UNDP

Regional Electoral Support for Middle East and North Africa

Phase II (2017 – 2020)

Midterm Review

Final Report

6 September 2019

Contents

Abbreviations

ANNHRI	Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutes
ArabEMBs	Organisation of Arab Electoral Management Bodies
BPPS	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
EAD	Electoral Assistance Division
EMB	Electoral Management Body
EU	European Union
F	Female
GPECS	Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IHIE	Independent High Instance for Elections
JTF	Joint Electoral Task Force
LADE	Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
LAS	League of Arab States
M	Male
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutes
NIEC	National Independent Electoral Commission
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PLWD	Persons Living with Disabilities
RBAS	Regional Bureau for Arab States
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TA	Technical Assistance
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	US Dollar
V-DEM	Varieties of Democracy
YLP	Youth Leadership Programme

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The *Regional Electoral Support for Middle East and North Africa Phase II* (Project) was a regional component of the Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support II (GPECS). Phase II was a USD 7.4 million three year electoral cycle project (2017-2020) intended to continue its Phase I efforts to improve the accountability, participation and representation in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region through strengthening knowledge, awareness and capacity on the electoral processes, and building regional networking and cooperation among electoral stakeholders.

The project is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and directly executed by UNDP. It is managed by its Regional Electoral Advisor for the Arab States and operates out of UNDP's regional hub in Amman. The project reports to UNDP's Lead Electoral Advisor in New York and coordinates its efforts with the regional hub's programme in governance and peacebuilding.

This independent midterm review of the project took place in July – August 2019.

FINDINGS

Relevance. The project was highly relevant give the scope of the changes that took place in the region following the Arab Spring and the need to strengthen the new institutions, legal frameworks and inclusive participation. These needs still exist and in some cases have become more acute as some countries adopt more restrictive legislation or are in conflict.[1] The project's intended outcomes were directly relevant to the needs, corresponded with the development goals of UNDP and SIDA and were aligned with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most notably SDG 5 on *Gender Equality* and SDG 16 on *Peace Justice and Strong Institutions*. The project's regional partners see the project as a useful tool to increase their capacity and strengthen regional networking and as essential for the Organisation of ArabEMBs (ArabEMBs) which is still nascent.

Effectiveness. The project was broadly effective as discussed in each of its four main outputs. Some of the factors for this were its collaborative partnerships with partners and stakeholders, the level of trust built up over five years of efforts, the continuity of the efforts from Phase I and the project's flexible approach that allowed it to take advantage of opportunities and be responsive to needs. In some cases though this also contributed to an activity-based nature.

Output 1: Enhanced regional electoral capacity and knowledge. Project efforts contributed to an increased level of professional knowledge for participants through its workshops, trainings, knowledge product development, exposure visits and exchanges. The actual extent of this however is unknown without baseline and other performance data. The project reached a limited number of persons directly, but as these were institutional representatives they took the knowledge to their respective organizations which expanded the project's reach substantially.

The project contributed to knowledge products for the region. It is finalizing a *Dictionary of Electoral Terminology* and a *Guidebook on Monitoring Elections* for the National Human Rights Institutes (NHRIs). It made a substantial effort with the Arabization of ACE by uploading and translating materials and managing its Arabic site. The use of ACE overall however declined in the past year and warrants a closer look.

Support to the League of Arab States (LAS), done in coordination with the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), was seen as highly effective by LAS and others. Its electoral unit has evolved into a department with its own budget line, it trains its

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[1] UNDP, *Regional Electoral Support Project,* Project Document, pps 5-6 [Project Document]

own staff using Building Resources in Democracy and Elections (BRIDGE) with project facilitation for the accreditation of its trainers, and it started its own EMB-LAS forum inspired by its exposure visit to the Latin American democracy forum. The second LAS forum was held in 2018 and brought electoral management bodies (EMBs) from more than 20 LAS member states together to discuss voter registration. These types of regional events broaden participants exposure to proven practices of good electoral administration, electoral norms and encourage useful peer-peer exchanges and relationships.   Project efforts with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), also in collaboration with EAD, also appear to be making a difference. After participating in the LAS-EMB forum, the OIC Electoral Unit asked for and recently received ministerial approval to hold its own annual meeting of the EMBs from its 57 member states, 21 of which are from the Arab States. This is currently in discussion with EAD as the OIC wants to hold this as a joint UN-OIC event.

Limited work was done so far with the media and this remains an important area to assist.

Output 2.   Strengthened profession of electoral administration through regional cooperation. Regional cooperation was strengthened among election professionals through the regular meetings and activities of the ArabEMBs and with LAS. Project efforts with OIC have significant potential to contribute to this output.

The ArabEMBs is a growing institution, now with 11 members and it is about to launch a women's network. It was not yet a viable institution at the start of Phase II and the project's continued financial, technical and logistical support ensured its continued development and functioning. The facilitation of its technical support with the Somali National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) on political party financing was an important first for the ArabEMBs and something to build on. Election visits and the process for the creation of the voter registry database among others contributed to the ArabEMBs' institutional growth and to their EMB members' professional growth.

The project provided good examples of South-South cooperation for its partners, in particular through the Mexican example and the TA efforts with Somalia. Output 2 also included a human rights component which conceptually needs its own output. For this the project worked with the Arab Network of National Human Rights Associations (ANNHRI) to raise its members' level of engagement in the elections from that of observers to monitoring the cycle by introducing the concept and developing a joint guidebook. This effort has the potential to make a substantial impact if synergistic support can be provided by country-level partners to help the national institutes to implement the actual monitoring of the cycle.

Output 3: Enhanced civil and political participation of women. The framework for Output 3 was ambitious for the scale of the project, its funding and staffing. The project concentrated primarily on the development of a women's network through the ArabEMBs and is poised to make a contribution once it launches in October 2019.   This effort seemed fully owned by the seven EMBs representatives on its working group. The group also includes civil society organisations (CSOs) which will extend the network's efforts to a broader range of stakeholders. This effort is likely to affect structural changes within the EMBs through the creation or strengthening of gender units, however results beyond this will depend on its strategic focus and level of activities. A guidebook on fostering women's political participation for their use (and others) to support their efforts is expected to be launched with the network.

Gender as a cross cutting issue was emphasized throughout project activities, it also ensured a gender balance of its participants and promoted the gender module of BRIDGE. However, efforts beyond this and the women's network seemed limited. It did develop a gender strategy for the project which was a recommendation from its Phase I evaluation. This provided a more realistic framework for project efforts than what was in the project design.

Output 4: *Role of youth promoted in the electoral cycle.* The project promoted the engagement of youth through its Youth Leadership Programme (YLP). This was widely seen as a popular and

successful model for youth engagement in the promotion of the SDGs which has become a flagship programme for the UNDP regional hub which manages it with the project's co-funding and assistance. YLP originally started with individual youth and since its shift in 2018 to working with youth-serving CSOs at country levels it has become a more cohesive and likely impactful project. In this, UNDP country offices select and mentor CSOs, which engage the youth through developing and implementing national plans, with the project providing the vision and regional glue with a regional event at the start and end of each YLP. This approach expanded YLP's reach from 100 youth to over 5,000 and 50 CSOs in 10 countries. Its goal is to reach over 100,000 youth and 1,000 CSOs by 2022. Although YLP 5 (2019) focuses on SDG 16, YLP's overall contribution towards "*youth empowerment in the electoral cycle*" is likely limited given its broad conceptual nature. There is not enough aggregated data to know about the impact of the national programmes.

The project expanded its reach by engaging in the one week Mediterranean University (MedUni) run by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe that links youth in the Mediterranean region. This appears to have potential for useful future collaboration which the project is exploring. The project has developed a successful model of a two day course on electoral systems which it has given annually at the University of St. Joseph's in Beirut. The project has engaged LAS in this effort as co-instructor. The addition of a field trip to a Lebanese election observation group this year was a good initiative. The model should now be expanded to other universities in the region.

Support to UNDP country offices and projects. The project provided a significant level of assistance to country offices and projects in the region with advisory support, technical assistance, human resources and in some cases financial support for individuals or efforts. This was an understated but important component of the project. It appears that this enabled some critical processes to continue, provided valued advisory services and in some cases facilitated UNDP relations with partners at country levels. The project's flexibility and responsiveness helped in this effort; however it needs better definition and inclusion in the next project design as an integral part of the project, with its own output, parameters for support, resources and indicators to measure its performance.

Efficiency and project management. The project team was seen as efficient with its management, administration done in timely manner. Operational support was provided by the regional hub, but as the project was a GPECS component every transaction had to go to New York for approval adding time and an additional burden for the regional hub. The project coordinated with the governance and peacebuilding section of the regional hub which saw the project as a partner working on joint efforts for youth and women. But it noted that this was an ad hoc relationship and lacked systems to tie the efforts together. This worked because of the individuals involved but it recommended that the project be attached to the regional programme in the future.

Project reporting was done according to the requirements in the project document and followed its results framework. It could be strengthened by the addition of more performance data and detail. The financial reporting system was set up at the output levels, making it difficult to track the regional financial expenditures at sub-output levels which is essential for project monitoring and management purposes. This should be fixed in the setting up of the next project. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is output based (i.e. number of events or products) and is insufficient to be able to measure actual results of the project beyond the holding of those events or products.

The number and costs of the events and travel was raised during this review in relation to the level of results achieved by those events. This is difficult to judge from the perspective of a short term review, especially without disaggregated expenditure information at sub-output levels. However, in general, the greater the results created by an event, the more cost-effective and effective it becomes. In this the project should document the results that are put into action by the participants after an event, and their results which would give a better idea of the value for money.

The project promoted cost sharing for its events, used skype for some working group and ArabEMBs executive board meetings and said it had learned from experience which cities were the most economical places to hold conferences. The project also made good use of UNDP's global electoral network to provide exposure and models for regional cooperation and technical materials.

The project also coordinated with UNDP country offices for the implementation of its activities, especially for the holding of events. This was mostly needs based with the exception of YLP where the country offices carried the programmatic efforts through the country level. The project coordinated well with partners and other development organizations resulting in joint efforts in some cases and shared costs. This included the EMBs, LAS, IDEA, Venice Commission, UN Women and others. This added up to more than USD 1.1 million with EAD providing almost half of this for their joint efforts. SIDA provided a reliable source of funding for the regional project for the past five years, but feels this reliance is a vulnerability and the project should mobilize more donors.

Sustainability. Project efforts with existing institutions were largely institutionalized, especially within LAS and to a lesser degree with the OIC. The LAS Electoral Department has the capacity to train its own staff, is committed to holding its EMB-LAS forums on a bi-annual basis, and is Arabizing BRIDGE for use in the region. The ArabEMBs is still dependent on the project's financial, logistical and institutional support, and it will take time for it to become a consolidated and self-sustaining association. It has made significant steps by registering and starting to collect dues. The women's network has an institutional home in the ArabEMBs and committed members. The network structure can be expected to remain, although it is too early to know active it would be without continued support. YLP has an institutional home in the regional hub which intends to continue its support for the medium term. It is too soon to know if the CSOs or national level networks created as part of their annual plans will continue after each YLP. The knowledge and experience gained by the youth and CSOs are expected to remain with them. The knowledge products produced are disseminated and available online when completed.

