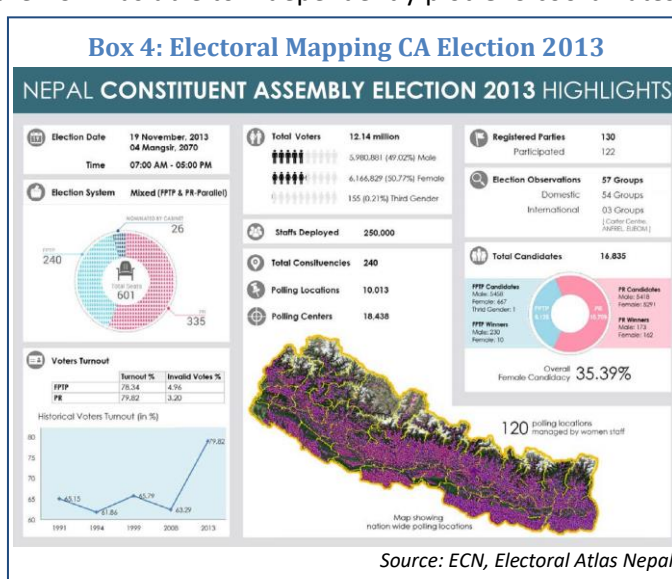
[46] ESP II, *Midterm Evaluation Report,* p 21
[47] ESP II, *Annual Report 2016,* p 5

between the former GIS office and the IT Department as the ECN had decided it should sit with the IT section. The ECN person who had managed the system earlier was no longer there.

Although the GIS system only took 1% of project expenditures, it was a substantial and visible accomplishment and useful tool for electoral management. ESP II should assist the ECN to ensure the GIS system becomes functional and to bring the IT staff and others up to speed on how to use it. Updating the electoral atlas and mapping with the results of the 2017 elections would be useful for ECN's future planning and for the EEIC's exhibits, as well as for other electoral stakeholders such as political parties, media, CSOs and academics.

Voter registration. ESP II provided substantial levels of support to the voter registration process, accounting for 10% of all project expenditures. This was a continuation of the assistance started under ESP I. The voter registration system used for 2008 had been an issue of contention, as the registry reportedly contained a large number of inaccuracies and left out a substantial number of young and marginalized voters.[48] ESP II intended to support ECN's development of a continuous voter registration system and voters list/IDs with photos for the 2013 election.

The registration process was expected to collect biometric profiles and information that would be shared with the Ministry of Home Affairs for the preparation of the national ID document as well as for the creation of a civil registry.[49] ESP II also intended to look into the feasibility of establishing an out-of-country registration system for the estimated 4 million Nepali voters working abroad.[50] Support was also to include the development of updated registration software to improve the existing ECN system along with the procurement of voter registration equipment and the establishment of a data processing centre within the ECN.

ESP II provided the expected support for 2013 and procured about 600 registration kits in 2016 to supplement the 3,600 kits provided under ESP I. It also equipped and established the data centre in the ECN central headquarters and supported the annual training of registration workers.

According to ESP and the project document, the 2008 registry contained about 17.5 million voters. This was reduced to about 9.6 million citizens aged 16 and above by December 2011 through the new biometric registration. ESP II support enabled the ECN to increase this to 12.4 million for the 2013 elections, 51% of which were women. This was a 2% increase of women voters over the 2008 roll.[51]   The number of registered voters reached 14 million for the first phase of the 2017 local elections and 15.42 million for the provincial and national elections held later that year.[52] This was estimated to be 90% of the potential voting age population by observers.[53]

ESP II also supported the ECN with the printing of the voter ID cards with photos by providing printing equipment to the ECN in 2013 and the plastic pouches for their protection. According to interviews, that timeline was extremely compressed, and ESP/UNDP worked closely with the ECN to ensure that the materials were received on time. This effort extended to use of UNDP's Procurement Support Office in Copenhagen, its Regional Office in Bangkok and the UN EAD in New York. Former ECN officials attributed the increase in turnout for 2013 with the issuing of the voter ID cards, seeing this as an incentive to register and vote. Turnout in those elections was about 80%, the highest turnout for any election.[54] The distribution of voter ID cards with colourful photos was also seen as a positive aspect of the 2017 elections by observers, although they also noted distribution issues in

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[48] Carter Center, *Observing the 2008 Nepal Constituent Assembly Election,* pps 12 and 34; EU EOM, *Nepal Final Report, Constituent Assembly Election 2008,* pps 20, 43
[49] ESP II, *Project Document*, p 18.
[50] IFES, *Elections in Nepal, 2017 House of Representatives & State Assembly Elections, Frequently asked questions*, p 10
[51] ESP II, *Midterm Evaluation Report,* p 21
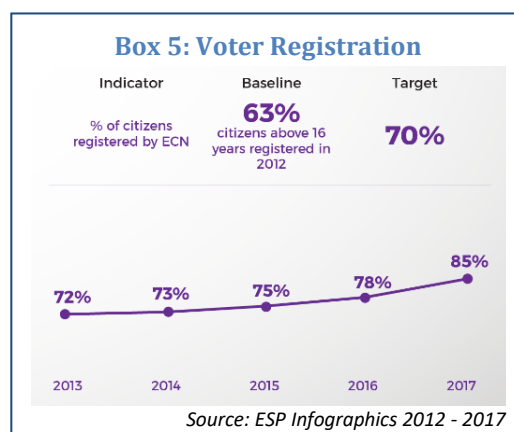[52] IFES, Op cit, p 10
[53] EU EOM, *Preliminary Statement 2017*
[54] ESP II, *Infographics*

the second phase.[55] ESP II did not directly support the printing for the voter IDs for 2017 although it provided a series of options to the ECN after being asked if the project could procure the cards in a more timely manner than could be done using the ECN's procurement process.[56]

The new voter registration for the 2013 elections was widely considered as an "*important step towards meeting Nepal's international obligations to ensure universal and equal suffrage*".[57] Observers found the ECN had consistently applied the eligibility criteria and provided public access to the lists which increased stakeholder confidence that those on the voters list were eligible to vote and could be properly identified on election day. This speaks to the effectiveness of the voter registration planning and training efforts. However, they also noted the need for a voter lists' audit and to take measures to ensure that all citizens, especially married women and people without proof of citizenship were able to register.[58] Although more citizens had been reached by 2017, increasing from roughly 70% to 90% (Box 5[59]), observers reported that the situation remained largely the same, especially for those without citizenship papers and abroad. The list still requires auditing.

The 2015 earthquakes caused substantial damage to the ECN's data centre and the equipment was relocated in the EEIC with ESP II support. Although this was supposed to be a temporary measure, with the project agreeing to build a new data centre, it was still operating out of the EEIC at the time of this final evaluation. According to ESP II, the ECN took time to decide on the location for the new centre on its Kathmandu premises, and the ESP II donors required the construction and quality control processes be completed by the end of the project. This was not possible when the project's end date at the time was December 2016 and the expected 1.5 year timeline for the bidding, award, construction and warranty period for the centre. The construction had still not started at the time of this evaluation and is a remaining need.

Box 5: Voter Registration

Indicator	Baseline	Target
% of citizens registered by ECN	**63%** citizens above 16 years registered in 2012	**70%**

2013: 72% — 2014: 73% — 2015: 75% — 2016: 78% — 2017: 85%

Source: ESP Infographics 2012 - 2017

The voter registry software still needs updating as the current system is not adequate for the needs. Entries are made at the central level with the data collected at local levels. According to the National ID Office, the registry's biometric data is unusable for their purposed from the way it was compressed for storage. It intends to re-register every citizen for the National ID once the legislative framework for this is in place.

ESP II worked with the ECN to develop the specifications for new software in 2013 that would address these issues and procured a Bangladeshi IT firm, Tiger IT to develop it. The firm was ultimately unable to deliver and the contract was cancelled in 2016. ESP II then proceeded with an in-house development of the software by its own IT experts and consultants. This process was problematic. According to interviews, the ECN IT management changed shortly after the entire process started and was reluctant to work with UNDP on it expressing preference for local procurement. Ultimately, the software completed by ESP was not accepted by the ECN.

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[55] Citizens' Campaign for Clean Elections, *Brief Observation Report on Second Phase of Local Level Elections 2017* p 1 and for *First Phase*, p 1

[56] The ECN ultimately decided to use its own fast track mechanism to procure the cards as UNDP's best procurement option was to through its Copenhagen office using a long term agreement to print them in Dubai. The ECN stated it wanted the cards printed in country because of the sensitive nature of the voters' information

[57] Carter Center, *Observing the 2013 Constituent Elections*, p 8

[58] Ibid. There is a provision for married women to move their registration place on the basis of their marriage certificate. For proof of citizenship, the observers refer to a Supreme Court Decision that was not fully implemented.

[59] ESP's estimates are based as of the local elections

According to the ECN, the software developed does not meet the 2013 specifications which included a web-based system (so they could register voters abroad) and was outdated by the time it was delivered. They also state UNDP's development of the in-house product was never the subject of any formal communication between them. ESP II IT experts say the software developed meets the original specifications and a web component can be developed later as an add-on. UNDP said it felt it had the approval of the ECN's Focal Point and Secretary through their participation in the project's board meetings and it was their obligation to deliver the software since they had not received a formal request to cancel the original ECN request.

At the time of this evaluation, it appeared the ECN would procure its own software directly as it had reportedly included a modest amount for it in its next GON budget estimates. Although ESP states it will offer the software to other EMBs through other UNDP electoral projects, and will continue to offer it to the ECN, this was a time consuming and expensive effort, taking more than four years and costing almost USD 540,000.[60]

There are lessons in this experience however it is interpreted. It likely demonstrates the impact of staff changes made in the middle of a development process, and the need for UNDP to be more wary of continued reluctance shown by counterparts to undertake certain activities or to do them in another way. These issues need policy-level discussions and decisions with clear policy guidance from the counterpart on whether or not it wants to continue with the activity and why-- and in writing to all concerned so that the project and the counterparts' mid-level management knows what the institutional decision has been, and whether or not they should continue to move forward with the effort.

From the ECN perspective, another lesson is for the need for more participatory processes. Although UNDP said it continued to reach out to the ECN for input during the software development, the ECN stated it had never formally asked ESP II to develop this product and wanted to be more than a passive recipient of assistance.

From an IT assistance perspective, it demonstrates the need for an experienced electoral IT management expert to be involved in the design and implementation of IT efforts. These are IT engineering issues that go beyond the development of specifications for one component and need someone who can see how the different bits and pieces come together as part of the larger IT management and system needs of an election commission. This type of expertise also needs to be included during the review of bids. The Tiger IT bid was reportedly well below the average market cost for this type of software development at the time which should have warranted a deeper look before award, providing the lesson as well that the lowest bid is also not always the best.

3.2.2 Output 2. Electoral cycle conducted in an effective, sustainable and credible manner

The objectives for Output 2 were: *support with procedures and training* (Output 2.1), *support with election operations and logistics* (Output 2.2), *support with electoral dispute resolution* (Output 2.3), and *support with election security* (Output 2.4). The project expected to assist the ECN with its 2013 CA election and the elections following the enactment of the constitution. ESP II intended to do this through the provision of TA, training, international exposure visits, commodities and IT support.

Almost 60% of the anticipated project budget (USD 12.4 million) and actual expenditures (USD 12.9 million) went for Output 2. Almost 90% of these expenditures were for electoral operations (Table 6).

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[60] Figures provided by ESP II. Tiger IT was paid USD 180,500 out of the almost USD 600,000 contract, the in-house effort cost almost USD 350,000, and USD 6,669 was spent on a learning workshop with ECN IT officials

ESP II's midterm evaluation concluded that 75% of the activities for Output 2 had been completed in the context of the 2013 elections, with Outputs 2.1 and 2.2 expected to be fully achieved by the end of the project. However, it felt that more work was required at that time in order for the activities to have the desired impact for future electoral cycles and to ensure sustainability for the future.[61] This final evaluation found that at the Output 2 level, the electoral cycle had been conducted in a credible manner but that continued work is still needed to ensure the sustainability of the efforts. [62]

The impact of ESP II's assistance, combined with the activities undertaken in Output 1, was evident in the ability of the ECN staff at national and district levels to handle the administration of the 2017 elections with substantially reduced levels of outside assistance. These elections were complex, done in phases and within a very short timeframe. Its tasks were made even more difficult by the late passage of required legislation and Nepal's difficult geographic conditions.[63] Almost 90% of the polling sites visited on election day by observers were assessed as good or very good. Remaining issues noted were the need for more ECN oversight over returning officers' work to ensure more consistency in administration, and increased transparency and consultations with parties, civil society and observers at the central level. They also noted some procedural issues, notably with the reconciliation of the ballots which they felt made the process vulnerable to abuse.[64]


Table 6: Expenditures Output 2
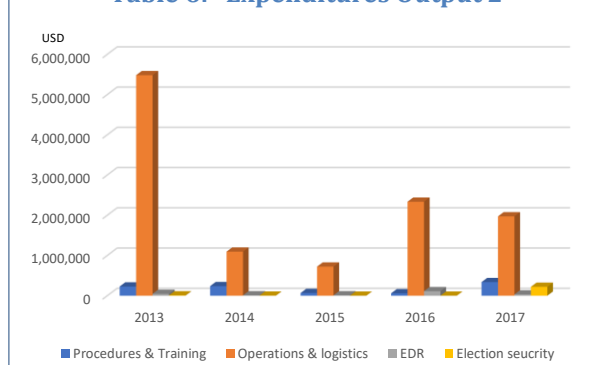
Procedures and Training. Under this activity area, ESP II expected to support the development of ECN regulations, guidelines, and procedures based on the new legal framework. This was to include the development of a revised *Election Code of Conduct*. ESP II also planned to support the organization of cascade trainings for poll workers and other electoral officials.