CONCLUSIONS

The project addressed a critical need in the region. It provided a trusted and effective regional platform of electoral support that brought stakeholders and partners together to address key issues in a more unified and coordinated manner. It played a valuable role in the creation and functioning of the ArabEMBs bringing EMBs together to address common areas of concern and better elections. It also provided valued regional advisory, support services and providing quick response mechanism for UNDP and the EAD.

Project results are the cumulative effects of the project's work in both phases. Attribution is difficult because of the number of other factors and the lack of results-level data, but major accomplishments include:

- Strengthened the profession of electoral administration by unifying and empowering EMBs in the region around a common purpose and by creating a credible and recognized entity in the ArabEMBs;
- Strengthened the role, capacity and visibility for the LAS Electoral Department especially in its establishment of the LAS-EMB forum and strengthened election observation efforts;
- Strengthened the position of women in EMBs with the creation of the women's network;
- Planted seeds among participating youth for more productive citizenship and improved their understanding of the importance of civic engagement;
- Mobilized CSOs in a volunteer effort to engage youth in national programmes promoting SDG values and constructive youth participation;
- Expanded the concept for the role of the national human rights institutions in the electoral processes which has the potential to yield significant results if adopted and implemented;

- Strengthened the relationship between EAD and UNDP through its collaborative and constructive working relationship and unified programme of assistance to stakeholders; and,
- Normalized (to a certain extent) discussions of certain culturally sensitive electoral topics by electoral stakeholders (such as gender) through their continued inclusion in project efforts.

Accomplishments in other areas are likely more limited due to the sporadic nature of the events or their broader based nature. Programmatic synergy with country levels was largely missing with the exception of YLP. The project's M&E plan was not sufficient to be able to measure actual effectiveness, and project results may be greater for some of the activities than what was visible during the evaluation.

Assistance at the regional level is still needed and important. The democratic transition in the Arab States is still underway and under stress in many areas, while the conflicts in countries will likely end in negotiations and elections. These processes will need significant support, not only at national levels, but regional.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the remainder of the project

Complete efforts underway with the main partners and ensure that any new activities focus directly on achieving the project's intended goals. Continue support to the ArabEMBs for its institutional development and programmatic efforts, including the women's network. Continue work with LAS and OIC and finalize the NHRI guidebook.

Increase efforts to track and aggregate the results of the YLP programme at country levels and work with the regional hub to expand YLP's institutional base and contributions from other hub projects. Extend the Electoral Systems course to another academic institution in the region and ensure the course at St. Joseph's will continue after project participation ends. Strengthen ties with country-level programmes (UNDP and others) to provide in-country follow up efforts for the members of the regional associations, to support NHRI's monitoring efforts, and to help track project results at the country level.

Strengthen the next annual report by including analysis of the progress made towards the achievement of the project's intended outcomes and ensure clarity in reporting on the who did what and why for events. Collect more results level data to use to target future efforts and monitor project effectiveness Supplement the M&E plan with the addition of a few results-based indicators for each main output for the remainder of the project.

Develop an exit strategy in case there is not a follow-on project and include progress made on this in the reporting. Continue close collaboration and partnerships with EAD, IDEA, Venice Commission, UN Women and others and expand these where possible. Start the design process now for a future project and avoid extending the project indefinitely.

For future efforts

At the strategic level there is still a need for a regional project focused on strengthening the electoral and political processes and their integrity, equity and inclusion in the Arab region. Electoral processes provide an effective entry point for broader good governance and policy reforms and for the promotion of democratic norms and rule of law. Start the next phase of assistance by conceptualizing it within the broader framework of UNDP's electoral and political processes support to the region as a whole, and within this framework how the regional and country levels can work together to strengthen the processes in the region. To support this effort, UNDP should develop a five-year integrated strategy of assistance that covers regional and country levels and includes a common theory of change, common goals at the outcome level and mutually synergistic programming. This strategy should include a few common indicators that both levels can use to measure their progress towards achieving those goals. Use this strategy as the foundation for the

design of the next regional project and for any new country-level projects, adapted as appropriate for the country contexts.

At the project level, continue the efforts from Phase II that show the most promise in terms of impact, notably, the consolidation of ArabEMBs and its efforts with its members to strengthen their national capacity and processes, further professionalization and development of LAS as a regional resource and defender of norms for its member states on electoral and political processes, the strengthening of the human rights network efforts as protectors of human rights and democratic norms throughout the electoral process and similar efforts with the OIC. Think through how to strengthen the project's impact for the electoral and political participation of women and youth beyond existing efforts as well as building on project successes. Include persons living with disabilities (PLWDs). As part of this, strengthen ties with specialized organizations to provide synergistic efforts, especially in light of the UN's repositioning that looks for "a *stronger UN institutional response and system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda*."[2]

Strengthen efforts to address issues of electoral violence, dispute resolution and the broader areas of electoral justice, the constructive role of media and transparency of EMBs and other institutions. Explore relationships with UNDP's on-line platforms beyond ACE, look into UNDP's open data efforts and the possibility of supporting the ArabEMBs to promote its members International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) certification. Expand the reach of the Electoral Systems course by developing a certificated e-learning course.

Provide a country window focused on strengthening coordination and programmatic synergies with country programmes, and measuring progress made under the integrated strategy. Develop the role of the regional electoral advisor and project in assisting country level efforts in the integrated strategy and project design. Ensure it has its own output, resource allocation and indicators. Attach the regional project to the regional hub for better integration into the larger UNDP regional programme, strengthen project oversight and streamline its administration. Ensure expenditure reporting at sub-output levels. Develop a full M&E plan with performance based indicators and baselines. Broaden the donor base to make it a more collective international effort and to help ensure stability and adequate funding for efforts.

2.1 Midterm Review of the Regional Electoral Support Project Phase II

UNDP commissioned this midterm review of the Regional Electoral Support Project Phase II. It is intended to provide UNDP, project partners and stakeholders with an independent assessment of the Regional Electoral Support Project Phase II that will be used to strengthen future programming.

In particular, the evaluation was asked to:

1. Assess the relevance and effectiveness of Phase II efforts taking into consideration the MENA regional context and UN/UNDP electoral and development goals;

2. Assess the level of progress made towards achieving the intended outcomes and outputs;

3. Assess the efficiency of project management, implementation and use of resources;

4. Assess the level of ownership, participation and partnerships in the project and in the promotion of its objectives and the sustainability of its efforts;

5. Capture lessons learned and best practices; and,

6. Provide recommendations to strengthen the project moving forwards.

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[2] UN, *Development System Repositioning. Frequently Asked Questions*, p 1

The midterm review took place in July – August 2019 with the field work done in Jordan from 28 July – 2 August 2019. The evaluation was conducted by Sue Nelson, International Consultant, an expert in democratic governance and electoral assistance. She undertook a qualitative assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Phase II assistance and the factors that affected project performance. The review 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 the review:

- Collected information and perceptions of the project through interviews with: UNDP (New York, Brussels, Amman and at country office level in the region); current and former Phase II staff and consultants, SIDA, EAD, ArabEMBs and some of its members, LAS, OIC, women and youth participants and other relevant actors and institutions. The interviews were done in person in Amman and persons 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 the MENA region (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 Midterm Review Inception Report (Annex 3). The midterm review's Terms of Reference are provided in Annex 4. The review was limited by the time available for the review and reporting, and the availability of project staff, partners and stakeholders for interviews.

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

2.2 Political and electoral context

The Arab Spring brought in a wave of new electoral institutions, legislation and expectations. These were positive changes for some in the region and for democratic development with the adoption of new constitutions and the holding of credible elections. However, in different places, it took different shapes, leading in some cases to instability and conflict and in others to more restrictive legislation reducing the space for voice and participation. In these cases, the checks and balance systems have been ineffective leaving political and economic elites in control of governments and resulting in what Transparency International characterizes as a crisis of democracy and a flourishing of corruption.[3]

Table 1: Survey Data on Participation				
Topic	2006	2011	2013	2016
	%	%	%	%
Interested in politics (F)	32	31	28	19
Interested in politics (M)	45	44	43	34
Voted in last elections (F)	-	46	54	43
Voted in last elections (M)	-	51	59	48
Never participated in meeting or signed petition (F)	77	65	85	85
Never participated in meeting or signed petition (M)	63	59	74	77

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[3] Transparency International, *Middle East & North Africa: Corruption continues as institutions and political rights weaken.* The region has an average score of 39 out of 100 for the *Corruption Perceptions Index 2018* with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at the high end with 70, and with Yemen and Syria at the bottom (14 and 13 respectively).

According to UNDP's *Arab Human Development Report, Research Paper Leaving No One Behind,* unaccountable governance is one of the five areas that need to be addressed in the region to combat the forces of exclusion. Another is discrimination.[4]
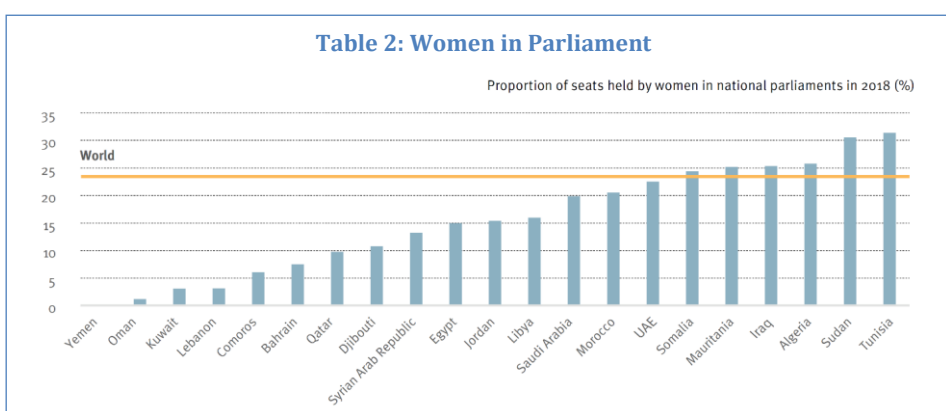
Polling over time shows an increase in the extent to which citizens believe their countries are democratic.[5] At the same time, citizen interest in politics and participation has decreased (Table 1). This data also shows a significant difference between men and women and their political participation in the region.

According to all of the reporting, women in the region lag behind men on the development indicators including political empowerment. The project's gender strategy notes that the MENA region closed over 60% of its overall gender gap in 2017 for the second year in a row but that it still ranked second to last globally on the *Global Gender Gap Index*. In the 2018 index for political empowerment (Box 1), Yemen ranked last and most of the other countries' scores remained unchanged with the exception of Qatar (+0.034) Mauritania (-0.052) and Lebanon (+0.005) where the scores changed only slightly.[6]

Box 1: Gender Gap Political Empowerment Index 2018	
Country	**Rank**
Tunisia	58
Mauritania	64
UAE	68
Algeria	85
Morocco	102
Egypt	122
Saudi Arabia	127
Jordan	129
Syria	135
Qatar	140
Bahrain	145
Kuwait	146
Lebanon	147
Yemen	149

There is also a pervasive attitude that politics and political office are for men, In the polling, 78% of men felt they were better than women in this regard (with 61% of women agreeing), however, 55% of men and 68% of women still felt that a women could become a prime minister or a president.[7] The disparity of elected women is evident in the number of women in parliaments (Table 2) where most of the countries in the region are below the world average.[8]

Table 2: Women in Parliament

Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in 2018 (%)

The region has a population of about 450 million people. Two-thirds of these are under the age of 30 with half of these 15 – 29. UNDP sees this as a "*demographic momentum*" that will "*offer a historic opportunity which Arab nations must seize*" for at least the next 20 years.[9]

This will be a challenge. As noted in the UNDP human development report on Arab youth, their prospects are "*jeopardized by poverty, economic stagnation, governance failures and exclusion, all compounded by the violence and fragility of the body politic.*"[10] As a result, although youth can be a force for building a better future in the region, their disempowerment "*sows the seeds of instability.*" Political participation rates among youth in surveys show similar declines as those in the general population Table 3). A 2016 survey done by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) found that the

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[4] UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report, Research Paper, Leaving No One Behind,* p 14
[5] In four out of the seven countries polled
[6] World Economic Forum, *Gender Gap Index 2018*
[7] Arab Barometer, Wave IV
[8] UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report, Research Paper,* p 17
[9] UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, p 5
[10] Ibid, p 26

large majority of youth distanced themselves from politics although they were interested and engaged in other domains.[11] It also found that more than a third of the youth surveyed listed democracy as their preferred system of government, a quarter preferred a strong man running the country while the remainder were split between wanting a combined democratic and Islamic system or a religious state based on Sharia.[12]

Trust in public institutions was also low among youth with their trust in parliaments at 11%. They trusted family the most (79%) followed by the educational system (41%).[13] Almost a third of the youth said the events in the region since 2011 was a revolution while a quarter felt it was anarchy. Two thirds of the youth felt the events were still ongoing, while more than half felt that the efforts started by youth had been hijacked by others, and half felt that nothing had changed.[14]

Table 3: Survey Data on Youth Participation				
Question	2006	2011	2013	2016
	%	%	%	%
Political party membership	-	8	10	4
Attended campaign rally	16	16	19	11
Participate in protest	22	16	23	16
Attended meetings/signed petition	20	16	20	13
Voted in last election	-	38	38	21

UNDP considers youth empowerment as the key to future development in the region and that empowering youth and channelling their energy for development will help the countries in the region to make a developmental leap and ensure durable stability. To effectively engage youth and achieve this, the factors that caused their exclusion in the political, social and economic environments needed to be changed and opportunities for youth opened in these sectors.[15] A key factor that could undermine these effort is the continuing conflict in the region (Box 2).[16] The UN estimates that if the ongoing conflicts and crises are not resolved and the demographic projections continue as anticipated, 40% of the Arab countries will live in crisis and conflict conditions by 2030.[17]

Box 2: Countries affected by conflict or political violence

2000 - 2003
Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan
2010 – 2015
Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen

2.3 Assistance to the electoral processes in the region

The international community provided a substantial level of support to the MENA region following the Arab Spring. This has been reduced over time, but there is still a significant level of support within the region.

UNDP currently has country level projects in Lebanon, Tunisia, Libya and Somalia. In addition to this Regional Electoral Support Project, it also has several regional programmes that are managed from its regional hub in Jordan. This includes Mosharaka (*Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Effective Contribution of Women in the Public Sphere*) and the Youth Leadership Programme which are done in coordination with the project.

In addition to UNDP, several UN organizations provide assistance to the electoral cycle in the region. EAD provides a wide range of advisory, technical and other support for the electoral processes for countries in the region and coordinated with the Regional Electoral Support Project in its

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[11] FES, *Youth in the MENA region. Coping with Uncertainty, An Overview*
[12] Ibid, p 117
[13] Ibid, p 118
[14] Ibid, pps 122-123. Actual survey data: 29% said the events were still a revolution (65% in Egypt and 40% in Tunisia), 25% said it was anarchy (54% of Syrian refugees, 42% in Lebanon, 38% in Palestine and 31% in Yemen).
[15] UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2016*, p 7
[16] Ibid, p 39
[17] UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report, Research Paper,* p 3

implementation. In addition, several countries in the region have UN political and peacekeeping missions which would include electoral advisors and electoral support efforts. This includes UNAMI in Iraq, UNMHA for Yemen, UNSCOL in Lebanon, and Special Envoys for Yemen and Syria.

UN Women's Regional Office for the Arab States covers 17 countries and supports them in their efforts for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and has regional programmes to implement these goals. It worked with GPECS II under Phase I to hold the women's summit in Cairo and coordinated with the Regional Electoral Support Project on its development of the ArabEMBs Women's Network.[18]

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides sizeable support to the processes in the region through its focus on inclusive governance, regional research and activities in areas such as space for civil society, promotion of gender equality and increasing meaningful youth participation which it undertakes through different organizations.[19]   The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has offices in 10 countries and focuses on the long-term development of civic groups, political parties, parliament and governing institutions, including engaging women and youth in political processes and sharing experiences.[20]   The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) focuses on strengthening electoral systems and democratic institutions. It has field offices in four countries and activities in another two and has done some coordination and information sharing with the project.

International IDEA (IDEA) supports activities in the region through its regional sub-office in Tunisia. It supports national EMBs in the region as well as the ArabEMBs with technical assistance (TA) and by supporting platforms for the different EMBs to share experiences. It also supports the participation of women and youth through its *Youth Democracy Academy and Respect for Women's Political Rights* project.[21]   It worked with the Regional Electoral Support Project on a number of regional events with the ArabEMBs and on the Women's Network.

The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe facilitates dialogue between countries on different continents including the Southern Mediterranean region.   Areas include democratic institutions and fundamental rights, constitutional justice, elections, referendums and political parties. This is done through requests for opinions, contributions to seminars, workshops or events, exchange of views or contact with different authorities and bodies. This is done on a bilateral as well as multilateral basis.[22] It also coordinated with the project on several regional workshops by providing experts and cost-sharing.

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Box 3: Expected Outcomes

Strategic Plan Outcome

2. Citizens expectations for voice, development, rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance

GPECS Outputs

2. Regional level advocacy, capacity development and knowledge generation enhanced

4. Gender is mainstreamed in electoral assistance

Regional Programme Outputs

2.2.2. Regional platforms for policy dialogue enabled to support civic engagement, constitution-making, electoral and parliamentary processes and institutions to promote inclusion, transparency and accountability (UNDP Strategic Plan 2.2.2)

2.6.2 Capacities strengthened to raise awareness on and undertake legal, policy and institutional reforms to fight gender discrimination and ensure women's participation in political and peace processes (UNDP Strategic Plan 2.6.1)

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2.4 Regional Electoral Support Project MENA Phase II

The Regional Electoral Support for Middle East and North Africa Phase II Project was designed as a USD 7,473,533 three year project (June 2017 – June 2020) intended to continue and expand on the

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[18] UN Women, *Arab States, Regional Office for the Arab States*

[19] USAID, *Middle East Regional, Democracy and Governance*

[20] NDI, *Middle East and North Africa, Overview*

[21] IDEA, *Where we Work: Africa & West Asia/Tunisia*

[22] Venice Commission, *Co-operation activities in the Southern Mediterranean*

achievements of its Phase I (2013 – 2017).[23] It is fully funded by SIDA and is a regional component of GPECS II.

The overarching goal of the project was to *enhance the credibility, inclusivity, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes in the Middle East and North Africa*.[24] It also intended to improve the accountability, participation and representation in the region through strengthening knowledge, awareness and capacity on electoral processes and regional cooperation among electoral stakeholders. These were to contribute to the UNDP strategic plan outcome for stronger systems of democratic governance; the GPECS II outputs on strengthening regional level advocacy, capacity, knowledge and gender mainstreaming; and the

Table 4: Anticipated Project Budget
by Outputs

regional programme outputs of support to regional platforms for electoral processes and civic engagement, and women's political participation (Box 3). Eighteen countries are covered by the project (Box 4).

To accomplish its objectives, the Regional Project focused on achieving four main outputs:

1. *Enhanced regional electoral capacity and knowledge* (Output 1);

2. *Strengthened profession of electoral administration through regional cooperation* (Output 2);

3. *Enhanced civil and political participation of women* (Output 3); and,

4. *Role of youth promoted in the electoral cycle* (Output 4).

Box 4: Regional Coverage

Algeria
Bahrain
Djibouti
Egypt
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Libya
Morocco
Saudi Arabia
Somalia
Sudan
Syria
Tunisia
UAE
Yemen
Palestinian People

The anticipated project budget is provided in Table 4. This includes the breakdown of anticipated costs within each output by the project's sub-outputs (or activity areas) along with its anticipated operational and overhead (GMS) costs.[25]
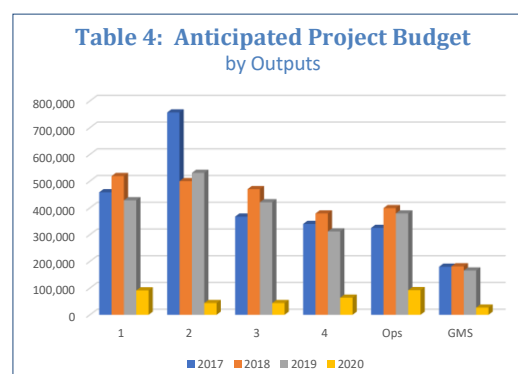
Box 5: Project Organizational Structure

Source: Regional Project Document
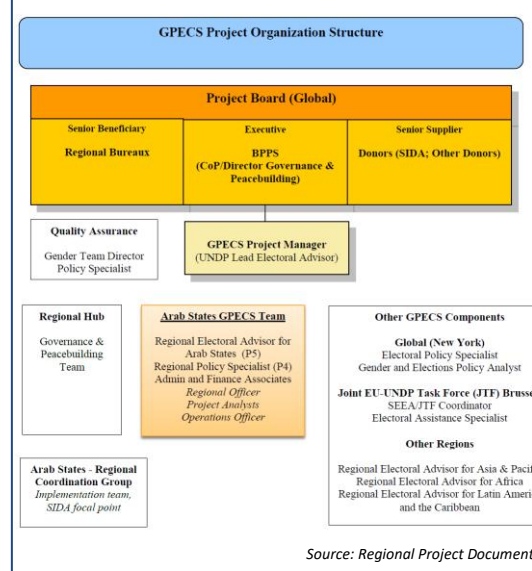
The Regional Project was executed through a direct execution modality by UNDP. GPECS II is a global project managed by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS). The MENA Regional Component was to be led and managed by a Regional Electoral Advisor for Arab States, assisted by a Regional Electoral Policy Specialist and support staff. The Regional Electoral Advisor was to be under the supervision of the Governance and Peacebuilding Regional Team Leader in the regional hub in Amman

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[23] Project Document, p 1. Phase I was a USD 5.5 million project also funded by SIDA
[24] Project Document, p 2
[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. It divided the costs for the long term advisors among the four outputs.

and the Lead Electoral Advisor in NY (Box 5). Its management and implementation were to be coordinated with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS)

GPECS II has a Project Board that was to meet once a year and the Regional Component was to have an additional Regional Coordination Group that was to meet quarterly. This was to consist of the project implementation team in the region, SIDA and other partners as appropriate.[26] BPPS was to provide the regional office with project support and quality assurance and RBAS through the regional hub supported its financial and administrative services.

The project anticipated having midterm and final evaluations. This is the midterm evaluation.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance

This section looks at the project and its relevance to the regional context, to UNDP's role and comparative advantage in electoral assistance, and to the project's intended outputs and activities. Design issues and the project's theory of change are also included.