The project supported these efforts throughout its lifetime although larger activities were undertaken in the lead up to elections. Those efforts were constrained by the short timelines for the elections but mitigated for 2017 to a large extent because of the electoral cycle nature of the project and the planning and preparations that had gone on with the ECN in the years between the elections.

According to project reporting the training provided and/or facilitated through the project, in combination with that of the ECN done directly and with IFES support, reached all of the returning officers and poll workers for the 2013 and 2017 elections. For 2013, it reports that it provided training to 1,131 ECN staff who trained more than 250,000 poll workers.[65] For 2017, this was 168 trainings for 6,184 persons including cascade trainings for ECN returning officers, IT for ECN field staff and specialized trainings for media,

Box 6: ESP II Election-related trainings

Source: ESP II Draft Annual Report 2017

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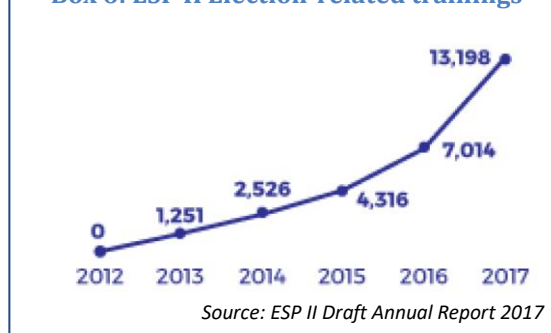
[61] ESP II, *Midterm Evaluation Report,* p 24

[62] According to evaluation interviews and observer reports

[63] EU, *EOM Preliminary Statement on Nepal's Elections, 2017*

[64] Ibid. Carter Center's preliminary statement noted that 97% of the polling centers visited for the HOR and state assembly elections were assessed positively. p 4

[65] ESP II, *Annual Report 2013,* p 41

political party representatives and security personnel (Box 6).[66]

An issue noted in this final evaluation was the evolution of ESP II's role from a primary trainer and source of TA for most trainings to a facilitator for ECN's trainings. As noted by one ECN official "*the ECN does the modules and selects the participants, and we request ESP for logistical support- food and lodging.*" On the one hand this is a good evolution as it demonstrates the increased capacity of the ECN to conduct its own trainings and the successful nature of the ESP II and other capacity building efforts. This also maintains ESP position as a partner with the ECN in its trainings, giving it access to the planning processes where it has been able to provide advice and information. It also provides a useful service for the ECN and helps it to defray costs for trainings which are usually not covered by the GON budget in non-election years. However, making lodging and other logistical arrangements for ECN's trainings and participants, which also consumed a large amount of ESP II staff time, is not a very strategic use for an international development assistance effort such as ESP.

Operational and logistical support. ESP II played a significant role with the preparations for the 2013 elections providing direct operational and logistical support. Among other activities, it supported the ECN with the preparation of its operational plans for all of its departments and the procurement of sensitive and non-sensitive electoral material, including 485 metric tons of paper for the printing of almost 30 million ballots, 20,000 bags for returning officers and copy machines and toner for the printing of 12.1 million voter ID cards.[67] In addition, according to one ECN official, ESP was extremely helpful in supporting the ECN to manage crises such as with the printing of the voter ID cards in 2013.

The project supported the establishment of the JEOC at the ECN, the opening of a media center and an observers resource center in 2013. These helped to ensure the smoother handling of election day events and the provision of information to the media and observers. ESP also supported a media monitoring effort for the ECN of the media coverage during the electoral period at national and local levels. It also established a call center that provided information on voter registration and polling to voters. This centre received 2,500 calls from 14 - 27 November 2013.[68] At the same time, it did not appear to be well advertised to voters. According to ESP's 2014 survey, only 11% of the survey respondents knew about the centre.[69]

These efforts directly increased the availability and timeliness of information on the process that provided practical and useful information for the voters, parties and observers. According to interviews, this helped to strengthen stakeholder and voters' perceptions of the ECN as a professional and credible electoral institution, and increased trust in its administration of the process. It also helped to set the institutional foundations for future elections and built institutional confidence in its ability to deliver the elections on time despite the difficult conditions.

ESP II had a sizeable presence in 2013 of about 40 persons and deployed 10 international and five national advisors at regional levels. It also provided national UN Volunteers (UNVs) at its regional centres for much of 2015 in addition to national staff. For 2017, ESP II played a less direct and more supportive role. It had comparatively few internationals and the regional offices were all staffed by nationals. (Table 10) The experts provided advice and option papers for the ECN for various aspects of the process and ESP II was positioned to provide back up support if needed. The option papers and advice were useful for the ECN and it was able to deliver the elections without using ESP's back up options.

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[66] ESP II, *Draft Annual Report 2017*, p 7 Figures in ESP reporting differs slightly from the infographic totals used in Box 6.
[67] ESP II, *Annual Report 2013*, p 12
[68] ESP I *Annual Report 2013*, p 12
[69] ESP II, *Baseline Survey of Electoral Support Project,* p ix

Electoral dispute resolution. The project expected to enhance the EDR skills of the ECN and the judiciary in order to decrease the number of unresolved disputes in future elections and increase stakeholder confidence in the process.[70] ESP II intended to do this through TA, analysis of the legal instruments, training and increasing ECN outreach on EDR.

ESP II's midterm evaluation felt the project's efforts up to that time, which included study tours to Afghanistan, Mexico and Australia, had not been effective and the impact of the activities was "*not very strong.*" It also felt the training of the judiciary and ECN undertaken in 2013 was not effective without changes in the legal framework and recommended that the project revisit its 2012 review of the EDR mechanism.[71] According to the 2013 observers, ECN officials lacked a uniform understanding of the EDR mechanism and some political parties felt they did not have enough information on EDR or confidence in the process. They also noted that the ECN had received 187 complaints about code of conduct violations, but had issued no fines, only warnings. This they thought was not enough to enforce the provisions of the code.[72]

Almost three years beyond the midterm review, this final evaluation found ESP II's efforts across its different outputs likely reduced the level of problems and complaints and helped to resolve them when they arose, reducing the number of potential EDR cases. For instance, the introduction of the voter ID card and lists with photographs, setting up the GIS electoral mapping system and other initiatives which served to strengthen election administration and increased its uniformity. The creation of the JEOC also facilitated ECN's monitoring of its nationwide operations and strengthened its ability to act quickly to identify and resolve issues.

In addition, ESP II built on the lessons from 2013, supporting ECN's updating of the *Election Code of Conduct* in 2015 which provided the guideline for the political parties, media, civil society and other stakeholders for the 2017 elections.[73] It also supported a two-day regional conference on EDR and Electoral Justice in 2016 hosted by the ECN bringing together eight EMBs from South Asia and the Republic of Korea. This helped to increase ECN and stakeholder focus on the issues and the importance of addressing them before the elections were scheduled.

For the 2017 elections, the project prepared informative posters that were distributed at local levels on the voting, counting and EDR processes. This helped to ensure accurate information was available at those levels. It also supported a two-day training for all returning officers in the capital on the EDR process, noting that the time was too short to organize a cascade training for greater reach. ESP II was also able to organize a workshop in each province for electoral stakeholders (parties, CSOs and media) on the existing EDR processes and judicial mechanisms.

Although limited, these efforts were important.[74] As per the views from individuals interviewed, they helped to address the general lack of knowledge on EDR processes and mechanisms available within and beyond the ECN and among electoral stakeholders. They noted that although hundreds of cases related to code of conduct violations were filed in the ECN's district offices in 2017, only 26 were raised to the level of the ECN. Another 146 cases were filed in court. According to legal experts, a lot of work still remains to be done for EDR. The legal framework for elections and compliance needs review and consolidation, EDR procedures need strengthening, and judges and prosecutors trained[75] as well as the ECN and electoral stakeholders. An ESP legal expert was undertaking an assessment of the 2017 cases during this final evaluation and this analysis should help to identify

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[70] ESP II, *Project Document*, p 21
[71] ESP II, *Midterm Evaluation Report*, p 27
[72] Carter Center, *Observing Nepal's 2013 Constituent Assembly Election, Final Report*, p 47
[73] ESP II, *Annual Progress Report 2015*
[74] IFES also has a sizeable legal assistance aspect to its support to the ECN including EDR and ESP II efforts are seen as complementary to those.
[75] UNDP Tanzania had a successful training programme on electoral justice led and implemented by judges which might provide some useful ideas for future efforts.

trends in the complaints that can help inform ECN's planning and handling of electoral disputes in the future.

Electoral security. The NAM conducted in 2011 for the development of this project identified electoral violence as a key issue for the project to address.[76] ESP II intended to support the development of electoral violence mitigation strategies and the establishment of a joint coordination mechanism between the ECN and other GON agencies to improve electoral security responses. It also intended to help the ECN develop a risk management tool. This was a small component for ESP II using only 1% of the project's overall expenditures.

Although there were a number of violent incidents reported by observers in both the 2013 and 2017 elections, with for example 726 incidents reported for the local elections (430 of these violent) and 73 for the second phase of the provincial and parliamentary elections (56 of these violent),[77] the evaluation found that the project met its activity level objectives for this output. They were modest but ESP II's support helped to reduce the potential for electoral violence and strengthened the mechanisms to address and mitigate problems for both the 2013 and 2017 elections. The risk management tool was developed by IDEA separately from this project.

The establishment of the JEOC facilitated the close working relationship between the ECN and the other agencies responsible for security, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Army, Police, Armed Police Force and the national Investigation Department. It became a focal point for the collection and sharing of information from the field offices of these different agencies. It was equipped with "*state of the art technology*" in 2013 with the GIS mapping showing all polling locations and their situational data. [78] The GIS system also facilitated IDEA's support to the ECN on its electoral risk management and mapping. The JEOC system was replicated in 2017 by the ECN without ESP II support or the use of the GIS.

Efforts were also made through UNDP's Social Cohesion and Democratic Participation Project in 2017 to organize a series of workshops in 10 districts funded by ESP II. These were intended to "*develop a common understanding for promoting peaceful elections*"[79] and provide space for the different stakeholders such as the DEOs, security officer, youth, journalists, political parties and civil society, to mitigate potential electoral violence by developing a common understanding on issues and being able to respond to problems. The highly competitive political environment during the elections can provoke conflict, sometimes leading to violence. Many of the violent activities are local in nature and triggered by local factors and actors, the thought was that initiating dialogue among local stakeholders would encourage them to find local remedies to preventing violence.

This grass-roots effort was a good step. The post-workshop reviews done by SCDP found that they contributed to foster collaboration and collective initiatives by the political parties and others that helped to ensure that activities were generally peaceful during these elections. It also found that the workshops were a useful means of gaining a public commitment from the political parties to a violence free election.[80] However, these efforts were election specific and developing them earlier, and as part of a larger ESP programmatic effort for voter education and increased participation, could have increased their effectiveness and widened their impact.

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[76] Election security was also an issue noted by observer groups from the 2008 elections which recorded that "*the pre-election period was marred by insecurity and violence*" which "*led to a general atmosphere of fear and intimidation*." Carter Center. *Observing the 2008 Nepal Constituent Assembly Election,* p 27, and EU EOM, *Final Report 2008*

[77] Democracy Resource Center Nepal, *Political Violence Monitoring Factsheets* and *Updates.*

[78] ECN and International IDEA, *Joint Election Operation Centre, Election Commission Nepal, ERM Tool Experiences* Powerpoint

[79] ESP II, *Annual Report 2017,* p 9

[80] SCDP, *Event Monitoring Report,* 2017

3.2.3 Output 3. Increased democratic participation for next cycle of elections, particularly for the under-represented and disadvantaged segments of Nepali society

The objective for this output was to *increase democratic participation for the next cycle of elections, particularly for the under-represented and disadvantaged segments of Nepali society.* ESP II intended to do this through: support for *public outreach, civic and voter education* (Output 3.1); establishment of the ECN's *Electoral Education and Information Centre (*Output 3.2); support for *external relations* (Output 3.3) and for *gender, social inclusion and vulnerable groups* (Output 3.4).
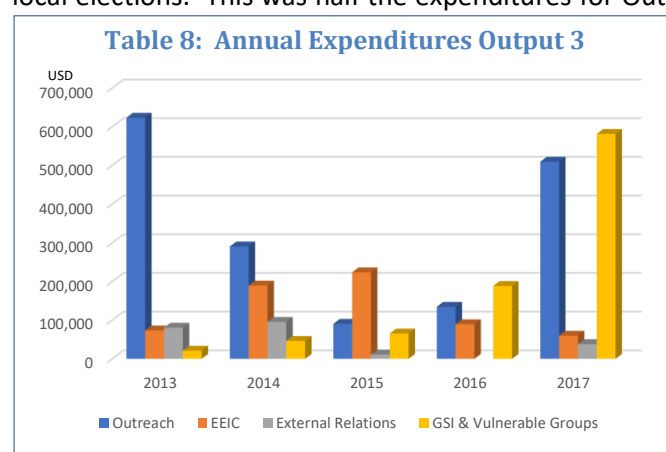
These activity areas were intended to: increase information to voters, especially the under-represented and disadvantaged groups, parties, CSOs and independent observers; mainstream policies and mechanisms for gender and social inclusion; and, increase participation and the transparency of the processes. This was an ambitious output with many planned activities listed in the Project Document.

Table 7: Planned & Actual Expenditures Output 3
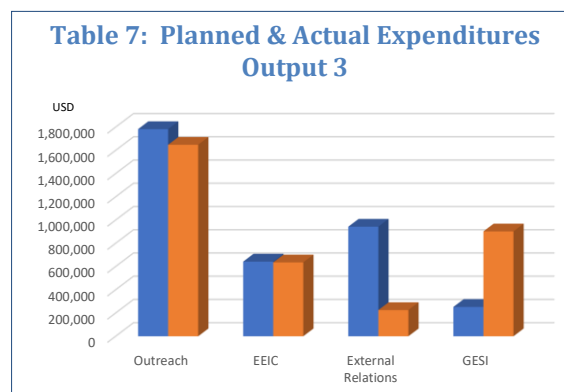
The estimated budget for Output 3 was USD 3.62 million (Table 7). This was 10% of the overall project budget. Actual expenditures were USD 3.4 million (12% of total project expenditures). Most of the expenditures were done in the years of the elections (Table 8).[81]

Public outreach, civic and voter education. ESP II intended to support the ECN to conduct voter education efforts throughout the electoral cycle to inform the public about the electoral and voting processes and to motivate them to vote. ESP support was to include the development of related strategies, establishing a media code of conduct and media centre within the ECN and to broadcast messages through mass communication. It also intended to issue small grants to CSOs to support their voter education efforts to complement the ECN's efforts. The informational efforts were to especially target first time voters, women and vulnerable groups.

ESP II provided a significant level of assistance to this output, in particular for the 2013 CA and 2017 local elections. This was half the expenditures for Output 3. ESP II also offered support for the ECN for the 2017 provincial and national elections but the ECN decided to conduct this effort on its own, with limited outside support.[82]

Table 8: Annual Expenditures Output 3

For 2013, ESP II developed the ECN's media centre and media code of conduct. It also subcontracted a firm to undertake media monitoring at the national and district levels which it used to support the ECN's enforcement of the media code. For the 2013 and 2017 local elections, ESP II supported the ECN to develop its voter education strategies and planning, providing TA, training and materials and by procuring media houses for the production, distribution

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[81] Financial data provided by ESP II
[82] ESP II, *Annual Report 2017 draft,* p 8

and broadcasting of programmes. It also provided small grants to CSOs to reach women and other marginalized groups with information for the 2017 local elections.

ESP's midterm evaluation had noted the reluctance of the ECN for the 2013 elections to adopt some of the recommendations of the ESP, instead relying on the more traditional approaches used in 2008. This included the use of door-to-door electoral workers and (paid) volunteers which is a staple of the ECN voter education efforts, and which it re-used in 2017. It also noted the effort was mostly voter information rather than voter education which remained largely the case in 2017.

ESP II undertook a rapid assessment of the 2013 voter education efforts in 43 districts. This focused primarily on the quality of training and materials provided to the ECN's voter education workers. It provides some useful information on issues raised by participants about the training, but it does not provide data on the

actual reach of the voter education programme or the effectiveness of the different modalities or messages used. ESP II undertook a more comprehensive "baseline" of voter and ECN information in 2014 which looked at voter and ECN perceptions of the 2013 voter education efforts, but this was not repeated at the end of the project. This was needed to be able to compare responses and to assess the effectiveness of the ESP/ECN efforts.   According to ESP, this is in the revised workplan for the project's extension to the end of 2018.

For the midterm review, 40% of the ESP II staff assessed the voter education efforts as very good or excellent, crediting it with the 17% increase in voter turnout in 2013 over the 2008 elections.[83] Although there was apparently good reach for the 2013 efforts, with almost 75% of those responding to the survey saying they were aware of the ECN voter education materials, including 90% of those in the west,[84] there was no data available to the final evaluation team that could show the differences between pre- and post-voter education campaign knowledge and voting intentions or that could enable attribution for the increased turnout or reduced number of invalid voters which were indicators used by ESP.   A complete assessment should be done of the project's voter education efforts that looks at the reach, effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the different messages and mediums used before any additional efforts are made. This is essential to ensure the best use of resources.[85]

ESP II's support to the ECN initiative of training secondary level social science teachers on "*elections and democracy*" seems to be a good initiative that can reach first time voters, with the students and teachers acting as multipliers within their families schools and communities. Started in 2015, the ESP supported effort reached more than 1,000 teachers with a one-day workshop intended to increase their familiarization with the electoral process which they could then pass on to their students and community members.

There was not enough data or follow up done to know if and how the teachers had passed on this knowledge and the impact of this beyond a 2014 follow up with 42 teachers from 32 schools. ESP II also undertook evaluation reports of several of the trainings. The Pokhara report from 2015 noted

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[83] ESP II, *Midterm Evaluation Report*, p 32
[84] Ibid, p ix An interesting baseline statistic was that despite the high turnout and 75% awareness of "ECN voter education materials," 41% of those surveyed did not know who conducted the elections (and this was 80% for the respondents in the far-west). ESP II, *Baseline Survey for Electoral Support Project,* p viii
[85] This should include everything supported by the project for voter information and education purposes including the use of the EEIC, voter information campaigns done through the media (including social media), print, face-to-face, CSO efforts, etc.

that 100% of the participants thought the training had helped to improve their knowledge, 87% thought it was relevant to their job and 85% felt they could implement the knowledge that they had gained in their work. The topic of "*Democracy and the constitution*" was ranked as the most useful (28%) followed by the *electoral system* (22%). The EEIC topic ranked at 6% and citizen's rights in elections at 3%.[86] Although these evaluations were useful for an assessment of the training (quality of trainers, materials used, time allocated for training, etc.) and the 2014 assessment was used to refine the trainings, more systematic use of pre and post training tests could have helped demonstrated actual increase in knowledge. Those that were done did note an improvement in their knowledge. For example, in the case of Kathmandu in 2015 teachers' scores rose from 50% to 78%.[87] The 2014 evaluation also noted that the teachers had difficulty in recalling the topics and subjects they had learned during the training and that 95% recommended refresher trainings.[88]

In the final evaluation interviews, the teachers' assessment of their training was mixed. Some felt the training had been extremely useful, while others could barely remember it. The one-off nature of the trainings undoubtably contributed to those who found it less useful. The effort could be strengthened considerably by developing a long-term partnership with the Ministry of Education to institutionalize the trainings, ensure that corresponding changes are made to the school's curriculum, and by following-up with the teachers. Trainees could also be linked through a social media network to provide them with a space to exchange experiences, access reference materials, and to find activities and ideas for their classes. This same recommendation is also applicable for many of the other efforts done by the project for voter education and participation, especially for those targeted at increasing the participation of women, youth, PLWD and other marginalized or vulnerable groups.

The subgrant component envisioned in the ESP II project document started very late in the 2017 local election process, only after the local elections were called. This directly affected their effectiveness and potential impact. The late start was due to the uncertainties about the actual election date, but also to ESP II which waited for ECN agreement before starting the activity. The ECN only agreed late for the efforts to be done for the local elections in 2017 and not at all for any other election. This was an issue also raised in the midterm evaluation. As ESP II support to CSO's to undertake civic education activities was an integral part of the project design and separate from the ECN capacity building or supported elements, it should not have been dependent on their approval and should have been included in the workplans from Year 1 of the project. This would have given the project the time to work with the CSOs, select those best suited for the needs of the target groups for information, and for the CSOs themselves to be able to develop and carry out a more well-planned and cohesive civic education effort.

The evaluation findings on the CSO activities themselves are covered in the GESI section of this report.

Electoral Education and Information Centre. ESP provided substantial levels of support to help the ECN develop its EEIC along with the AEC whose own electoral information centre served as a model for the ECN. ESP I supported the visit of ECN officials to Australia to see the AEC model, funded the construction and equipping of the EEIC building located on the compound of the EEIC headquarters in Kathmandu, which began operations in May 2012. ESP II continued this assistance, supporting the establishment of two regional EEICs 2015 and the development of three mobile EEICs that it also helped to operate in 2016 and 2017. Although the EEIC was integrated into the ECN organizationally (with a director and two dedicated educators), and financially (having assumed 80% of its operating costs by 2013),[89] ESP II still played a major role in the effort, providing a national expert who was

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[86] ESP II, *Social Studies Teacher's Training, 5-10 July 2015, Pokhara, Final Evaluation Report*

[87] ESP II, *Social Studies Teacher's Training, July to December 2015 Pretest and Posttest Report,* p 1

[88] ESP II/ECN, *Social Studies Teachers Training Evaluation Report,* p 9

[89] ESP II, *Annual Report*, p 11

embedded within the EEIC until only recently, and funding the operations of the mobile EEIC outreach.

ESP II and the ECN consider the EEIC as one of their major achievements. The EEIC was developed as an interactive centre with several zones, including a mini-theatre showing a documentary, a mock polling site, and museum-style exhibits of past Nepali electoral materials. The mobile EEIC was considered as an innovative tool with battery operated interactive electoral games stored in computers, with a TV screen to show the EEIC documentary. This was intended to extend the EEIC's reach to rural areas.

The main EEIC centre was equipped with iPads to gather feedback from visitors. It showed that more than 75% of the visitors in 2012 reported increased knowledge of electoral and democratic issues. This was up to 99% by the end of 2015.[90] Almost 50% in 2012 found the mock polling the most useful (up to 79% by 2015), followed by the interactive room and thematic presentations for both periods assessed. 90% of the visitors in 2012 were from private schools. [91] Anecdotally, ESP staff working in the EEIC heard that the visits had helped improve students grades and increased their awareness about registering once they reached 16 years of age. As most off the visitors were students, this is a good way to reach first time voters. ECN officials felt the EEIC gave them a place for outreach to provide information to electoral stakeholders including political parties, CSOs, media and candidates.

The EEIC in Kathmandu received the most number of visits within the first six months it opened in 2012, with the number declining every year since except for 2016. The two regional centres reached a combined total of almost 4,000 persons and the two mobile centres, more than 2,700. Thus, the EEICs reached a total of 28,560 persons by the end of 2017[92] (Table 9). The evaluation team visited the EEIC in Katmandu and the regional EEIC in Pokhara. Both were being used for other things and the center in the

Table 9: Visitors to EEIC				
Year	**Number**			
	Kathmandu	Dhangadi	Pokhara	Mobile
5-12 2012	6,172	-	-	-
2013	5,323	-	-	-
2014	3,044	-	-	-
2015	2,000	451	918	-
2016	4,288	1,204	332	2,131
2017	1,063	32	970	632
TOTAL	21,890	1,687	2,220	2,763

Source: ESP

capital will require refurbishing once the data centre is moved out. The ECN intention is to revive the centre, but the effort has lost momentum and needs a mobilization strategy for how the EEICs can be better used to reach first time and marginalized voters, and students from public schools who may not have the same resources as the private schools to reach them. The ECN stated that the social studies teachers trainings was an offshoot of the EEIC. However, the linkages between the centers and the teachers also need to be revived and strengthened with a long term vision and sustainability plan developed and put into place for the entire EEIC system.

External relations. Most of the activities reported under this output have already been covered in other sections of this evaluation report and very little was actually reported by ESP under this output. It accounted for only 1% of the project's expenditures. This included the support to establish the media centre which served as an information centre for the media, observers and other electoral stakeholders and a venue for ECN press conferences for the 2013 elections. The project also provided seven journalists who served as ECN media advisors to support outreach and the media monitoring effort. It also reported the funding of 15 participants to attend a 3 credit course at Kathmandu University on Electoral Systems and Electoral Rights in 2015 and having provided strategic advice to the ECN during the rest of the project.

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[90] ESP II *EEIC Evaluation Report November 2014 – April 2015*, p 1
[91] ESP II, *Annual Report 2012*, pps 14 & 17. There was no data provided for 2015.
[92] ESP II, *Annual Report* 2016, p 11

This output is redundant and could be integrated in the future into the ECN capacity building or operational support components depending on future focus.