The project was originally designed following the 2010-2012 Arab Spring and was highly relevant given the high levels of popular demand for political and other reforms and the need to strengthen the electoral processes, their administration and inclusive participation in the region. This movement had resulted in large numbers of new institutions and electoral frameworks that needed strengthening and implementing. These needs still exist and in some cases have become more acute given the "*increase in the number of countries adopting counterrevolutionary regressive laws and legislations.. that take away fundamental rights of civic engagement,*" where *"horizontal inequalities and people's political exclusion and that of women and youth in particular from decision making processes*" remain which were "*underlying reasons for the 2011 uprisings and the subsequent ongoing conflicts in the region.*"[27]

The project's intended goals of improving the accountability, participation and representation in the region are widely recognized as integral components of credible electoral processes that accurately reflect the votes and underpin the legitimacy of governments. These objectives correspond to UNDP's development goals as well as to those of SIDA for the MENA region. SIDA's goals are to strengthen democracy and gender equality and greater respect for human rights.[28] These also align with the objectives of the SDGs, most notably SDG 5 on *Gender Equality* and SDG 16 *Peace Justice and Strong Institutions.*

The efforts with LAS and to strengthen regional cooperation were also directly relevant to the UN Security Council's focus on strengthening cooperation and partnership with regional institutions, and in case of the Arab region, with LAS[29] as well as the General Assembly Resolution that "*calls upon United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and institutions to continue their interaction with their counterparts from Arab organizations and institutions ..... in order to implement mutually agreed projects and programmes and to make the greatest possible use of Arab institutions and their technical expertise in implementing projects in the Arab region.*"[30]

The regional nature of the project that linked the institutions responsible for the different aspects of the electoral cycle for technical level cooperation in the region through networking and peer

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[26] Project Document, *Annex 1,* p 2
[27] Project Document, pps 5 and 6
[28] Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, *Regional Strategy for Swedish Development Cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) 2016 -2020,* p 1
[29] Security Council Report, *Cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States*
[30] United Nations General Assembly, *Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States*, p 2

exchanges was widely perceived as needed during evaluation interviews. Although UNDP had several country level programmes that provided outside exposure and networking opportunities for some of the institutions, these were driven by national-level agendas and regional considerations were secondary.

The project's regional nature also made it relevant to the needs of countries without a UNDP country-level presence or where UN electoral assistance was not yet authorized by the UN Focal Point. It was a useful tool for UNDP and EAD as it kept the UN and the normative values of its electoral assistance on the radar screen for the EMBs and officials within the non-assisted countries. It also broadened their exposure to the work of other commissions in the regions and to their best practices. The fact that the number of UNDP electoral related projects in the region had diminished

substantially during the project (Box 6) increased its relevance and importance for those countries as it was able to provide some continuity of contact or to complete an essential task in some of those cases.

 The project's design for Phase II was a continuation of Phase I with only minor changes, most resulting from the lessons learned from Phase I and the recommendations from its final evaluation and donor. The challenges to the democratization process in the region and the regression in some areas were clearly laid out in the project document which justifies the need for assistance. It also situates the work under UNDP's Strategic Objective No. 2 which was to *"strengthen the framework for democratic governance and building resilience into the principle, rules of engagement, systems and core institutions of governance… which is the basis for inclusive accountable, responsive and resilient state-society relations under the rule of law."[31]*

Box 6: UNDP Country Level Electoral Support Projects	
July 2017[1]	**July 2019**
Djibouti	Lebanon
Egypt	Libya
Iraq	Somalia
Jordan	Tunisia
Lebanon	
Libya	
Palestine	
Tunisia	
Yemen	

The project provides a clear goal that is directly linked to this strategic objective: "*strengthen the credibility, inclusivity, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes"* and "*improve [their] accountability, participation and representation.*" It also explains that it would achieve this through *enhancing knowledge, awareness and capacity on electoral processes and regional cooperation among electoral stakeholders*."[32]   However, it does not lay out a clear theory of change that demonstrates how the outputs and activities selected, some of which are quite broad, contribute to these processes and achieve the higher level objectives for this project.

Pieces of the theory of change can be found in different sections in the project document and results framework. For instance, it explains in the section on youth that "*inclusive and credible elections provide the necessary political space for disaffected youth to voice their opinions and have a say in the policies and decisions that govern them."[33]* This justifies the need to strengthen the electoral process so that youth (and others) are able to participate and advocate for their policy issues and representation. However, it does not state how the activities chosen for youth would contribute to strengthening the electoral processes so that they can provide that space and opportunity for the youths' effective voice in policy decisions.

Developing a more explicit theory of change and laying out a clear programmatic vision that ties the four outputs and their activities together and explains how individually and collectively they would

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[31] Project Document, p 8

[32] Project Document, p 1. This goal was down from Phase I's "*transparent and strengthened electoral management bodies that are able to administer electoral processes that reflect the will of the people*" which the Phase I Final Evaluation stated was beyond the control of project and the regional partners assisted

[33] Project Document, p 29

contribute to the project goal would strengthen the overall strategic focus for the project and its activities.

The project used an electoral cycle approach in its design. This is a best practice as well as a practical means to ground a regional electoral support project. This allowed the project to support the broader base of stakeholders inherent in the cycle approach as well as the other components of the process beyond electoral administration, such as political and electoral participation and role of the human rights institutions and media in the process. This cycle approach was reflected in the design as well as in the wording of the project's intended outcome.

The project intended to use a flexible approach so it could "*shift activities and resources*" to the "*evolving political environment and electoral calendars*" and to allow for "*rapid response to emerging democracies or hot spots with an urgent need for electoral expertise.*"[34] This flexibility helped the project to maintain its relevance during implementation and address key needs such as the Iraqi recount but it also contributed to an activity-based nature for some of its efforts.

The project's activities were directly relevant to the needs of its partner regional organizations, in particular the ArabEMBs, the electoral departments at LAS and the OIC and the network of national human rights institutes. They saw the project as a partner and a useful tool to help them achieve their own objectives. The project's participatory approach to planning and organizing activities and events substantially contributed to this sense of partnership, trust and ownership in the efforts.

EMB ownership in the Association of ArabEMBs was notable in the evaluation's interviews although the Association has yet to organize many activities without project support. One of the founding members referred to it as "*my baby.*" The project's flexibility during its establishment, which has been slow and challenging, helped ensure its continued relevance to the ArabEMBs members as it made its efforts responsive to them, their needs and timelines.

The support for LAS and to the OIC, done in coordination with EAD, was also highly relevant and useful for their elections departments, both of which said they needed the training, systems, mentoring and exposure opportunities provided by the project. Both noted that they faced significant financial constraints and the project's financing of trainings and their participation in events enabled their departments to participate in some important regional and capacity building activities on democratic issues such as the independence of electoral commissions and women's political participation.

The work done to develop the women's network under the ArabEMBs and its intentions for the future are directly relevant to the needs of the electoral and political process and the goals of the project. The proof of this however will be in its implementation, the level of effort that the participants put into this and their focus. Work with parliamentarians or political parties on women's participation and representation issues would increase the relevance of this component for future efforts.

The project's activities for youth were relevant for the participants who received support for their social innovations and civic engagement efforts. The inclusion of youth-serving CSOs and the development of national plans for their efforts increased the relevance of the support at national levels as did the YLP 5 emphasis on SDG 16 and political and civil participation. However, the activity's broad-based nature in general is not as relevant to the electoral and political participation and representation aspects of the project. As with the gender component, working with parliamentarians and political parties on youth issues, and encouraging youth interaction with the work of the ArabEMBs, LAS or NHRIs would strengthen their relevance.

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[34] Project Document, p 14

UNDP was well placed to implement the Regional Electoral Support Project having successfully implemented Phase I which helped to establish the ArabEMBs and develop the relationships with the regional partners and institutions that provided the platforms for the project's efforts. The fact that Regional Electoral Support Project was a component of a global project based in New York gave it immediate access to UNDP's global network of experts, staff and relationships, although this would also have been easily available had it been attached to the regional bureau as UNDP has an experienced and well organized system of technical and other support for its electoral projects.

The project design highlights UNDP's dual role as a convener and as a development organization, able to bridge gaps, provide platforms that bring different people together, facilitate their networking, dialogue and support their institutional and professional capacity building. The project worked in close coordination with EAD, and in some cases helped to implement an EAD activity, such as the BRIDGE training with the OIC and the Iraqi recount. This was directly relevant given EAD's mandate and DPA's role in the region. The EAD noted the value of the UN in organizing these efforts which was perceived in the region as credible and more impartial than some bilateral donors which may be seen at times as having a regional agenda or other motives for their assistance.

Phase II was situated in Jordan co-located with the UNDP regional hub office for the Arab States. Although the project was separate from the hub as a part of a global programme, the regional hub felt the project added value to its regional programme of assistance, seeing it as a joint effort rather than something done in parallel. This was especially the case for the support for women, youth and human rights which were implemented jointly with the regional hub. These joint efforts however also broadened the focus of the efforts in the case of women and youth.

A country level window was not included in Phase II which some UNDP Chief Technical Advisors (CTAs) thought limited the opportunities for country level efforts and regional coordination meetings. This reduced the relevance of the project for several of the CTAs interviewed. Nevertheless, the project still provided a significant level of technical and human resource support to some of the projects and country offices. Much of this appeared ad hoc and need driven. Their programmatic relevance could be increased significantly by recognizing this element more directly in the project design and incorporating it into the overall strategy so that the parameters and purposes for this type of assistance were clear.

3.2 Effectiveness

This section provides the findings on project performance and results for each of its output areas. It ends with findings on the advisory and other support provided in the region.

3.2.1 Output 1. Enhanced regional electoral capacity and knowledge

The objective for Output 1 was *enhancing regional electoral capacity and knowledge.* The Regional Project intended to accomplish this through *increasing professional knowledge on elections* (Output 1.1), *promoting the establishment of a network of Arab speaking electoral experts* (Output 1.2), *enhancing the capacity of the League of Arab States* (Output 1.3), and *engaging with media to raise awareness and facilitate partnerships* (Output 1.4).

To achieve these objectives, the project intended to organize regional and thematic workshops and trainings, including BRIDGE, establish a Regional Training and Documentation Centre, codify regional legal knowledge and practices, and expand the Arabic lexicon of electoral terms to cover country variations not included in the original version. It also intended to develop an e-learning course, strengthen the pool of regional BRIDGE facilitators, translate/ customize BRIDGE modules into

Arabic, and strengthen the LAS Electoral Department through the provision of ICT expertise and training.[35]

The anticipated budget for the activities for this Output was USD 1,134,250 (Table 5). This was 20% of the project budget. The costs for the project's two long-term technical advisors were split among the project's four outputs in the project document which brought the estimated total budget for Output 1 to USD 1,496,750. Actual expenditures as of the end of June 2019 were USD 1,328,009 (24% of all project expenditures).
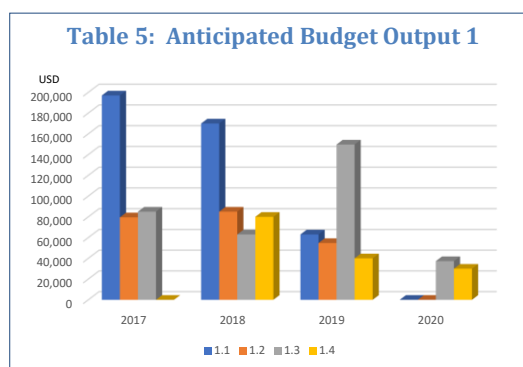
Increasing professional knowledge (1.1). More than a third (38%) of the activity funds for Output 1 was intended to be used to increase the professional knowledge of electoral administrators and other stakeholders (USD 430,000). As part of this the project intended to codify legal knowledge and practice in the region on elections, create a regional training and documentation centre for the enhancement of electoral knowledge and good practices, expand and facilitate the use of the electoral lexicon and initiate the development of the first professional electoral dictionary as a tool for practitioners. The project also intended to increase awareness and technical understanding among stakeholders through regional conferences and national workshops.