Gender, social inclusion and vulnerable groups. ESP made policy and programmatic contributions to strengthen the participation of women and vulnerable groups in the electoral processes in several areas.[93] ECN's previous policy had been limited primarily to gender issues, with a 2009 *Gender Policy in Elections.* ESP II technical assistance helped to expand this policy to include other groups, resulting in the ECN's first *Gender and Inclusion Policy* in 2013. This policy provides a broad framework for the ECN to: mainstream gender in the electoral process; promote socially inclusive electoral processes; and, enhance its technical and institutional capacity to address GESI issues.[94] It also supported the ECN to develop a three year GESI action plan which it adopted in 2015 that outlines its institutional priorities to empower women and vulnerable group throughout the election cycle.[95] The ECN's *Strategic Plan 2015-2019* also incorporated GESI as one of its key priority areas.

Ten of ESP's 18 BRIDGE trainings were on gender inclusion and elections which helped to raise the profile of GESI within the ECN. The baseline survey of ECN staff itself done in 2014 concluded that more efforts needed to be done as only 30% of the district level staff and fewer staff at headquarters at that time had received trainings on gender issues. ESP II appears to have increased

its efforts for GESI training for ECN staff and stakeholders, showing a marked increase in the numbers trained in 2014-2016 (Box 7). At this point, a follow up ECN staff survey, that included KAP questions, would be extremely useful to help determine the actual level of knowledge and understanding within the existing ECN staff as well as the capacity within the ECN and GESI Unit to implement the GESI strategy.

Box 8: ESP II GESI trainings for ECN & stakeholders

Source: ESP II Draft Annual Report 2017

Observers for the 2013 election noted that most district offices had few female staff, and these were often in relatively junior positions (two of the 240 ROs and four of the 75 DEOs were women and within the ECN only one commissioner and two under secretaries.[96] The situation was similar for 2017, with only seven DEOs out of 77 officers women, six ROs out of 167, one ECN commissioner and no female joint or under secretaries. This issue is largely beyond the control of the project or ECN since the ECN is unable to select its own staff.

For the elections, ESP II also helped the ECN to ensure GESI elements were integrated into their policies and included calls for the increased participation of women and disadvantaged groups. As an example, the provisions of the 2013 *Election Code of Conduct* required gender-friendly election campaigning and prohibited the use of GESI insensitive language. The ECN also made special provisions to prioritize pregnant women and women with infants, the elderly and people with disabilities for voting on Election Day.[97] The ECN also worked to enforce the quota systems resulting in women making up 41% of local representatives, and over a third of the representatives in the provincial assemblies and federal parliament.[98]

UNDP undertook a case study of Nepal for its study on *Promoting Gender Equality in Electoral Assistance: Lessons learned in Comparative Perspectives*. This documents the lessons learned on gender mainstreaming in Nepal as of 2012. This provides some useful baseline data and it would be

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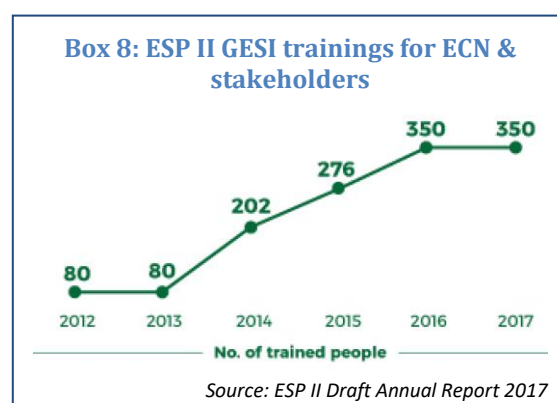
[93] GESI issues in electoral and political processes are also supported by a large number of other projects and actors.
[94] UNDP Nepal, *ROAR 2013*
[95] ESP II, *Annual Progress Report* 2016
[96] Carter Center, *Observing Nepal's 2013 Constituent Assembly Election, Final Report,* p 30
[97] UNDP Nepal, *ROAR 2013*
[98] ESP II, *Annual Report 2017 draft*, p 1

interesting for further assistance to develop a 2017 update of the report and compare actual advances in gender mainstreaming against the 2012 situation. This could also be used to strengthen GESI efforts within the ECN and processes and identify areas that need further attention.

The ECN developed the book on *Her Voice her Choice* for the 2013 elections with ESP support for use as a reference material for engendering the electoral processes.[99] ESP II also contributed to the development of a GESI package for the Inter-Ministry Networking Group led by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Likewise, ESP II supported the development of manuals for the visually impaired and for those with hearing disabilities which were used to conduct electoral education training to these groups. It also provided two public service announcements for the ECN in sign language.

ESP II's work with CSOs for the 2017 local elections targeted women, marginalized groups and PLWD. It used the microenterprise associations already under contract by UNDP through its Micro-Enterprise Programme (MEDEP), which targets the economic empowerment of the poor, women and disadvantaged groups, to provide community-level voter education and orientations for potential women candidates. These used district-level Master Trainer of Trainers (TOT) trainings, mobilizing 25 people each to conduct community level meetings. As per the ESP data, of the more than 50,000 women reached in 30 districts, 4,000 of these ran for office and more than 1,000 won.

Despite the numbers, the efficacy of this effort is hard to determine without more data.[100] Anecdotally the women interviewed seemed to remember more generic type of voter information than information needed for a candidate to decide to run and win. They also stated that the effort was implemented late in the electoral calendar, after most parties had already decided on their candidates. Using the pool of micro enterprise associations already involved in MEDEP allowed for the quick start up, essential in the context, but might have also limited the reach to other interested community based associations. Most of the grants were small, ranging from approximately USD 7,500 to USD 33,000, with most averaging USD 14,000. This level of funding affected their coverage and quality of efforts, leaving some overly dependent on the voluntary nature of their participants to carry the message down to their own communities. The one-off nature of the events likely limited the scope of their contribution towards supporting meaningful women's participation and representation in electoral processes beyond increased awareness among participants.

ESP's work with the PLWD was found anecdotally to have been quite impactful, especially given the level of marginalization of this group from the electoral process by their disabilities. The project collaborated with the Nepal Association of the Blind (NAB) and the National Federation of the Deaf (NDFN), both umbrella organizations of related CSOs. This gave them access to networks that covered much of the country and was an effective way to reach targeted populations through cascade efforts.

Participants interviewed with hearing disabilities felt the training had helped them to be more aware of the processes. They also realized that sign language did not have all of the words needed for voter education. As a result, the NDFN developed several new signs for this use. Their TOT training of 66 persons reached 600 deaf persons in 53 districts. This they thought had been an empowering experience even though the trainings themselves were limited. It even encouraged the head of the NDFN to run for office. Although his attempt was unsuccessful, the effort has planted the seed among some about running for office in future years.

Similar stories were heard from the visually impaired community. According to the NAB, project support enabled them to train 89 TOTs and reach more than 1,000 visually impaired persons for the

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[99] UNDP Nepal, *ROAR 2014*

[100] For instance, data on the participants' profiles (such as level of education, profession, income, age, etc) which could be correlated against the level of their participation and success (ie: workshop participant, candidate, elected official), pre and post workshop KAP surveys that would show changes in level of interest and knowledge, etc.

first time with voter education messages. This also increased their visibility with the media, helping them to raise the issue of PLWD voting rights and their voting rights activities. The NAB "*liked being messengers for change and empowering people*", however the limited time engagement by ESP and lack of programmatic follow up limited its potential impact beyond increasing awareness and interest. It is notable that the NAB participation was done on a volunteer basis, with ESP II covering only the basic expenses for the main training. However, the NAP noted the difficulty of sustaining this type of activity beyond the one-time efforts without funding for their volunteers.

3.3 Efficiency and project management

This section starts by looking at project implementation and the issues that affected its efficiencies, and continues with the findings on project management and its monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Project implementation. Project efficiencies were directly affected by the context and different factors already mentioned. The project was originally foreseen as a three year project and required several extensions as the political process wore on. This affected the coherency of project planning and prevented the implementation of some activities, such as construction of the data centre, especially when the project was extended by small intervals. Uncertainties about election dates, short timelines once dates were set, and delays in ECN's requests for, and decisions on, activities and products reduced the project's lead in time, affected planning, limited options and the ability of the project to undertake a more cohesive effort. This reduced efficiencies and cost-effectiveness. As an example, the EU verification of UNDP's use of EU funds expended by ESP II found that the ECN's late decision for the procurement for backpacks for the 2013 election workers cost the project an extra USD 378,154 which "*could have easily been avoided should the order have been made in a more timely matter.*"[101]

The embedding of ESP II within the ECN at both national and regional levels was an efficient and effective way to deliver technical assistance and capacity building to the EMB. It increased the access, availability and interaction of experts and ECN officials through formal and informal contact, enabling an easy exchange of information, knowledge and practices. The joint efforts also strengthened ECN ownership in and appreciation for the activities and products. This resulted in a more efficient use of project resources than was found for activities or products that were done independently or apart, or where the ECN felt that UNDP's policies had unduly blocked their preferred options (such as for particular procurements). Efficiencies were also directly affected by the frequent changes of ECN personnel which affected continuity and the ownership. Ownership issues, such with the voter registry software, need to have immediate attention, and decisions made on whether to continue, modify or end the effort. It is not an efficient use of time or resources to continue to develop a product or provide advice that will be put on the shelf or not accepted, such as with the registration software.

The highly centralized nature of ECN operations and activities also affected the manner of project implementation. Capacity building, workshops and other project activities were organized at the centre for efforts outside of Kathmandu. Although many used a cascade approach which helped to increase efficiency, many others still involved the travel of central ECN officials to serve as trainers/facilitators requiring travel and payment of per diems and lodging costs. Using locally available officials could have been integrated into the project's capacity building component. This could have helped to strengthen their skills and increased their engagement as well reduced costs.

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[101] This was for the procurement of 20,000 backpacks for electoral workers for the 19 November 2013 elections. The EU report noted that the ECN had made the original request on 14 August 2013 and UNDP had received five bids for the packs, two received by UNDP Nepal and three by UNDP PSU. The ECN did not make a decision on the bags until 25 September stating that they needed to be received by 30 October. While two of the bids had been for USD 800,000, only one of the five vendors was able to deliver within the timeframe, costing USD 1,150,000. *EU Verification Report*, p 19

Centralization also affected the efficacy of ESP II's regional offices. They were well equipped, adequately staffed and ready to support efforts in their areas. Although they were used to support trainings and other activities generated by ECN and ESP, the regional staff interviewed felt underutilized and frustrated at their inability to initiate activities or address issues directly. The regional ECNs also served primarily as district level ECNs. This limited their ESP II counterparts primarily to the district where they were affected, although most said they also had toured their region to meet with other district offices and stakeholders. This helped to gather information on nearby districts that they would pass back to the regional ECN offices and ESP. The new constitutional system and decentralization process offers a good opportunity to look at expanding the roles and productivity of the regional office concept if it is retained for the future.

The costs of Nepal's elections were raised during the final evaluation interviews. Some had concerns that some of the technology, systems and practices used or being discussed for the elections were beyond the capacity of the GON to support without continued assistance. Some of these were felt to have been introduced by the project by some ECN officials. Others thought some were a result of ECN decisions made without adequate cost analysis. There were also a few allegations of collusion in some UNDP procurements which some ECN officials felt had increased costs or limited procurement options. Although not specific or substantiated, these types of perceptions are counterproductive to the work of the project even if only expressed by a few, and need to be addressed directly with the ECN to dispel any false impressions or to take any corrective action needed.[103]

Assessing the cost of the elections overall, including the running/maintenance costs and actual use of the various types of equipment and systems, is an area where the project could help the ECN and is something that should be done before any future investments are made to upgrade systems, introduce new technologies or fund additional educational or other types of centres.

Former ECN officials said they had also raised the cost of running the project during their tenure with the project board, in particular for the number of internationals who were more expensive than nationals. Many TA costs are covered within the operations line item which accounts in part for its higher percentage of project expenditures. According to data

Table 10: Number ESP II Staff and Experts [102]						
	Staff		**Experts**			
YEAR	**Nat'l**	**Int'l**	**National**		**International**	
	No.	No.	No.	Purpose	No.	Purpose
2013	24	13	26	N & R Experts, translators	7	Experts
2014	33	13	15	R Experts, translators	3	Expert, Fin. ICT
2015	35	2	1	Expert	4	Voter Reg, Soft, M&E
2016	29	2	4	Experts	3	Experts, VR software
2017	29	2	14	Experts, M&E, R Admin, Peace promotion	2	Expert VR, VR software
2018	15	1	5	Experts, IT, M&E	2	M&E
TOTAL			**65**		**21**	
N = National R = Regional						Source: ESP

provided by ESP, the number of national experts/staff has exceeded those of internationals for the life of the project (Table 10). The project had assigned two internationals and one national to each ESP office for the 2013 CA elections. These were replaced by all national staff in early 2014. This

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[102] Table is for illustrated purposes only. Some experts and staff spanned years making it difficult to state a definitive number for each year. ESP drivers are not included in the chart.

[103] In interviews, UNDP stated it uses open and transparent competitive procurement processes and that the market responds to their requests. Cheap firms do not always meet the criteria for the product. It also noted that the value for money for certain products has already been established through its competitive process during the award of its long term agreements with firms. It also noted the risk factors and need for insurance and other items that can add to costs. The late notice or approvals from partners for products also reduced their procurement options and usually cost more. UNDP's project accounts are also subject to regular audits.

reduction had cost-savings as well as the added efficiencies that come from having national experts that know the context, counterpart institutions and staff.

UNDP made good use of its existing projects and global network to support ESP II implementation. This was especially useful in the context. Its decision to tap into the CSO network supported under its MEDEP project was efficient, allowing for its rapid start up. The use of its social cohesion project to undertake peaceful election programming was also efficient. It tapped into an ongoing programme and its conflict prevention network and only needed to adapt its messaging and targeting towards the prevention and mitigation of electoral violence. UNDP's global network of election assistance projects supported some of the study tours and international visits which allowed the respective EMBs to share experiences and expand their outlooks. It also used the UNDP Regional Elections Advisor from Bangkok as part of the team that undertook the midterm review of the ESP making efficient use of a regional resource.

The project made limited use of social media to expand its reach or to link and follow up with participants from the various trainings and workshops. Developing networks of BRIDGE trainees or social study teachers for instance would be a cost-effective way to continue the engagement with the participants, share information and strengthen their engagement and project results.

Project management. The project was managed directly by its PMU with UNDP support for procurements, payments, recruitments, and oversight. It used a direct implementation modality which is the default modality for electoral support projects. This was appropriate for the context and nature of the processes assisted. The UN Office for Project Support (UNOPS) was listed as an implementing partner on the project document. Limited data was available at this point in time on its efforts which seemed to be related to earlier construction. Since the earthquake, UNOPS had a number of very experienced logisticians with electoral experience on its staff and could have provided good back up support for ESP II if it had been needed.

The PMU officially was comprised of the CTA/Project Manager, international Electoral Advisor and the national Deputy Project Manager, although in reality it was larger with administrative, financial, M&E and other support staff. There were two CTA/Project Managers during the life of ESP II with the current CTA starting in early 2017. It was undoubtably a heavy workload for one person serving two functions, especially for the 2013 period given the scale of the project's efforts. However, the project appeared to be adequately staffed and with the national deputy project manager being credited by the Midterm Evaluation with "*giving a national face to the project*", as well as "*facilitating the overall management to understand the local context and enable acceptance of the project in the ECN.*"[104] There appeared to have been an adequate delegation of authority to the PMU by UNDP and there were no major management issues raised by the persons interviewed for this evaluation.

The evaluation team found the current ESP project management (PMU, ESP II project staff and UNDP) extremely well organized. Although long-time ESP II staff said it had always been organized, the evaluation noted the more recent introduction of a shared drive that increased access for project staff to all of the project documents, the vast depository of ESP and other documents, the regular holding of weekly ESP meetings with all staff, and the teamwork spirit. It also noted the regular quarterly board meetings and project reporting. Although one of the donors felt these were too frequent, this was important for a project of this nature, especially in the post-conflict transitional context. Existing project staff was still busily engaged in their activities during this evaluation even though the project was expected at that time to close within the month. Many of these staff had been with ESP since ESP I and had institutional memories of the project and ECN.

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[104] ESP, *Midterm Evaluation Report*, p 9

There appeared to be a smooth working relationship between ESP II staff and UNDP its various units such as governance and procurement. UNDP was a good steward of the basket funds with most funds being expended as intended in the project document. The DIM mechanism provided assurance to donors that their funds were subject to UNDP's administrative and financial controls and used only to further the objectives of the project in accordance with the terms in the project document and their funding agreements.

The funding from the UK and Denmark was finished early in ESP II leaving the EU and Norway as the main donors for most of the project. Coordination and relationships appeared to be good. The issue of visibility was raised by the EU as well as by a former ECN official. They had opposite concerns. The former ECN official said he was surprised by the project's branding with donor logos on one of the ECN publications printed by the project. He felt it took credit away from the ECN. On the other hand, the EU expected more visibility for its contributions [105] and according to the former ESP II CTA, DFID wanted less. It was a difficult balance for the project to find. The evaluation found that the branding done by the project was appropriate. It recognized the contributions made by its development partners, which is important since it demonstrates the use of their tax payers' funds, but at the same time the branding was generally discrete but visible.

ESP II did regularly update the EC-UNDP JTF page dedicated for ESP II. This helped to demonstrate the project's achievements for visitors to the website. The EU also expected increased participation in conferences and other events organized or funded by ESP II. Depending on the event, the presence of high level development partner representatives or their experts could help strengthen the event as well its visibility. ESP II also ensured relevant documents on the Nepali electoral process and ESP were uploaded to the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network virtual library.

Project coordination with other electoral assistance implementers appeared to be good, especially with IDEA and IFES. The three CTAs still met weekly and seemed to have a close working relationship. This helped to ensure a continual exchange of information and joint planning in some cases, such as BRIDGE. This also helped to avoid duplication of efforts or the provision of contradictory advice to the ECN and others. ESP II also met with the broader scope of donors and other organizations working on elections through its work on the EWG. In addition, ESP provided regular updates for the weekly internal UN election progress meetings chaired by the Resident Coordinator,[106] and the UNDP's coordination of the UN presence in the IDPG EWG.[107]

The UNDP Governance Office seemed to coordinate ESP's broader programmatic reach, in particular with the use of the MEDEP grantees and its SCDP project. These efforts also resulted in the ECN, UNDP and UN Women's Leadership Conference in 2017 funded by ESP II and Finland. More direct and systematic coordination by ESP with other programmes and UN agencies beyond punctual activities seemed limited.

Project reporting was generally good. The annual reports provided information on project activities according its outputs and most provided data in table format on the indicators and expected outputs used in the results framework. Only a few reports included the activity targets and progress made towards their achievement.

Monitoring and evaluation. The project made substantial efforts with M&E which was one of the recommendations of its midterm review.[108] It had a full time M&E staff person to track progress and who ensured that many activities were reviewed by participants and/or ECN/ESP. ESP also ensured

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[105] The UN and the EU have a Joint Visibility Guidelines for EC-UN actions in the field (2008) intended to maximize the visibility of joint projects.[105]

[106] With the heads of UNDP, UN Women, the Regional Coordinator's Office, DPA Liaison Office (LO) and ESP.

[107] With UNDP, DPA LO and ESP jointly operated a distribution list for senior staff members across the UN system that expressed an interest in Nepal's elections, including UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS.

[108] ESP, *Midterm Evaluation Report*, p 13

the use of questionnaires at the end of some trainings that participants used to provide feedback on the quality of training. It also provided a few pre- and post- tests. These kinds of efforts should be used more systematically throughout all of the major training activities to be able to determine the actual increase in the level of knowledge and skills in the participants. Ideally these should also be repeated months or more later to determine if the participants still remembered the lessons, if they were able to use this in their work and if this had generated any improvements or change.

The project experimented with an SMS feedback mechanism for the trainings for women's

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Box 8: Best Practices

- Using the electoral cycle and capacity building approaches towards strengthening the electoral process, electoral administration and the other stakeholders and actors in the electoral processes
- Embedding the project in the EMB which allowed for on the job mentoring, facilitated the transfer of skills, built counterpart capacity and increased national ownership and mutual accountability.
- Expanding the concept of more inclusive participation from that of gender to gender and social inclusion. This strengthened efforts for more equal participation and rights.
- Remaining flexible, especially during a transition process, so a project can meet emerging needs and take advantage of windows of opportunities. This helped to ensure project relevance and effectiveness in an extended or changing context.
- Use of umbrella associations of PLWD to develop disability-specific messaging for their members, extend the reach of voter education to these vulnerable groups and empower them with the information.
- Banding together to accomplish the tasks. The power of collaboration is illustrated in the joint efforts in 2013 between the ECN, ESP II, UNDP Nepal, UNDP Regional Office in Bangkok and the UN EAD that helped to ensure that Nepali citizens had their photo ID cards in time for the CA election.
- Collaborating with social studies teachers to ensure first time voters (and their parents and community) get accurate information on the new electoral system, registering to vote and on some fundamental issues relating to a democracy. Social study teachers have daily interaction with the students, the topic is part of their regular curriculum and they are widely respected.
- Making use of and collaborating with an on-going project focused on social cohesion to build networks for peaceful elections at the grass roots rather than having an electoral support project develop parallel efforts.

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participation. This allowed them to collect the number of TOT participants, the number of women reached afterwards and information on if they ran for office and if they were successful. Organizers noted the difficulties with the SMS effort because of the participants unfamiliarity with texting and coding as well as connection difficulties and the lack of electricity in some areas to charge their phones on time. The status of the participants (if they ran or won office) contacted during this final evaluation did not always match the status provided by the project. But it was a commendable effort to collect data on the participants' efforts after the initial workshop. So was the introduction of the iPad in the EEIC to collect visitor feedback at the end of their visit.

ESP II's 2014 "baseline" survey provided some useful information on voters' perceptions and reach of the 2013 voter information efforts, as well as ECN officials' thoughts on some ESP supported activities such as training. It was originally intended to have been done before the CA election in 2013 but according to the project, the ECN did not approve its start until after those elections. To serve as a baseline, it needed to have been done at the start of the project, as later on it served more as a mid-term review, but it was useful to better target some activities and was better late than never. To be more useful as an M&E tool, the survey needs to be repeated at the end of the project so it can demonstrate changes in levels of knowledge, skills or practices among voters and ECN officials. If it is repeated it should also include some additional questions that could help to determine if any of the changes were attributable to the project's efforts.

ESP II also regularly reported on the indicators used in the results framework although it appears that targets were not set until after the 2013 elections.[109] Only one or two of the annual reports provide information on the targets and then on whether or not the targets were reached. None provided a breakdown of the results by year. They either list the cumulative totals or the number for that year. This makes it difficult to see the larger picture of actual project progress without referring back to each annual report.

The M&E indicators could be strengthened to better capture project results beyond numbers of persons trained or documents produced. Some of the higher level indicators used, such as turnout or percentage of invalid votes, are affected by a large number of factors making attribution for any changes to a particular project or effort difficult, especially when IFES also provided assistance to many of the same areas and claimed many of the same results as the ESP reporting.[110]

3.4 Sustainability

This section looks at the factors that supported or hindered the sustainability prospects for ESP II's contributions, and then the sustainability for its different results.

The sustainability aspects of ESP II were directly affected by the larger context in which it worked. This included the human and physical damage done in the devastating earthquakes of 2015, the short timelines for the delivery of many activities that shifted the emphasis to getting the effort done rather than on building sustainable systems or processes, and the continual turnover of ECN officials. As an example, three of the key Joint Secretaries interviewed by the final evaluation team were transferred out of the ECN within 10 days of the interviews. Transfers seem to be done quickly leaving little time for handover and briefings for replacements. Although the staff rotation issue had been recognized as a serious issue in the design of ESP II, and which included Output 2.1 to address the issue, ESP II did little work at the larger policy level which is where the issue needs to be addressed.

ESP II was cognizant of the issue and tried to compensate during project implementation by supporting the development of written manuals, procedures and strategies. It also supported the ECN to digitalize and archive its historical documents after the 2013 elections to strengthen its institutional memory.

> *I wanted to leave something behind. UNDP was instrumental in this. Biometric registration, first time voter id cards, EEIC, Media Centre. We have changed. Our people have been trained in elections, understanding of the electoral process, democratic process, how you deliver things and why.*
>
> Former ECN Commissioner

The capacity built by ESP I and II is still evident within the ECN and was demonstrated during its administration of the 2017 elections. This was accomplished despite the many challenges by using the foundations laid by the earlier ECN officials with ESP and other support. Maintaining this foundation through the staffing changes in the period between now and the next elections will be a challenge for the ECN. Some of these foundations are stronger than others. Those that are well rooted can be expected to be maintained for the near to medium term.

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[109] Ibid

[110] For instance those noted in USAID's *Summary of Programme Results, August 2010 – 2016* from its Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and legislative Processes (SPPLEP) programme implemented by IFES. Some of the results listed include more inclusive polling day procedures; institutionalization of ECN's strategic planning with annual reviews since 2010; increased ECN investment in staff and stakeholder trainings; training 300 ECN staff, 600 poll workers and 94,000 full and part time staff; development of over 40 training manuals; institutionalizing the media center to develop and distribute electoral information; ECN's regulatory framework for gender and inclusion (GI) for its 2013 policy (with UNDP ESP), GI strategy and action plan; ECN's GI unit, outreach to 440 staff and stakeholders on key GI principles; development of GI-related training resources including GI responsive budgets and audits; 7 training manuals for the CA 2013 election including for voter education, 15,000 voter educators and 1,700 teachers trained; contributed to ECN's voter education for 2013 election and reached 4.2 million persons directly though CSO supported campaigns.

For example, the ECN has adopted the strategic planning process. Having ESP take it through the first cycle into the second helped to deepen its institutionalization and ECN's familiarity with its processes. The ECN was discussing the review of its current plan during the evaluation and it appears to be something that will continue. The depth of this process, and the level of consultations that will be undertaken though are likely to be affected by ECN budget constraints and centralized institutional culture.