Table 5: Anticipated Budget Output 1

Actual expenditures were estimated to be about 17% of the activity expenditures for Output 1.[36]

This midterm review found that the project's overall efforts, including those targeting Output 1.1, contributed to an increased level of professional knowledge on elections and related issues for those who participated in the project's workshops, trainings, knowledge product development, exposure visits and exchanges. This helped ensure that professional knowledge was shared among project partners, built peer networks and developed a sense of common interest and understanding of the topics discussed.

The actual extent of this increase and its impact beyond this are unknown as the project's M&E indicators track the number of events and participants. However, it seemed evident from the evaluation's interviews and the anecdotal information available, that some of the project participants were more aware and knowledgeable on some of the better practices raised during its efforts, as well as on the ways in which their colleagues managed similar issues which were discussed in the different venues.

The numbers of persons reached directly by the project was limited. For instance, 257 persons participated in all of the activities implemented for Output 1 (Table 7). Many of these are likely to be the same persons who attended different events. These numbers also include project or other UNDP staff or consultants in some cases. Nevertheless, the majority of these participants were representatives of their institutions which do the actual work of the electoral processes in their countries and region, and were in a position to be able to adopt some of the better practices and systems promoted by the project, pass them on to their colleagues and in some cases to institutionalize them within their own institutions.

The actual extended reach of the project through these representatives and any changes they may have generated as a result is unknown. It is likely substantive for the sharing of information given the level of interest that participants noted in the processes and meetings such as on voter registration and electoral dispute resolution. Tracking this to the extent possible in the future would

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[35] Project Document, pps 18-19
[36] Expenditures by sub-output activity areas are estimates provided by the project for illustrative purposes only.

give the project a better idea of the impact and ripple effect of its work, identify which of its efforts were the most effective and provide data that could be used to focus follow-up efforts. This would strengthen its efforts to transmit knowledge and skills beyond the representatives who attended the events and which could significantly increase the project's potential impact and benefits for the institutions. This could be done in collaboration with country offices and projects which would be a best practice.

The project produced two knowledge products in Phase II so far for Output I. These are the *Dictionary of Electoral Terminology* and the *Human Rights Guidebook on Monitoring in Election*. In addition, it is coordinating with IDEA on the development of the ArabEMBs guidebook on the independence of EMBs. It also published other knowledge products in undertaking the work for the other outputs (Box 7). Earlier products produced in Phase I were seen to be of good quality, although their actual use is an unknown. Tracking the reach of the Phase II products and gathering feedback on their use would help to determine their actual relevance and usefulness to the recipients.

The dictionary was done directly by UNDP as a follow on to the *Arab Lexicon of Electoral Terminology* which the project completed in Phase 1. The dictionary is modelled after one done in Latin America (now in its 3rd edition) and the project translated about 100 pages of it into Arabic as a writing guide. The dictionary covers 80 electoral terms in depth and includes regional examples and procedures. The project contracted 35 writers to develop the dictionary, led by a multi-agency editorial board headed by the former Chief Electoral Officer of Palestine and included EAD (which provided for about a third of the dictionary's cost) and the former president of the Independent High Instance for Elections (IHIE) in Tunisia.

This is a good practice example of building on a successful model from a region that underwent a similar transition and was now at the next level of democratization. The project used the development of the dictionary to build a network among the different types of professionals involved (academics, government professionals, lawyers and international development experts) who were focused on a common goal and used common procedures to deliver a product that the project expects to be useful for practitioners, professors and university students. Several EMBs and LAS commented on this product during the evaluation and noted its importance as a reference. The dictionary was in its final review during this evaluation.

The depository for the document is expected to be the ArabEMBs website. There is a prototype website already developed with other project products available there such as the voter registration mapping. This website is expected to serve as the institutional repository for knowledge products produced in partnership with the association.

In addition, the project is developing an electoral atlas that is to be an online database with procedures, laws, etc. from across the region. They are currently in the data collection process and expect it to be completed jointly with LAS with missing information to be collected by the ArabEMBs through a survey of its members.

Pool of Arab electoral expertise (1.2) The project intended to support the formation of a network of Arab speaking electoral experts through collaboration with LAS and the ArabEMBs. It also intended to develop a certificated e-learning course on different relevant matters and expand the pool of regional BRIDGE trainers and facilitate their engagement with electoral stakeholders in the region. The Arabization of ACE and support for its outreach was also foreseen under this output.

The project's estimated activity budget for Output 1.2 was USD 219,250 which was 19% of the planned Output 1 budget. Actual expenditures were estimated to be about 32% of Output 1's budget.

The original intent on developing a pool of experts was to identify Arab-speaking experts in the region and train them through BRIDGE or with other training to become experts who could then provide technical and other assistance in the region. The project realized however that a substantial level of expertise already existed within the various EMBs and other institutions and decided instead to work with its partner institutions to further enhance their capacity. This was a much better approach for this output than what was originally intended. The drawing on existing expertise and developing a network by linking like institutions, such as through the ArabEMBs, organically built a network of Arab-speaking electoral experts who could provide this expertise.

The project hired a long term consultant to work on the Arabic site of ACE. This is a global repository of electoral knowledge managed by eight international organizations including UNDP. This work was a comprehensive and time consuming process that included finding and uploading electoral materials in Arabic to the site, preparing the annual Arabic newsletter and translating materials. The consultant also helped with the revamping of the ACE website which needed to be done first in the English version, after which she started translating the webpages into Arabic. This process is not yet completed.

The project is piloting translation support for this effort by using UN Volunteers provided through an online service to which the project subscribes. So far, it seems to be working well and to be a cost-effective way to translate the many pages of the ACE encyclopaedia and other materials, some of which are lengthy. For example, the section on gender and elections is 109 pages, youth and elections is 120 pages, and conflict prevention is 178 pages.

ACE as group undertook a survey of its site's use in all languages in summer 2017 as part of its strategic planning process and updating of the site. The findings from the 78 responses from the Arabic site are provided in Box 8.[37] Most of the respondents of the survey were from Algeria (31%) followed by Iraq and Libya (17% each), Egypt (12%), Jordan (7%), Sudan (5%), Morocco (3%), and Mauritania, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria each with 1.7%.

Box 8: Use of ACE in Arabic 2017 Survey Results
Visit Frequency
Daily: 13%; Weekly: 29%
Monthly: 20%; 1st time: 36%
Most useful site
Encyclopedia: 48%
Electoral Materials: 44%
Support & Advice: 22%
Regions & Countries: 21%
Comparative Data: 15%
Relevance
Very: 42%. Somewhat: 25%
Average: 25%; None: 9%
Users
Academic: 36%; EMB: 24%
Int'l Org: 9% Media: 4%
Male: 84%, Female: 16%
Ages 18 – 34: 29%; 35-64: 68%

The market survey undertaken to inform ACE's 2020 - 2024 planning process found that ACE overall received about 2.3 – 2.8 million visits a year from 2015 - 2018 with 90% of all site visits to the encyclopaedia pages and 4% of all visits to the Arabic site.[38] This showed a decline starting in October 2018 with 1.9 million visitors from March 2018 - March 2019. The market survey analysis

Box 9: ACE in Arabic, Number of Page Views
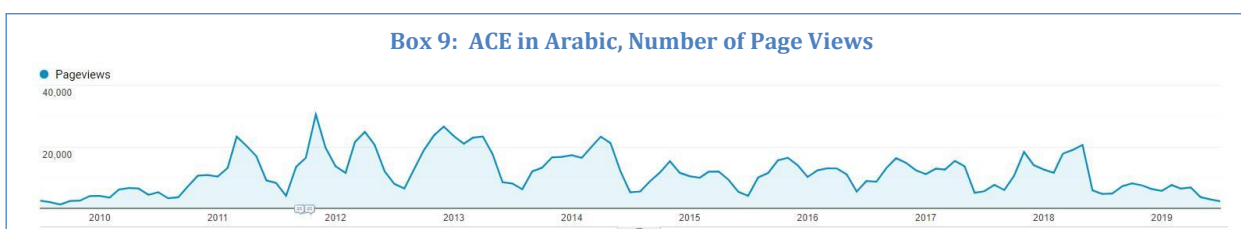
noted that the cause for the decline was unclear. The number of page views (Box 9) for the Arabic site shows a peak of use during the Arab Spring, and a precipitous drop in 2019. More detailed analytics were not available within the timeframe of this evaluation that would show the actual

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[37] ACE, *Arabic User Survey 2017 Results.* Percentages in Box 8 are rounded
[38] ACE, *Data and Market Analysis,* p 2

amount of time spent on site by the users and other variables that are needed to be able to understand its actual use.

Although the decline in the Arabic version apparently also reflects the overall decline in the use of ACE, the drop for the Arabic site is notable given the level of effort that the project has expended on it in Phase II and the amount of material that it has translated and uploaded. This requires a closer look at the analytics and users/nonusers to determine what the real issues are and if it is a simple marketing issue or if it is something more systemic within ACE itself, such as reduced relevance for these types of sites given the proliferation of materials that are available on the internet or the increased capacity and professionalism within the sector that reduces the need for reference materials.

League of Arab States (1.3). LAS is a key partner for the project. It anticipated spending USD 335,000 or 30% of its Output 1 budget to continue its efforts to strengthen the LAS Electoral Department and its work. It intended to do this through TA, customization and implementation of BRIDGE and other training courses, study tours to the electoral departments in other regional institutions, support for thematic workshops and conferences and the preparation of LAS election observation missions. These efforts were to be done in partnership with, and under the leadership of, EAD which is the main UN partner of LAS given its political nature.

Actual expenditures were estimated to be around 32% of Output 1 expenditures.

LAS sees the project as an indispensable partner which, with EAD, helped to develop its electoral unit into an Electoral Department which it feels can provide technical assistance and observation services for its members. The Department credited the work done under Phases I and II with helping it reach this position stating that 90% of the cooperation activities it has done in the past five years have been through this project.

One of the key successes of the Phase I effort was the development of a LAS regional forum which brought together EMB officials from more than 20 countries, many of whom did not know each other before then, to discuss electoral issues. This idea was generated in part from the LAS exposure visit to the Latin American Democracy Forum organized by the project in Phase I. LAS felt it was important to gather all EMBs from its 22 member states under the LAS umbrella to discuss electoral topics and share knowledge since there had been so many transitions in the region since 2012. It was also proud that this had enabled LAS to hold its first ministerial council on elections which it had adopted officially to be held on a biannual basis.

The project, along with EAD, supported the second LAS Forum of EMBs held in Cairo in 2018 which LAS co-funded. In addition to the EMBs, ArabEMBs and international agencies, representatives from the Arab Parliament attended. LAS felt the topic of voter registration adopted for the conference was important for the region. The project showed a considerable amount of foresight and planning for the event. It undertook a voter registration mapping of the region with the ArabEMBs under Output 2 that it developed it into a knowledge product which the ArabEMBs presented during the forum. The conference brought in the EMBs from LAS member states, including the Gulf, which provided the ArabEMBs with the opportunity to extend their networks and relationships.

> **LAS on value of project support**
>
> *The Project's existence in the Arab Region became essential… it is irreplaceable. It made a significant contribution to improve electoral processes in the Arab region by supporting the role of the ArabEMBs and the regional organizations like the League of Arab States.*
>
> *The project is already engaged in many initiatives .. some of them are mainly related to gender and inclusivity… two issues which represent major challenges in the Arab region and we all still have much more effort [to do] in this regard.*
>
> *LAS… gained more experience from the training courses conducted by the project as it has its own election trainers team, the LAS Elections Department became more engaged with the elections community as the project facilitated LAS participation … this gives LAS the strength to start its role to assist its member states as soon as the funding issue is solved.*

LAS characterized its introduction to, and adoption of, BRIDGE as a success.[39] It sees this as its main programme for building its staff capacities and credits the project with facilitating the accreditation of its trainers by ensuring an accrediting facilitator was included in each course which gave LAS the opportunity to have its trainers accredited. By the time of this Phase II midterm evaluation it had 14 semi-accredited, seven fully accredited and one accrediting facilitators and they had trained 100 LAS observers. LAS intends to create a team of 14 trainers that can train the 200 LAS staff members who also serve as observers for the LAS election observation missions as well as a means to provide training and technical assistance to its member state EMBs.

LAS is also working with the project on the Arabization of BRIDGE. Although most of the BRIDGE modules are already translated, their quality was characterized by the project as 'weak" and needing customization. This is done through rewriting the modules in Arabic and adding Arab case studies. The gender module is the pilot effort which LAS stated would be done by the first quarter of 2020 to be launched at a workshop on gender equality and elections. LAS also felt its review of the Arab election dictionary had added value to the document.

The project facilitated the visit of LAS Electoral Department Director to EAD in NY along it with her counterpart from the OIC. As LAS wants to provide technical assistance to EMBs, undertake needs assessment missions (NAMs) and continue with its elections observation with trained observers, this visit was undoubtably useful. The project also provided the opportunity for LAS Electoral Department staff and its Deputy Director to attend the electoral systems course at the University of St Joseph's and for the Deputy Director to return the subsequent year to co-instruct the course. This he felt was professionally enriching and is an avenue the project hopes will lead to the sustainability of the course.

There is no performance data for the efforts with LAS beyond numbers of persons trained and events facilitated although BRIDGE efforts include a participant feedback mechanism.[40] It appears evident from the anecdotal information provided that the capacity of the Department, its staff and observers has improved substantially. The Department reports that the training of its observers increased the efficiency of their observation and their awareness of the process. It also credits the training and their earlier signing of the *Principles for International Elections Observers* and the *Code of Conduct for International Election Observers* for increasing the credibility and integrity of their electoral observation missions.

There is impact evident in their perceptions of their role and in the vision for what they can do with their technical assistance and observation. There is also their increased engagement and interest in the normative values of their work. Starting the Arabization of BRIDGE with the module on gender is also significant gesture given the status of women in some of the LAS member states.

Looking forward, efforts with LAS could be strengthened by supporting them to undertake a training needs assessment to inform the development of a targeted professional development plan. At some point, it will need more focused professional training especially if it wants to emulate EAD's role. Some of the experts interviewed felt the LAS Electoral Department already knew "a lot" about elections, and raised the issue of BRIDGE being too basic for its core staff. LAS is also reportedly interested in doing a model UN. This is an effort that could be interesting to support depending on how it was conceptualized.

The project also continued its relationship with the Electoral Unit in the OIC which has 57 member states, 21 of which are Arab States. In Phase I, the project had included the OIC in some of the

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[39] Introduction and adoption of BRIDGE by LAS predates the project.

[40] The 2017 training report showed that 100% of the participants thought the course had met its objectives and 87 percent said it added to their knowledge with a 5 out of 5, with 13% giving it a 4 out of 5. BRIDGE *Introduction to Electoral Administration Module for the League of Arab States, Final Report, Cairo,* December 2017, p 13

South-South exchanges and helped EAD facilitate an UN-OIC workshop with CSOs on electoral integrity. In Phase II it held its first BRIDGE workshop on Gender and Elections, and included the OIC Electoral Department Director in the 2018 LAS exchange visit with EAD and DPA in New York.

The OIC appreciated the cooperation it had received from the project and EAD. Its Electoral Unit of three persons was only created in 2016 and saw elections as a new area for them although it had started some election work in 2005 under its political affairs department. It is in the process of developing the vision for its work, which is very similar to that of the LAS Electoral Department and to EAD. They want to be an independent unit with the resources to undertake their own activities, conduct training, produce knowledge products, databases and others. They see their development as a step by step process and found the exposure visit to DPA in New York very useful as was the training.

The Unit obtained a ministerial resolution in March 2019 to hold of an annual meeting and a summit every three years to exchange views with the EMBs of the OIC's member states on election issues. They are already in discussions with EAD about organizing the first OIC-EMB forum with UN support. EAD is intending to co-organize the event and is currently looking for funding.   The project is assisting EAD with the concept and design for this first time forum and will support its implementation. The Unit itself has only a budget for its observation efforts and is also looking for outside support to undertake its activities. The adoption of this forum is likely an indirect result of the success of the LAS-EMB forum in which the OIC participated.

There is significant potential in these efforts to contribute towards the outcomes sought by this regional project, especially given the progression made within LAS and the benefits that accrue from open discussions on electoral issues in a region with difficulties in these areas.

Media engagement (1.4). The overarching objective for the project's engagement with media was to promote public access to professional, accurate and comprehensive electoral information to safeguard the transparency of electoral processes and to encourage an electoral process with public debate and the information needed to make informed choices. The output itself focused on professionalizing the media in the region to raise awareness on its role, facilitate discussions and partnerships, and promote the development of a framework to improve the quality of electoral reporting in the region. The project anticipated holding annual workshops in 2018 – 2019 in partnership with regional media networks, regulatory bodies and other media entities that were to be engaged in 2018.

The estimated activity cost for this component was USD 150,000 or about 13% of the activity budget for Output 1. Actual expenditures were estimated to be about 16% of the Output 1 expenditures.

The project did only a few things on media despite what it characterized as extensive brainstorming with partners and others on how the issue could be broached and finding the appropriate, nonpoliticized organizations to serve as partners. It shared a study on media monitoring in Tunisia that had been supported by the UNDP project there with EMBs in May 2018; it provided a training on the NRHI guidebook's media monitoring component at an ANNHRI round table at its 2018 general assembly; and it funded one of the ArabEMBs' delegation members to participate in the UNESCO global conference on Media for Democracy. There the ArabEMBs' board participated in the round table discussion for electoral practitioners on protecting electoral integrity and the challenges of information flows. The other ArabEMBs members went at their own EMB's expense. The ArabEMBs subsequently developed a concept paper for a workshop with media experts and outlets to discuss how the media is used during the electoral cycle, its role and how to deal with disinformation. It hopes to hold the workshop in late 2019 or early 2020.

Moving forward, the project should build on these efforts as the issue of information and the role of media in the region on elections integrity and participation is important in the context and one that could benefit from a regional approach, information sharing and advocacy.

3.2.2 Output 2. Strengthened profession of electoral administration through regional cooperation

The objectives for Output 2 were: *support for the ArabEMBs* (Output 2.1), *facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation among key electoral stakeholders* (Output 2.2), *enhancing the ethics of elections* (Output 2.3), and *promoting knowledge and awareness of political rights as fundamental human rights* (Output 2.4). To achieve this the project expected to support the development and consolidation of the ArabEMBs as an organization, its efforts to share lessons and knowledge among EMBs in the region, and to develop its ties with similar institutions in other regions.

Table 6 Anticipated budget Output 2
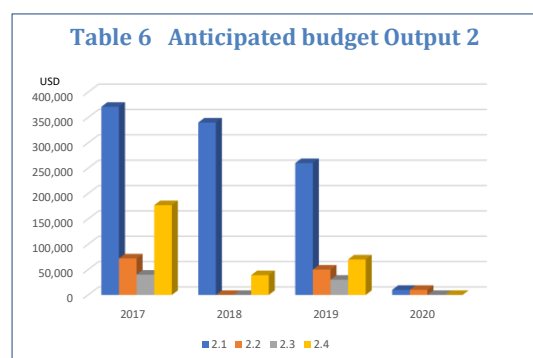
The project intended to do this through the provision of TA, training, support for the ArabEMBs secretariat, its general assembly and other meetings and conferences, and IT support for its social media and communications. It also intended for the "*EMBs to recognized that a human rights based approach to elections is required to complement political and technical approaches*." To achieve this, it anticipated working through the ANNHRI to develop synergistic efforts between EMBs and NHRIs to create an environment conductive to elections where people can freely exercise their political rights.[41]

The anticipated activity budget for Output 2 was USD 1,469,000 (Table 6). With the costs for the long-term advisors, the estimated total budget was USD 1,831,500 which was 25% of the project budget. Actual expenditures as of the end of June 2019 were USD 1,591,848 which was about 29% of all project expenditures.

ArabEMBs (2.1). The ArabEMBs was established with Phase I support in 2015 and was still in the process of setting up its structures and systems and organization during this evaluation. For Phase II, the project intended to continue its support for the setup of the secretariat, including covering its staffing and general operating costs,

Table 7: Activities Output 2						
Date	Location	Topic	Participants	Number		
				F	M	TOTAL
10-12 July 2017	Nairobi	TA	ArabEMBs training for EMB Somalia on political party reg.	11	21	32
14-16 Aug 2017	Amman	Visitor Program	ArabEMBs	5	13	18
11-13 Oct 2017	Mexico City	Election Challenges	LAS Y Youth to Latin American Dem Forum	3	4	7
15 – 16 April 2018	Oman	General Assembly	Regional Advisor attended ANNHRI		1	1
5-7 May 2018	Tunisia	Visitor Program	ArabEMBs for municipal election Tunisia	12	21	33
25 June 2018	Amman	Ex Board Meeting	ArabEMBs	1	3	4
3-4 Sept 2018	Madrid	Monitoring Guide	ANNHRI	2	7	9
25 Sept 2018	Amman	Ex Board Meeting	ArabEMBs	1	3	4
8-10 Oct 2018	Brussels	Electoral Violence	UNDP-EU (JTF) Conference	3	2	5
13-14 Nov 2018	Cairo	Voter Reg	LAS-ArabEMBs Forum	16	53	69
3-5 Feb 2019	Dead Sea	General Ass & EDR	ArabEMBs	26	64	90
19 Jan 2019	Amman	Ex Board Meeting	ArabEMBs	1	3	4
23-26 Mar 2019	Istanbul	Ex Board & Dictionary	ArabEMBs	7	7	14
4-5 April 2019	Mexico City	Democracy Forum	Academic, project staff	1	3	4
20 June 2019	Istanbul	Role NHRIs in election	NHRI Conference	1	5	6
19 -21 June 2019	Mauritania	Visitor Program	ArabEMBs to election		4	4
26 June 2019	Amman	Ex Board Meeting	ArabEMBs	1	3	4
25 June 2019	Amman	Signing ceremony	ArabEMBs	15	20	35

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[41] Project Document, p 22

the holding of its annual assemblies joined with a regional conference on a thematic topic, developing its website and supporting the institutionalization of its relationships with other regional associations.