The ECN has also adopted the GESI concept and integrated it into its plans. The one female Commissioner is an advocate for GESI and the Gender Unit is integrated within the ECN structure. However, again the reduced ECN budget in non-election years will likely limit the scope of its activities. The GESI policy will also need review and updating over time to further engage its targeted groups.

The JEOC and media centre are institutionalized and were re-established and managed by the ECN for the 2017 elections without ESP assistance. It is expected that these will continue in future elections. The GIS system needs attention to be useful for the ECN and to avoid losing the investment. It needs to be reassembled, tested and the current ECN staff trained. A system also needs to be developed within the ECN to ensure the functioning of the system and cover the training

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Box 9: Lessons Learned

- More participatory development generates better results and ownership and the importance of including a counterpart official in everything done for it, including on the teams developing products on its behalf.

- Difficulties of maintaining institutional momentum and national ownership for project efforts in a context of continually changing counterparts and the time that was lost during implementation to bring new counterparts up to speed and rebuild relationships and trust.

- Need for attention to the reluctance shown by counterparts for activities, products or methods. Address these early and gain clear institutional commitments on doing or not doing the activity.

- Technical assistance alone cannot solve problems that are political in nature and require engagement at the policy levels. These need to be addressed at the project board and policy levels. Board decisions need to be well documented and communicated to the project and counterparts so everything is clear.

- Need for continued attention to the tools and products developed for counterparts even after handover to ensure they remain functional and that the institution is able to use them into the next electoral cycle.

- Need for an experienced election technology manager to ensure the coherence of the IT solutions supported through an electoral assistance project.

- Decentralizing TA and assistance is more than setting up regional offices and deploying staff, and requires a delegation of power and ability for the office to develop its own regional level workplan and initiatives to supplement the national level plan.

- Ensuring M&E data collection is able to show the changes resulting from project efforts and that baselines and assessments are done at the very start of a project so they can be used to target project activities as well as serve as the baselines for future results.

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needs for its staff in the future.

The EEIC system also needs attention and a champion within the ECN. A plan should be developed to re-energize the concept, get them back up and into operation and to maximize their use. The materials also need to be updated. For instance, the EEIC documentary predates the 2013 elections. Since then there have been two elections and a new constitution and electoral system. These should be reflected in the EEIC content. Some of those interviewed felt that an orientation on the system and its potential for newer senior staff and the commissioners would be useful since those who drove its establishment were no longer there.

The ECN ran its own voter education efforts for the national elections in 2017 without ESP II assistance. The foundational materials for voter education are there and expected to remain in place for the next electoral cycle. However, they will also need updating over time to remain current

and useful. Much more remains to be done in the area of civic education, especially for youth, women, PLWD and the marginalized and under-represented groups.

The more participatory BRIDGE-type methodology, training manuals and other related ESP II products have also been adopted and many institutionalized. For instance, the short orientation course is now provided to all new officials. Although it is not tailored for any particular department, it does provide new officials with an introduction to the work of the ECN and was appreciated by the officials. The ECN's institutional capacity development and training plans likely need review, updating and support. It is difficult to foresee the ECN's continued use of BRIDGE without international assistance given the high cost of BRIDGE events and the lack of an ECN BRIDGE budget, and the lack of a clear path to full ECN ownership of BRIDGE.[111]

The voter registry is in place and being updated regularly. It still uses the old software which needs to be replaced with a more modern and trackable system. The ECN reportedly is intending to procure an updated software solution with its next budget which can be expected to improve the situation. The unused software will be offered to other EMBs. According to UNDP it is open sourced, requires no licensing fees, and is easily adaptable. It also states it will continue to offer it to the ECN. Ultimately, the national ID system should make the need for a separate registration system obsolete as the voter registry can be pulled from that data, but the legal framework for this effort is not yet in place. This has been pending for a while, but if it moves forward is an area where policy and technical support would be useful.

3.5 Looking to the future

The ECN noted a number of areas where it felt that ESP could continue to provide useful support. This is not an official list or request, but reflects the areas mentioned during the final evaluation's interviews. The ECN looks for a future focus on "*strategic areas*" rather than "*activities*" which correspond with the evaluation's own findings and recommendations for a more strategic and programmatic approach. The ECN also noted the need for a different implementation modality so "*ESP can do other things without the ECN.*"

Areas of strategic support noted:
- Out of country voting;
- Use of electronic voting machines;
- ICT in the electoral process;
- Electoral reforms;
- Capacity development of staff; and,
- Construction of the data centre.

Current and past ECN officials also had a number of specific areas which they felt could benefit from continued assistance. These included:

- Review and harmonization of the election laws;
- Capacity building for procurement and auditing systems;
- Capacity building and resources for ECN's training of political parties on political finance;
- Strengthening of the EDR systems;
- Providing opportunities for on-the-job work experience in other EMBs with best practices;
- Decentralization of the voter id system and its link to the national ID;
- Polling centre management; and,
- Continued support for strategic planning especially for district-level offices.

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[111] ESP II, *BRIDGE Impact Evaluation Draft Report 2018*

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

1. *Electoral cycle support was needed and relevant for the 2008 – 2018 democratic transition.* The project provided needed technical assistance, services and training to build ECN professional capacity and ability to more effectively administer the elections that were an integral part of this process.

2. *ESP II played a valuable role in supporting the ECN to hold credible elections.* This resulted in the election of the CA body that developed the new constitution and electoral system, and the elections for all of the elected positions in the new federal system, successfully concluding that part of the democratic transition.

3. *The context directly affected ESP II's effectiveness and result* including uncertainties over the election dates, short time frames and frequent ECN staff changes. On the positive side, the commitment of the ECN to hold well administered, on time elections and the flexibility of the project, UNDP and development partners to meet the needs of the process.

4. *Attribution for impact level results is difficult due to the number of actors and factors involved in the process, but major ESP II accomplishments include:*
   - ✓ *Strengthened ECN institutional and professional capacities and confidence;* expanded efforts for GESI; and increased visibility and profile for the ECN internationally and with other EMBs.
   - ✓ *Continuing voter registration system with a more accurate voter registry* that is updated routinely and used for every election since, and which has increased stakeholder confidence in the voter lists;
   - ✓ *EEIC concept expanded* to two additional locations with mobile capacity to extend its reach;
   - ✓ *New signs invented* to better explain the electoral process for persons with hearing disabilities and sense of empowerment for those engaged in the effort;
   - ✓ *Electoral mapping and GIS introduced* that strengthened logistics, operations, security planning and understanding of the 2013 election;

4. *Other initiatives were useful and show promise but need better grounding and programmatic perspective to become more effective efforts.* These include: CSO subgrant activities for voter information and increased participation for women; outreach and information for PLWD; outreach to political parties, media and CSOs; and social study teacher trainings.

5. *The status and sustainability for some of ESP II efforts are of concern,* especially for the GIS and EEIC systems and the IT aspects of the voter registry.

6. *Overall project management was good and the long term national staff added significant value.* The regional office system also added value but was constrained by centralization. The new federal system should increase the importance and relevance of regional office-level support.

7. *The context has changed.* The original ESP assumption that the ECN needed external support to deliver the elections is no longer valid, and future assistance should focus on consolidating the gains made since 2008, supporting the ECN in the decentralization efforts, and on improving the quality of the process (electoral integrity, transparency, accountability as well as the pressing needs of civic education, equal participation and inclusion).

8. *The next cycle of elections is as important to support as the last ones.* They will consolidate the democratic transition and their quality will set precedents for the future. Expectations

and stakes will be high and the environment likely not as forgiving as it was during a transitional period.

4.2. Recommendations

1. *Stay engaged and support ECN, GON and CSO efforts to consolidate the progress made with ESP support and to: further strengthen the ECN through technical assistance and institutional capacity building; support the decentralization of the electoral process and its administration; and support the inclusive and knowledgeable participation of voters, especially women, PLWD and marginalized groups.*

2. *For the ECN, ensure continued focus* on: its strategic planning processes including its different departments and district offices; institutional capacity building done on the basis of an institutional needs assessment and an institutional capacity development plan; reviving the GIS system, revitalizing the EEIC and strengthening the ECN's GESI efforts.

3. *Adopt a project profile that fits the post-transitional context,* is outcome-driven and ensures a more strategic engagement and value added for the institutions supported. Ensure a programmatic approach with follow up for all activities.

4. *Decentralize project implementation* and empower the project's provincial offices if the concept is retained in the future*.* Support these offices to develop province specific workplans that tie into the overall project efforts, ECN's strategic plans and contribute directly to the intended outcomes*.*

5. *Maintain the DIM mechanism and provide direct support to the range of partners in the electoral processes.* Beyond the ECN, this could include the National ID Unit, other ministries and CSOs. Ensure the different components, implementation modalities and roles are clear in the project design to avoid misunderstandings and delays later on.

6. *Continue close collaboration* with IFES and broaden outreach to other projects working on SDG 5 (*Gender*) and SDG 16 (*Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)* to develop programmatic synergies and strengthen project activities and results.

7. *Use participatory approaches for project design and implementation.* Embed technical experts in the institutions to ensure transfer of knowledge and skills to counterparts and to foster team perspectives. Incorporate counterparts into all product development teams to ensure it meets their needs and increases institutional understanding, ownership and use of the product.

8. *Strengthen the M&E framework, and in particular ensure the collection of baseline data at the start and end of the project*. Incorporate KAP indicators to be able to measure results beyond the activity output level. Systematically use pre- and post-tests and ensure post-activity follow up. Show targets and actual level of performance over time in reporting.

Annex 1: Persons met

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Federation of Nepali Journalists
Punya Siwakoti, Journalist, Media Training Participant, Pokhara
Punya Poudel, Editor, Media Training Participant, Pokhara
Sushma Paudel, Broadcaster, Media Training Participant, Pokhara

Federation of People Rights Concern Nepal
Dipak Karki, Central Chairman

Madhya Pashim Yuba Milan Kendra Nepal, Rukum
Tek Bahadur BK, by phone

Nepal Association of the Blind
Nara Bahadur Limbu, Executive Advisor
Surya Awale
Samjhana Ranjitkar
Shobha Neupane

National Election Observation Committee
Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti, Chairperson

National Federation of Deaf, Nepal
Kedar Prasad Adhikari, Chairperson
Surya Bahadur Budhathoki, Secretary General
Sanu Khimbaja, Interpreter

Rural Entrepreneurship Development Center
Anita Tiwari, Representative, Baglung, by phone
Sabita BK, Trainer, Baglung, by phone

Rural Environment Development Centre (REDC), Dadeldhura
Rajendra Tha, by phone

Social Study Teacher Participants
Ghanashyam Ojha, Teacher Social Studies Teacher's Training Participant, Pokhara
Bikram Bataju, Teacher Social Studies Teacher's Training Participant, Pokhara
Bikas Chapagain, Teacher Social Studies Teacher's Training Participant, Kathmandu by phone
Durga Kharel, Teacher Social Studies Teacher's Training Participant, Kathmandu, by phone

Women Leadership Training Participants
Urbashi Majhi, Morang by phone
Kumari Rasaily, Jhapa by phone

GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL

Election Commission of Nepal
Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav, Chief Election Commissioner
Narendra Dahal, Election Commissioner
Ishwori Prasad Paudyal , Election Commissioner
Sudhir Kumar Shah, Election Commissioner
Neel Kantha Uprety, Chief Election Commissioner (2013 – 2015)
Bhojraj Pokharel, Chief Election Commissioner (2008-2010)
Madhu Prasad Regmi, Secretary (2010 – 2015)

Sharada Pd Trital, Secretary (2014), Joint Secretary (2011 – 2013)
Maheshwor Neupane, Joint Secretary (2013-2016), Secretary (2017)
Navaraj Dhakal, Joint Secretary, Electoral Education, Training and Foreign Relations Division, ECN
Bir Bahadur Rai, Joint Secretary (2010 – 2015) Procurement
Birendra Kumar Mishra, Joint Secretary, Information Technology Management Division
Surya Aryal, Under Secretary, Electoral Education, Information and Training Section
Mahendra Bhattarai, Under Secretary, Foreign Relations Division, ECN
Chandra Bdr. Shiwakoti, Under-Secretary, Voter Registration Section (2014 – 2018)
Rashmi Paudel, Section Officer, Foreign Relation Division, ECN
Shrichandra Shah, Sr. IT Officer
Chandra Bahadur Siwakoti, Under Secretary, Voter Registration Department, ECN
Shrikumar Rai, Section Officer, ECN
Mukunda Sharma, Under Secretary, Planning and GESI Section
Namrata Chudal, Section Officer, Planning and GESI Section
Lok Bahadur Rana, Section Officer, Planning and GESI Section
Gangalal Subedi, Under Secretary, ECN Pokhara
Bishaksen Dhakal, Under Secretary, Election Statistics, GIS Officer
Rudra Neupane, ECN Pokhara
Jit Bahadur Gurung, ECN Pokhara
Ishwari Pokhrel, ECN Pokhara
Rabi Mohan Paudel, ECN Pokhara
Madhu Bhandari, ECN Pokhara
Govinda Rijal, ECN Pokhara
Kamal Pun, BRIDGE Training Participant, Pokhara