The anticipated budget for this effort was USD 981,000 which was 67% of the activity funds for Output 2. Actual expenditures were estimated to be about 53% of the expenditures for Output 2.

The creation of the ArabEMBs done under Phase I was a major accomplishment. As noted by its former Secretary General several attempts had been made to create an association of EMBs in the region following the Arab Spring through LAS, however the "*momentum was not there*." It was done independently from LAS although it stemmed from a joint workshop held between LAS and the EMBs facilitated by the project. This setting up a regional organization from scratch directly affected the pace of its institutionalization which has been slow, but deliberate, however it provided for a direct EMB to EMB relationship without the political overtones that would have been involved had it been tied to LAS, which is a political institution.

Box 10: ArabEMBs Members	
July 2017	**July 2019**
Iraq	Comoros
Jordan	Iraq
Lebanon	Jordan
Libya	Lebanon
Mauritania	Libya
Palestine	Mauritania
Somalia	Palestine
Sudan	Somalia
Tunisia	Sudan
Yemen	Tunisia
	Yemen

Four years after its establishment, the Association is growing. It has gained recognition among its members and other institutions and is now up to 12 members from its original five, and ten at the end of Phase I (Box 7) and it is about to launch a women's network this fall that will link EMBs with CSOs and others on issues of women's participation in political and electoral processes. It has held various meetings, collected data on the voter registration processes of its members, had working visits to observe the elections of its members and has even started providing technical assistance to other members. Most of which were facilitated and supported by the project. A full list of the ArabEMBs activities is provided in Attachment A.

Project support has been essential for the continuity of the ArabEMBs and its operations. The association was not sufficiently advanced as an institution at the end of Phase I to have remained a viable entity without this substantial level of project support. Despite its high degree of ownership by the EMB members in the association, the ArabEMBs had difficulties becoming registered until it finally recently succeeded as registering as an association.

This registration is allowing the association to open a bank account, start collecting dues and set up an office. Until now, the project has funded its sole secretariat member who works out of the project office in Amman although he has been working directly with the ArabEMBs members and Executive Board. The association has located a building in Amman to house its secretariat which it intends to lease once it gets in its dues. Palestine was the first EMB to pay its dues followed by Jordan. These are substantial, USD 10,000 for a full year and USD 5,000 for 2019 due to its registration late in the year.

Some of the original assumptions for the creation of the organization have proven to be accurate over time. The sharing of the Arabic language and other regional similarities have allowed for the easy sharing of experiences among the members and initial replication of some of the practices that they have learned from others. For example, Lebanon had a new election law in 2018 that adopted the proportional representation system for the first time. They used some of the practices they had seen in Jordan during the elections visit in the design of their ballot paper and for counting.

From the anecdotal information heard during the evaluation, it found that the bringing together of EMBs from across the region, providing exposure to best practices in the region and elsewhere, and by the sharing of their own experiences has contributed to their individual and professional growth,

and is helping to solidify the concept of a profession of election administration in the region and the norms that go with it.

The focus on thematic topics at the annual conferences, and with the LAS-EMB forums, has provided useful and practical information for the EMBs that some are already using. For instance, the EMB in Palestine stated that after the thematic conference on EDR, some EMBs were now viewing their EDR procedures with a regional and global perspective. The EMB in Libya, which classified itself as in a transitional phase where each event has a different election law, stated that it was collecting the lessons learned from the sessions and visits, and from its own three elections, and was combining these so that when the time came for a new electoral law they will be ready to make their technical comments. It also noted that it was optimistic that if it could incorporate some of the best practices shared on EDR into the new electoral law, it could reduce the number of complaints.

ArabEMBs Board Members

They were responsive within their funding allocation. But what we accomplished with the project was not only with money, but with the sense of moral, logistical, administrative support they shared with us.

I'm proud of unifying Arab EMBs under one umbrella. First among Arab countries. United body, we work together as one family, with a lot of harmony. This is a very big achievement in a very short time period."

These efforts have also generated peer-peer exchanges of practices, ideas and support among the ArabEMBs members outside of the formal activities organized by the project and secretariat. For instance, Palestine reported they have already started to work directly with Libya, Yemen and Iraq on procedures.

One area supported by the project which shows significant promise was the facilitation of the ArabEMBs to provide their experiences to the newly established NIEC in Somalia on political party registration. This was seen by the ArabEMBs participants as a completely Arabic effort and they were appreciative of the opportunity to help the NIEC in its work. It also shows good coordination by the project with the Somali costs paid for by UNDP Somalia and the project funding the participation of the ArabEMBs members. The ArabEMBs intend to follow up on this effort directly with Somalia, stating that they were waiting on the detailed needs of the Somalis for voter registration and were ready to send an expert to team to help.

The visits to electoral events were seen as an added value by their participants. They did not consider it as observation, they felt it was to learn and share experiences. The EMBs apparently did not mind having their peers come to assess their work with Mauritania being the last country visited.

The final evaluation of Phase I stressed the importance of the regional identity the ArabEMBs had created for its EMB members. These members still felt this was important as when they went to an international event they said they were no longer just going as the representative of their EMB, but as representatives of the Arab region. They also go together and speak for their own institutions as well as the ArabEMBs. This they felt gave them increased visibility and voice, as well as the increased opportunity, through the project, to attend these regional and global events.

The project has not tracked the results of its work with the ArabEMBs beyond the activities themselves. Current indexes, such as the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) index on EMB

Table 8: EMB Capacity Index
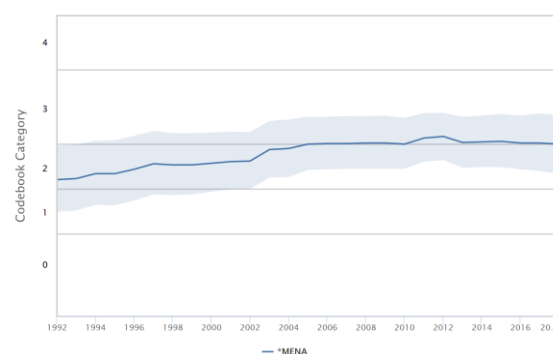
capacity (Table 8)[42] can give an indication of regional changes over time however they are affected by so many different factors that they are difficult to use to measure project performance. More targeted data could be obtained by undertaking a knowledge, attitudes and practices assessment of the member EMBs which could provide some needed baseline information against which future project results could be measured as well used as to help to target the capacity building efforts at the regional and national levels by UNDP or others. Developing synergies with country level programmes to provide the follow up with EMBs for practices raised at the ArabEMBs level could significantly expand the impact of the project and its efforts.

South-South cooperation (2.2). The project intended to facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation among key stakeholders to enable the sharing of experiences and lessons learned. It intended to do this through strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones with institutions of democratic governance that have a role and make an impact on the electoral processes through thematic conferences and workshops that bring EMBs together from other regions.

The anticipated activity budget was USD 132,000 or 9% of the Output 2 budget. Actual expenditures were estimated at about 13% of the Output 2 expenditures.

Phase II saw a continuation of the efforts started in Phase I which had flurry of exchanges between the ArabEMBs and other country/regional efforts, most of which were facilitated by the project. The main one for Phase II was the project's attendance at the annual Latin American Forum on Democracy, a global conference co-sponsored by the National Institute for Elections in Mexico, the Organization of American States and other regional and international organizations. The project sponsored LAS and several youth to attend the conference in 2017 and an academic from Tunisia and three project staff in 2018 who were expected to develop a concept note on replicating the forum in the Arab region.

The project also sponsored one ArabEMBs member to the global media conference in Addis in 2018 as previously noted which generated the idea to hold a similar conference in the Arab Region with the media and experts on the communications and information challenges faced during the electoral process.

Elections Ethics (2.3). The project expected to promote ethics in elections and to have this codified into three codes of conducts: one for EMBs, one for political parties and candidates, and one for CSO election observation efforts. This was intended to be done through consultative workshops. The anticipated activity budget was USD 70,000 or 5% of the Output 2 budget. Actual expenditures were estimated at about 13% of the Output 2 expenditures.

The issue of codes of conducts and election ethics were raised in some of the workshop activities, exposure activities and in the development of some of the knowledge products. In particular, the guidebook for NHRIs and for the independence of EMBs. Even though the ArabEMBs were reportedly not that interested in developing a model code of conduct, this is something which the project should continue to promote. Elections integrity is one of the keys to achieving the objectives sought by the project and should continue to be an important cross cutting issue in all of the project's efforts.

Human Rights (2.4). The project intended to promote knowledge and awareness of political rights as fundamental human rights among its project partners through collaboration with ANNHRI in partnership with LAS and the ArabEMBs. This was to be done through workshops and the holding of a second regional forum on citizenship and elections with LAS. The anticipated budget was USD

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[42] Varieties of Democracy, *V-DEM Dataset- Version 9, Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) Project*

286,000 which was 19% of the Output 2 budget. Estimated expenditures were about 20% of Output 2's expenditures.

Conceptually this element needed its own output in the results framework that focused on the protection of human rights during the electoral cycle. This could have been broken down into its different components, including the main activity undertaken by the project which was strengthening the capacity of NHRIs to monitor the protection of human rights during the electoral cycle.

Phase II continued the work with ANNHRI, a regional network of Arab national human rights institutions. The project had run several workshops in Phase I in collaboration with the regional hub's human rights advisor where they raised the idea of the value added that the national human rights institutions could bring to the electoral process by monitoring the cycle rather than observing the elections event which was their practice. This generated the idea of developing a joint UNDP-ANNHRI manual for NHRIs on monitoring human rights in elections. As this was a new area for ANNHRI, in Phase II the project contracted two senior experts to support the drafting and the development of the guidebook with ANNHRI.

This effort seems to be an effective way to strengthen the integrity, inclusiveness and accountability of the electoral processes by strengthening the role of the NHRI's as protectors and promoters of political and civil rights in the electoral process. Several joint meetings were held during the development of this joint document. According to the interviews, this was a complex task. Logistics were complicated by the fact that ANNHRI is based in Qatar and meetings had to be held elsewhere because of regional political issues. There was also apparently a substantive difference in opinion over the NHRI's role between ANNHRI and the project on observers vs monitors that affected decisions about content of the manual.

A joint project-ANNHRI workshop in Madrid in August 2018 reviewed the manual and Arabic case studies. The revised version was adopted by the ANNHRI's general assembly in December 2018 with its secretariat tasked to finalize the manual. However, this version did not reflect the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' October comments which led to discussions with ANNHRI on whether the comments would be incorporated since ANNHRI considered its draft as final. Another workshop in June 2019 reviewed the UNHCHR comments and UNDP has since incorporated all of the UN comments into the English version. This has not been done into the Arabic version. UNDP has not yet decided if it will issue the main manual in English on its own as a UNDP product and leave the Arabic version and country examples for ANNHRI to publish without the UNDP logo or if will continue the effort with ANNHRI as its partner.

ANNHRI stated that it intends to submit the guidebook to its next executive committee for approval to then be presented at its next general assembly in November 2019. It still wants it to be a joint ANNHRI-UNDP publication and is still looking for project assistance to translate the case studies into English as well as to support the training of trainers on the guidebook for the NHRI members so that they can then train their own staff on its use and methodologies.