National Identity Card Management Center
Dilip Kumar Chapagai – Executive Director
Shivraj Joshi, Director
Chomendra Neupane, Director
Tulsi Prasad Dahal, Section Officer
Ram Thapa, IT Officer
Jnaneshwor Bohara, Computer Engineer

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Electoral Support Project
Vincent da Cruz Chief Technical Adviser and Project Manager (2017 – 2018)
Kundan Das Shrestha, Deputy Project Manager (2010-2018), Senior Electoral Advisor (2018)
Nikila Shrestha, National EEIC Coordinator (2011 – 2018)
Deeva Yonzon Lama, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (2012-2018)
Tek Nath Sapkota, Electoral Regulation and Procedure Officer (2017 – 2018)
Mim Bahadur Lama, Senior Admin and Finance Officer (2009-2018) by skype
Sudip Aryal, Regional Electoral Advisor, Pokhara Regional Office (2011-2018)
Srijana Shrestha, Senior Administrative Assistance (2009 – 2018)
Sujit Gophal Shrestha, IT Specialist (2011 – 2018)
Bikash Sharma, Graphic Designer (2017 – 2018)
Sita Gurung, Voter Education Officer (2013 – 2018)
Dinesh Pathak, Regional Election Advisor, Dhangadhi Office (2014-2018) by phone
Ram Kumar Khadka, Regional Election Advisor, Nepalgunj Office (2014-2018)
Pradip Maharjan, Regional IT Officer, Kathmandu Regional Office (2012 – 2017) by email
Aruna Bajracharya, Senior Administrative Assistant (2013 – 2018)
Srijana Shrestha, Senior Administrative Assistant (2013 – 2018)

Trishna Bantawa, Senior Administrative Assistant (2013-2018)
Ranjit Ghimire, Driver (2013 – 2018)
Andres Del Castillo, Former CTA and Project Manager (2013-2016), by skype
Najia Hashemee, Technical Advisor (2011-2014) by skype
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Chahine Hamila, IT expert for Voter Registration Software (2015 – 2017) by skype

Delegation of The European Union To Nepal
Andreas Röttger, First Counsellor, Head of Cooperation
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Department for International Development
Gareth Rannamets, Deputy Team Leader, Governance and Service Delivery, by email

International Foundation for Electoral Systems
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Radhika Regmi, Deputy Country Director

International IDEA
Antonio Spinelli, Head of Mission
Santi Ram Bimali, BRIDGE and ERMT coordinator

Royal Norwegian Embassy
Edle Hamre, Minister Counsellor/ Deputy Head of Mission
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Archana Aryal, Team Leader, Democratic Transaction Unit
Deepak Shrestha, Procurement Analyst
Ambika Amatya, Procurement Associate

United Nations Office of Project Support
Charles Rochford Callanan, Country Director

UN Women
Gitanjali Singh, Deputy Country Representative
Andres Magnusson, International Consultant

USAID
Ramesh Adhikari, Election, Legislative and Political Advisor

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Annex 3: Evaluation methodology

1. Introduction

This Evaluation Inception Plan was developed based on: the Terms of Reference (TOR) prepared by UNDP Nepal for this independent final evaluation of the Electoral Support Project – Phase II (ESP); UNDP evaluation guidelines; and, an initial review of the project documents and reporting.

1.1. Purpose for the Final Evaluation

The purpose for this final evaluation is to provide UNDP with a final evaluation report on the progress made by the ESP towards its intended results, documents its lessons learned, best practices and to propose recommendations for future efforts. ESP Phase II was a four and a half year (2013-2018) USD 26,991,034 project intended to strengthen the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN), its conduct of the electoral cycle and to increase democratic participation in the process.

Specifically, this evaluation will:

1. Assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact[112] and sustainability of ESP taking into consideration the objectives of the ESP, United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and UNDP Country Programme;

2. Assess the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of ESP; and

3. Document key lessons learned, best practices and provide recommendations for future programming.

1.1 Background and context

ESP Phase II was developed as a continuation to the 2008-2012 Electoral Support Project which began after the first Constituent Assembly elections. Phase I was done within the context of a United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and an electoral assistance mandate from the Security Council (Resolution 1740). ESP Phase II was post-UNMIN and adopted an electoral cycle approach. It was amended in 2015 to extend the project's end date to 31 May 2018. This enabled the project to support the complete cycle of local, regional and national elections that were eventually held in 2017 and 2018. Financial support for ESP Phase II was provided by Denmark (USD 738,926), DFID (USD 8,749,165), the European Union (EU) (USD 12,104,079), Norway (USD 4,830,000), and UNDP (USD 1,103,422).

The overarching goal of ESP Phase II was to strengthen the Election Commission and its capacity to conduct credible, inclusive and transparent elections at national, provincial and local levels. To accomplish this goal, ESP II focused its support in three main areas:

1. Strengthening the capacity of the ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance (Output 1).

2. Supporting the conduct of the election cycle in an effective, sustainable and credible manner (Output 2).

3. Increasing democratic participation for the cycle of elections eventually held in 2017-2018, particularly for the under-represented and disadvantaged segments of Nepali society. (Output 3)

The project is executed through a direct implementation modality (DIM) with the ECN and the United Nations Office of Project Support (UNOPS) as responsible parties. According to the Project Document management decisions were to be made by a Project Executive Board when required/solicited from the Project Manager/Chief Technical Advisor (CTA). A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was also to be created to provide strategic guidance. An Electoral Support team was to be established headed by the CTA to undertake the day-to-day work of the project. UNDP was to provide project support. A midterm ESP Phase II review was done in 2015.

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[112] Impact is used in its general sense and in terms of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the ESP in achieving its intended results, and the relevance and sustainability of its outputs as contributions to medium-term and longer-term outcomes. (UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results p 37)

1.2 Scope of the final evaluation

This independent evaluation will:

- Undertake a review of relevant documents, including the project document, progress reports, Letters of Agreement (LOAs) / Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs), project products and electoral observation mission reports.

- Undertake discussions with ESP partners, Government and non-government agencies, project stakeholders and others working in the sector on the project's design, implementation, performance, challenges, lessons learned, best practices and results.

- Assess the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and inclusiveness of the project interventions taking into consideration the project objectives as well as its progress made towards achieving its intended results.

- Assess the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of ESP implementation and management and the factors that contributed to this.

- Assess the qualitative and quantitative data available on the results achieved and progress made, especially in terms of its contribution to the strengthening and professional development of the ECN, the conduct of the electoral cycle and in the democratic participation in the elections, especially for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

- Identify the factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of results and the lessons learned/best practices of the project.

- Validate preliminary evaluation findings through discussion, interviews and the evaluation debriefing.

- Provide lessons, best practices and recommendations for future programming and strengthening of electoral assistance in general.

The evaluation will focus primarily on the period following ESP's Phase II review. However, findings on the earlier period will factor into the final evaluation's findings and will be highlighted as relevant.

2 Methodology

2.1 Evaluation criteria and questions

With the evaluations scope detailed in Section 1.2 in mind, the evaluation team will seek to answer the following questions. These are in addition to the questions provided in the terms of reference on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact:

Outcome	Main Questions	Sub- Questions
Strengthened capacity of ECN to function as permanent, independent, credible institution of governance	• Was the ECN strengthened as a result of ESP? If yes, in what ways? How did this impact its institutional development, independence, accountability and the electoral process? • What were the factors that facilitated or hindered this development? Were these adequately factored into the project design and during implementation? • How is the ECN situated to manage the next electoral cycle? What are its main strengths and challenges? • How timely and inclusive was the voter registration process and	• Was ESP support strategic and appropriately targeted to the needs of ECN's institutional development? • How has the institution changed since ESP started? What are the main factors? • Which staff were trained by the project and how relevant was the training to their needs and those of the ECN? How many are still with the ECN? Where are the others now? • How sustainable are the changes supported by ESP? • What was the quality of technical assistance provided? Was it timely and relevant? How did this impact the ECN

Outcome	Main Questions	Sub- Questions
	registry? Accuracy? Sustainability? • What are the perceptions of ECN's role and performance by other electoral stakeholders such as political parties, media, CSOs and observer groups	and electoral cycle? • What was ESP's role in voter registration? What were the results of the assistance for registration? Are these sustainable? • Was GIS mapping assisted? Was it effective and what was the impact of this?
Strengthened management of the electoral cycle	• What are the general perceptions on the way the electoral cycle was managed? Were the elections conducted in an effective, sustainable, accountable, transparent and credible manner? What were the main factors/issues and what was ESP's role in this? • Was electoral security an issue and did the project adequately address the issue? How? • How contentious were the elections and did the project adequately support electoral dispute resolution (EDR)? Did this help to reduce the potential for conflict/ violence/rejection of the results?	• Who was trained/oriented by ESP in the pre-during and post-election phases? How many, on what? How effective were these trainings (why) and what was their impact? • How well organized is the ECN to manage its electoral operations, procurement, training, outreach, etc today? How does this compare to 4 years ago? • What was the level of outreach and dissemination of information supported by ESP? Was this adequate? • How well was gender and inclusion of marginalized/vulnerable groups mainstreamed into the electoral cycle and the ECN?
Increased democratic participation in the electoral cycle	• What is the ECN's role in voter education and how has this evolved in the past 5 years? • What are the major constraints to increased democratic participation in the electoral process? Were they addressed by the project? Why or why not? How?	• How effective were ESP efforts to strengthen ECN's voter education and outreach efforts? Why? What were the general perceptions on the quality of voter education, outreach and electoral information? • How well were gender/access/inclusion issues mainstreamed into voter education and outreach efforts? • Which voter education/outreach efforts were the most effective? Why? • Was there an increase in numbers/type of persons running for office and in voter turnout? Is this attributable to ESP efforts?

Outcome	Main Questions	Sub- Questions
Project design and management	• Were there design issues, and if so, how did this affect the project? • How relevant and appropriate was the project and its implementation? • What were the main constraints to project implementation? • Did the project maintain its electoral cycle nature during implementation? • How effective was project management in delivering an efficient, responsive and effective project? What were the factors that helped or hindered this? • What were the lessons learned and best practices? Any lost opportunities? • Were project resources used effectively and were they adequate for the needs? • What was the level of national ownership? What were the factors for this? • How visible was the project/donors and was this level of visibility appropriate?	• Was ESP seen as impartial and effective? • How coordinated were project efforts with other national/international assistance efforts? • Did the project develop synergistic programming with other relevant projects working on the electoral processes, inclusion issues, democratic development, and enhancing women's political participation? • What was the theory of change? Was it well grounded in the context and did it prove to be effective? Was there an exit strategy? • Were the underlying project assumptions valid? • Were the risks adequately identified and addressed by the project? • Was the project adequately monitored by project staff and was reporting adequate for the needs? • Did the project staff and experts hired have the level of expertise needed for the job? Was the timing for assistance appropriate?

2.2. Approach

In answering the evaluation questions, the evaluation team will use mixed methods for analysis, synthesis and drawing conclusions. These include: trend analysis of key outcomes, analysis of associations between observed outcome and ESP-funded efforts, assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and results of ESP's assistance and validation through triangulation (validation discussions with UNDP, ECN, development partners, project staff and other partners/beneficiaries, by information provided in the documents reviewed and by the quality of the electoral processes as reported by impartial national/international observers). As a result, based on the information available and stakeholder perceptions, the evaluation team will make judgments on their value and the extent that these outputs contributed towards the achievement of ESP's intended outcomes.

The questions outlined in Section 1.2 are specific yet general enough to allow for flexibility in questioning as well as to allow for flexibility in responses. This will enable the responders to voice their own issues and concerns. The team will start by asking brief general questions before going into the specific evaluation questions. Sensitive questions will be asked at the end of the interview after a rapport has developed between the interviewer and person(s) being interviewed. Issues identified in discussions will be followed up with additional questions to that individual/group, as well as by questions to other informants to corroborate the information as needed.

The evaluation team will interview available partners, stakeholders and project staff. This is expected to include: UNDP and ESP project staff and experts; ECN Commissioners and staff; development partners and key donors/organizations supporting the ECN and electoral processes (i.e. ESP donors, UN Women, International

Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International IDEA); ESP sub-grantees; relevant NGOs, election observers/key think tanks and experts.

Evaluation questions will be tailored to the different institutions, their mandate and their role in the project and/or sector. Particular attention will be given to the management challenges, time/political constraints, timeliness of assistance, changing context, and the structural questions on partnerships and management structures emerging from these management challenges.

The evaluation team will be composed of two persons: an international team leader and a national expert. UNDP Nepal has recruited these experts directly. Both team members have substantial experience with democratic governance and electoral assistance programs. The team will work in a collegial manner with the team leader responsible for the overall direction of the team and allocation of evaluation tasks. The team leader will be responsible for the delivery of the main deliverables (Inception Report, Preliminary Findings, Draft and Final Reports) and will report to the ESP CTA. The national expert will provide input and contribute to the drafting of these deliverables.

The workload for the evaluation will be divided up among the team members based on their professional expertise and experience with the different output areas of the project and their individual contractual terms of reference with UNDP. This will ensure that at least one of the team members has a good understanding of the project's assistance for each of the main output areas under review and is able to contribute to the writing and justifications for that section in the report. These allocations will be made in country after the team has had a chance to meet in person and discuss the work.

2.3 Measuring results

The evaluation team will use its professional judgment to assess the information collected and to answer the evaluation questions. Results will be measured in terms of the expected results outlined in the project documents and results and resources framework, as well as by the participants' perceptions of the project and the team's assessment of the results found. Attribution of results directly to ESP may not be possible in some cases due to the time available for the evaluation, and the work that has been done in the sector by other organizations that are likely to have contributed to the same outcomes. However, where a direct correlation seems evident, this will be noted in the Evaluation Report. It is also likely to be difficult to assess cost-effectiveness of specific interventions within the timeframe.

2.4 Data sources and processing

The evaluation will use both primary and secondary data and a variety of data collection methods to gather the information needed to conduct the work. This is expected to include: desk review and analysis of ESP and secondary data; in person interviews in Kathmandu and one or two regional locations; and Skype and/or e-mail interviews for a sample of other key actors in other locations. Criteria for the field visits will include: scope of ESP activities in the location, regional context (geographic, political, electoral, administrative and demographic); and presence of ECN staff, former ESP regional staff, ESP partners, sub-grantees, etc). The team will review available documents before, during and after the field work as needed. It will spend time in country as a team to discuss findings and to review the data collected from the field.

The desk work portions of the evaluation will be done individually by the evaluation team members, but the content will be discussed by the team during the field work and for the development of the Preliminary Findings and debrief for UNDP and its partners. The team's in-country work is expected to be done during regular UNDP working hours except for the weekend which the team will use to continue its review of documents, discussions and analysis.

The persons interviewed will be the primary ESP partners, staff and beneficiaries. Statistical data, public opinion surveys and analytical reports will be used where available to gain supplemental information on electoral and democratic attitudes, practices and knowledge.

The team will review the most pertinent documents related to the electoral processes in Nepal, which is expected to include the observer reports from the recent elections; political analyses; public opinion polling data on electoral processes, inclusion and democratic participation; ECN plans, the UNDAF and UNDP Country Programme, and available project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data and progress reports. The data collected through interviews, observation and review of documents will be processed in team discussions, and the main findings extrapolated and listed against the intended outcome areas of the project. The team will synthesize those findings into the main points that will be discussed in the Evaluation Report. The evaluation

team will maintain an impartial and professional view towards developing its findings, and will base them on the evidence found and against the anticipated outcomes according to the Project Document. The team will arrive at its findings through consensus. If no consensus can be reached on a particular issue, this will be noted in the Evaluation Report.

The evaluation team will treat all information gathered as confidential and the Evaluation Report will not identify individual responses unless it has consent from that individual to use the information publically. The Evaluation Report will follow UNDP's standards for independent evaluation reporting.

3. Programme of Work

3.1 Phases and calendar of work

Time Frame	Tasks
Phase 1: Design, Plan and Develop Inception Report: 23 April – 2 May	
23-28 April	▪ Desk review of relevant program documents provided by UNDP
30 April	▪ Submission of draft Inception Report
2 May	▪ Submission of final Inception Report (following UNDP comments)
Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis: 1 - 16 May	
1-16 May	▪ Conduct in-country consultations
Throughout	▪ Evaluation team discussions to assess findings
14 May	▪ Develop Preliminary Findings
16 May	▪ Debriefing on preliminary findings, main recommendations
Phase 3: Report Writing: 18 May – 26 May	
18 – 26 May	▪ Draft report
26 May	▪ Submit draft report to UNDP
o/a 29 May	▪ Receive UNDP feedback and incorporate feedback into report
31 May	▪ Finalize and submit report

3.2. Evaluation deliverables

The main outputs of the ESP Final Evaluation are:

- This Inception Report which describes the overall approach to the evaluation, including methodology, work plan and proposed structure of the Evaluation Report. The Inception Report will be submitted electronically.

- Preliminary Findings to be presented during a debriefing meeting at the end of the field work. The overview of preliminary findings will be submitted electronically.

- Draft Evaluation Report of not more than 35 pages excluding annexes that present the Evaluation's main findings on the project, best practices, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations. This report will follow UNDP's standard guidelines for independent terminal project evaluation reports. It will include a stand-alone Executive Summary of not more than 5 pages. A draft table of contents is provided in Annex 1 to this Inception Report. This draft Evaluation Report will be submitted electronically.

- Final Evaluation Report of not more than 35 pages, excluding annexes. The final report will be submitted electronically and presented at a Programme Board meeting.

Annex 4: Terms of Reference

I. Consultancy Information
Title: National and International Consultants for Final evaluation of the Electoral Support Project – Phase II

II. Background

National Context

Nepal made significant progress over the last few years in institutionalizing democracy by making a swift transition from the unitary to the federal system of governance. After the first Constituent Assembly (CA) was not able to promulgate the new constitution, the house was dissolved and the elections for the second CA held in November 2013. The second CA promulgated the Constitution in September 2015.

As envisioned in the Constitution, the Election Commission with full ownership and reduced international assistance, successfully conducted the federal, provincial and local elections in 2017 in five phases. These led to the establishment of 753 local governments, seven provincial assemblies and the federal government.

The local elections were held for the first time in almost two decades, the voter turnout was 74% and 41% of elected representatives were women. The federal and provincial elections had a turnout of just under 70%resulted in 34% of women's representation in Provincial Assemblies and the Federal Parliament. The domestic and international observers deployed during the elections have commended ECN for organizing an inclusive, credible and peaceful elections despite the tight electoral calendar and a difficult political situation in some parts of the country.

The elections of the President and the Vice-President are expected to be held in the first quarter of 2018.

Project Description

The Electoral Support Project (ESP) phase II is a continuation of the Electoral Support Project Phase I that was initiated in August 2008, following the first Constituent Assembly elections. The Phase II of ESP provides technical assistance focused on a long-term institutional capacity development of the Election Commission (ECN) for conducting credible, inclusive and transparent elections.

The electoral cycle approach is closely reflected and applied to the overall strategy of ESP. The project is aligned with Outcome 5 of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2012- 2017), contributes to the Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and is aligned with the Strategic Plan of the ECN (2015- 2019).

The three key outputs of the project are the following:

The ECN capacity-building: The project provides sustained institutional strengthening and professional development assistance for ECN to function as a permanent, professional and independent electoral management body.

Credible and sustainable elections: ESP provides technical assistance and critical operational support to ECN during elections.

Increased democratic participation of voters: The project focuses on increasing awareness of democracy, electoral system and processes, especially of vulnerable groups (women, people living with disabilities and ethnic minorities), for them to meaningfully participate in different stages of the electoral cycle.

In order to achieve these three broader outputs, ESP has been providing technical and operational assistance to ECN in the following thematic areas: voter registration, operational and technical support in planning and conduct of the elections, trainings (including BRIDGE), civic and voter education, electoral mapping and geographic information system, electoral dispute resolution, promoting peaceful elections and gender and social inclusion.

The duration of ESP phase II is from November 2012 till May 2018 and the total budget is USD 28 million. The project is implemented by UNDP under the Direct Implementation Modality and in partnership with the European Union, United Kingdom Aids, Norway and Denmark. The project works in close collaboration with other implementing partners, particularly IIDEA and IFES. ESP together with IFES provide the secretariat to the Election Working Group formed under the framework of the International Development Partners Group.

III. Objectives
Since ESP phase II is coming to an end in May 2018, the project evaluation is being carried out to assess the progress made by the project against the project outputs and indicators. In-depth analysis will be needed to review

the results achieved under eight project activities as outlined in the project document.

The evaluation should look into the relevance, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance provided by ESP to ECN during the project cycle.

The evaluation will also measure an impact of the project towards strengthening the capacity of ECN in conducting a credible, inclusive and transparent elections (UNDAF Output 5.1) contributing to the broader outcome of making the institutions, systems and processes of democratic governance more accountable, effective, efficient an inclusive (UNDAF Outcome 5) .

The analysis and recommendations presented by the evaluation mission will be useful to ECN, development partners and UNDP in measuring the contributions made by the project and in designing future interventions for strengthening electoral system and processes in Nepal.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are the following:
- To assess and evaluate the progress made by the project towards an attainment of the results as specified in the project monitoring and evaluation framework, UNDAF and CPD
- To measure the contributions made by the project in enhancing the accountability, effectiveness, efficiency and inclusiveness of democratic system and processes with focus on elections
- To assess the sustainability of the project interventions
- To examine the cost efficiency and effectiveness of ESP assistance

To document main lessons learned, best practices and propose recommendations

IV. Methodology/Responsibilities

The evaluation team will consist of one international team leader and electoral expert and one national expert. The team is expected to apply the following approaches for data collection and analysis.
- Desk review of relevant documents (project document with amendments made, review reports-midterm, annual, ECN strategic plan, etc);
- Briefing and debriefing sessions with Development Partners, UNDP and the Election Commission, as well as with other partners;
- Interviews with partners and stakeholders (including gathering the information on what the partners have achieved with regard to the outcome and what strategies they have used); donors, etc.
- Field visits to selected project sites and discussions with project teams, project beneficiaries and major stakeholders (as deemed necessary);
- Consultation meetings.

Evaluation Questions

Relevance
- To what extent ESP technical and operational assistance were relevant in addressing the needs and strategic priorities of ECN and other electoral stakeholders?

- To what extent were interventions informed by gender and social inclusion analyses to enhance women, youth, people with disability and marginalized groups' meaningful participation in the electoral processes as voters and candidates?

- How relevant was the project in making the election management body, electoral system and processes inclusive, credible and transparent?

- To what extent the project was able to cater the needs of the beneficiaries in the changed context? If and when required an alteration of focus/strategy, was the project flexible?

- Is there any evidence that the project advanced any key national human rights, gender or inclusion policies and the priorities of UN, UNDP, including the UNDAF?

- How relevant was the geographical coverage?

Effectiveness
- How effective has the project been in enhancing the institutional and professional capacity of ECN to conduct an inclusive, credible and transparent elections?
- Has the project achieved its outputs? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the outputs?
- To what extent the planned outputs contributed towards the achievement of the UNDAF outcome and what are the evidences to validate these claims?

- Did women, men, PwD, youth and marginalized groups directly benefit from the project's activities? If so, how and what was the impact?
- Were any changes made in the project regarding approach, partnerships, beneficiaries etc. suggested by project mid-point assessment, context/risk analysis? Did it affect project results?

Efficiency

- To what extent have resources (financial, human, institutional and technical) been allocated strategically?
- Could the activities and outputs have been delivered in fewer resources without reducing their quality and quantity?
- Were the project inputs and benefits fairly distributed amongst different genders and communities while increasing access for the most vulnerable? What factors influenced decisions to fund certain proposed activities, and not others?
- To what extent did the coordination with other UN agencies and UNDP projects reduce transaction costs, optimize results and avoid duplication?

Impact

- What impact did the work of ESP have on the institutional capacity of ECN and other electoral stakeholders? Is there evidence of knowledge transfer?
- What impact did the work of ESP have on the conduct of elections in Nepal? Is there evidence of changes in their credibility, effectiveness and/or sustainability?
- What impact did the work of ESP have on the democratic participation in elections in Nepal? Is there evidence of improvements for under-represented and/or disadvantaged segments of Nepali society?

Sustainability

- Have ESP interventions enhanced the capacity of ECN and electoral stakeholders for sustainable results?
- What is the level of ownership of ECN towards the project? Will the ECN be able to sustain project supported interventions (programmatically and financially) after the project phases out?
- Is there any evidence of ESP reduced assistance over the years due to ECN increased ownership and leadership?

V. Expected Results/Deliverables

Target Groups and Stakeholder Coverage
- National level stakeholders: ECN, former Commissioners and government officials associated with ECN, development partners (EU, UK Aids, Norway and Denmark) electoral experts, IDEA , IFES, members of EWG, civil society organizations, UN agencies and UNDP projects
- Local level stakeholders: District Election Officers, social studies teachers, beneficiaries of ESP interventions and civil society organizations.

The evaluation team should deliver the following outputs:
- Inception report detailing the evaluator's understanding of what is being evaluated, why it is being evaluated, and how (methodology) it will evaluated. The inception report should also include a proposed schedule of tasks, evaluation tools, activities and deliverables.
- Start of mission debriefing/meeting on proposed methodology, design and work plan
- Presentation of the inception report to the Reference Group, including UNDP, development partners and ECN
- Mid-term meeting with development partners on impressions and initial findings from the field work
- An exit presentation on findings and initial recommendations
- The draft review report within 20 days of the start date
- Final report within 30 days of the start date of sufficient detail and quality and taking on board comments from , with annexes and working papers as required

The reports to include, but not be limited to, the following components:
- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Description of the review methodology
- Political and development context
- Key findings

- Lessons learned
- Recommendations
- Annexes: mission report including field visits, list of interviewees, and list of documents reviewed.