The experts stated that there is substantial interest in the guidebook by the NHRI networks in the Global Alliance of National Human Rights institutions (GANHRI) as this seems to be the first manual of its kind and is believed to be applicable to other regions beyond the Arab States. GANHRI's Asia Pacific network (which includes the Middle East) and its Network of African Human Rights Institutions (which includes North Africa) are potential partners for this effort if the project decides to make a change.[43] The UNDP regional hub already has a direct relationship with these organizations and the project could go forward with them by working on a sub-regional basis.

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[43] ANNHRI is not an official member of the GANHRI which has divided the world into four regional groupings: Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe. (UNHCHR, *OHCHR, and NHRIs*

Regardless of the future partner(s), the efforts with the NHRIs are interesting and have the potential to make a significant impact on strengthening political and civil rights through the efforts made in monitoring the electoral cycle and the range of stakeholders engaged in the cycle. To strengthen these efforts, once the manual is published the project should follow up with the national level institutions for the application of the guidelines through the UNDP country offices and other partners working in country. According to project reporting, the Algerian NHRI asked to pilot the guidebook in its 2019 elections during the December 2018 ANNHRI meeting.

### 3.2.3 Output 3. Enhanced civic and political participation of women

The objective for this output was to *enhance the civic and political participation of women.* The project intended to do this through: strengthening *gender equality through constitutional drafting and legal frameworks* (Output 3.1); *promoting regional networks of women involved in public life (*Output 3.2); *promoting women as voters, candidates, representatives and electoral administrators* (Output 3.3); *women, parliament and institutional strengthening* (Output 3.4); facilitating dialogue on *the role of women in conflict and post conflict situations;* (Output 3.5); and advocating on the *role of women within regional electoral organizations* (Output 3.6)

These activity areas were intended to: mainstream gender in parliamentary, legislative and electoral institutions and processes; strengthen the capacity of regional organizations to promote the participation of women, enshrine gender equality in constitutions and legislation and facilitate dialogue on the role of women in preventing conflict and violent extremism. It intended to work on the need to increase the number of women in decision-making processes as well as to strengthen the quality of their leadership.[44]

The estimated activity budget for Output 3 was USD 939,500 (Table 9). With the long term advisors' costs, the total budget was USD 1,302,000. This was 17% of the overall project budget. Actual expenditures for the output as of the end June 2019 were USD 895,206 which was 17% of the total project expenditures.

Table 9: Anticipated Budget Output 3

The framework for Output 3 was ambitious for the scale of the project, funding and staffing. Although it had four sub-outputs, it only reported on three of these in its first annual report (3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) and two in its second (3.2 and 3.3). This could be a result of the project's focus on establishing the women's network which it sees as the main tool by which it can achieve results in the other areas in the future or because the Mosharaka project which implemented a portion of the gender activities for Phase I was winding down in Phase II and ended at the end of 2018. Or it could be that some of the outputs were treated as cross-cutting issues and if so this output could have been streamlined in the project's design.

One of the recommendations of the Phase I final evaluation was for the project to have a gender strategy that focused "*more specifically on elections and gender and on facilitating women's participation in democratic processes... and in building the understanding, endorsement of and expertise of EMBs in gender analysis, reflection and advocacy.*"[45] The project developed a gender strategy for Phase II with the help of the regional hub's gender advisor, who also managed the Mosharaka project.

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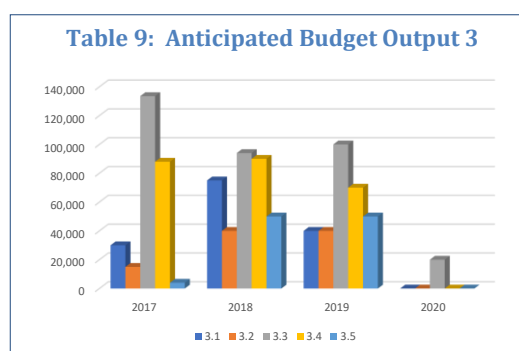
[44] Project Document, pps 25-26

[45] UNDP, Regional Electoral Support Project Phase I, *Evaluation of Phase I, Evaluation* Report, p 20 [Phase 1 Evaluation Report]

This strategy intended the project to focus on: *raising the awareness and dissemination of information on the status of women in elections, the barriers to their effective participation and*

regional and global best practices; target EMBs as key agents of change; support regional cooperation and networking on women's political and electoral participation; support civic space and promote work with CSOs on the 2030 agenda, and mainstream gender in all initiatives of the project.[46] This provided a more realistic framework for the project's efforts and reflects the Phase I final evaluation recommendations although the focus for the work outlined with CSOs was still broad. A more specific focus on SDGs 5 and 16 on women's political and electoral participation, leadership and related equality issues would strengthen

Table 10: Activities Output 3						
Date	Location	Topic	Participants	Number		
				F	M	TOTAL
1 Sept 2017	Amman	Women's political participation	UNDP, Other experts & int'l orgs	-	-	-
11-13 Oct 2017	Ankara	BRIDGE gender	OIC-UN	10	17	27
28-30 April 2018	Istanbul	Women's network	Advisory Group on Women's network	25	11	36
13-15 Aug 2018	Tunisia	Women's network	Working Group	14	2	16
8 – 10 Oct 2018	Brussels	Electoral violence	UNDP-EU Conference	3	2	5
3-4 Dec 2018	Tunisia	Women's Network	Working Group	14	4	28
3-5 Feb 2019	Dead Sea	EDR	ArabEMBs	26	64	90
28-31 Mar 2019	Beirut	YLP5 "Explore"	Youth	44	36	80

the strategy and its targeting of activities with CSOs that could make a more direct impact on the outcomes sought by an electoral and political processes project.

The project largely used this strategy in its approach to Phase II efforts. It worked with the EMBs to develop the women's network and to increase the awareness of EMBs on gender issues through the ArabEMBs workshops and other activities so that they could act as agents of change. And it raised gender and equity issues in the various events facilitated. The broader CSO/SDG outreach was done through Mosharaka which was already doing this before the gender strategy was developed which likely accounts for the broader focus for those elements in the strategy.

Mosharaka was a regional women's empowerment project that the regional hub ran from 2014 to the end of 2018. Its total budget was USD 2,343,941 with the Regional Electoral Support Project covering a portion of project manager's post in Phase II. Over its life Mosharaka "*mobilized national actors and regional women's organizations to strategize on SDGs through focusing on women's role in the implementation.*" Its initiatives focused on knowledge management, capacity development, networking and coalition building among partners. According to its final report, it also created an online database of laws and legislation on women's rights and with the regional electoral support project support launched YLP to promote the role of youth in SDGs and gender equality.[47] Its main constraints were a lack of funding and the regional political and security situation which affected attendance at some of its events.[48]

The project made efforts to ensure an appropriate balance of men and women in project activities, which for 2017 – 2018 was 52% female and 48% male.[49] The ratio for 2018 – 2019 was 42% female and 58% male.[50] It also promoted the BRIDGE gender module and raised gender issues at the different conferences and workshops that it facilitated. So much so that one of the EMBs interviewed had gender-workshop fatigue noting that "*we've done women in elections since 1991. Everyone does empowerment of women and workshops, European Union (EU), USAID, UNDP, the*

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[46] UNDP, Regional Electoral Support Project Phase II, *Gender Strategy*, p 9

[47] Ibid, p 5

[48] It reported spending USD 475,194 out of its planned USD 617,782 for its last year. Mosharaka, *Final Project Review Report,* p 4

[49] UNDP, *Regional Electoral Support Project, Annual Report 2017 - 2018*, p 31 [Annual Report 2017-2018]

[50] UNDP, *Regional Electoral Support Project, Annual Report 2018 – 2019,* p 57. [Annual Report 2018 – 2019]

Government and we do. This is a religious and social issue and won't be resolved by EMBs. The issue is changing mentalities and that needs to start in school."

Polling results demonstrate some of the core challenges to women's political and electoral empowerment. These show that most citizens believe men are better at political leadership than women (Table 11) however it also shows that the higher the persons education, the more equal their views become. The Arab Barometer that conducts periodic polling has concluded from its data that "*that efforts to improve women's equality need to move beyond ensuring equal rights to focus about the roles women should play in society.*"[51]

Table 11: Women in Politics Survey Data				
Question	2006	2011	2013	2016
	%	%	%	%
Men are better at political leadership (F)	63	62	52	61
Men are better at political leadership (M)	72	78	68	73
Women can become prime minister or president (F)	70	-	66	68
Women can become prime minister or president (M)	51	-	48	55
Voted in last election (F)	-	52	54	46
Voted in last election (M)	-	57	59	51

The project coordinated with UN Women on the organization of some of its events and on the establishment of the women's network in terms of sharing information and attending events. This element could be strengthened in the next project design by developing a more programmatic and synergistic relationship focused on strengthening women's political participation. UN Women is in the process of developing its next five year regional women's political participation project, which will include the electoral and political processes as key components, and it stated that it looks forward to collaborating with UNDP on these efforts through connecting the networks that each supports.

Gender equality (3.1). Although all of the project's work on gender was intended to promote gender equality, it did not report on this sub-output in its two annual reports for Phase II.

The project had intended to promote gender equality through support for constitutional drafting and strengthening legal frameworks, by providing technical assistance, facilitating networking and South-South cooperation to share experiences with regions that had gone through similar transitions. The anticipated budget was USD 145,000 or 16% of Output 3's activity budget. Estimated expenditures were 16% of the Output 3's expenditures.

The strengthening of constitutional and legislative frameworks has yet to be undertaken and there is substantial amount of work remaining to be done in these areas. As stated in the final review of Mosharaka "*given the region's current situation, there is still a long path to go before reaching substantial results in Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and a proper consolidation of gender-based approaches in regional policy making.*"[52]

Regional women's networks (3.2). This was a substantial focus of the project for Output 3 although its estimated budget was only 10% (USD 95,000) of Output 3's activity budget. Its estimated expenditures were about 27% of Output 3's expenditures. It is in this area where the project will most likely make a substantial difference for women's political and electoral participation in the future.

The project and Mosharaka worked on the idea of developing a women's network in the region in Phase I exploring the different possible avenues for a network, wanting to ensure it had an institutional home for sustainability purposes. They ended up with the ArabEMBs. This seems logical and should help to help institutionalize the effort and avoid the political overtones and issues that would come if it were attached to a more political body such as LAS. Many EMBs also have gender focal points and units which provides a foundation for such a network.

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[51] Arab Barometer, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa, A Divide between Rights and Roles*, p 15
[52] Mosharaka, Op Cit, p 19

The network was developed by a working group of representatives from seven EMBs (Iraq, Jordan Libya, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia) as well as with experts from IFES, IDEA and UNDP. UN Women and LAS attended the working group meetings as observers. The working group developed its concept and vision to "*work as a regional platform to support and promote women's political and electoral participation in the Arab world,*"[53] It intends to advocate for reforms of national legislation, develop EMB and other capacity to promote women's participation, and develop common regional principles and standards. Its launch was originally anticipated for October 2018 but is now scheduled for fall 2019.

Members of the working group interviewed seemed vested in the development of the network and were excited by its potential. The decision by the ArabEMBs to have such a network shows progress in the efforts of the projects and others to promote gender. They also agreed for it to include CSOs which will help build a link and a means for EMB outreach to the civil society networks that can carry the work forward at regional and country levels.

The objectives of the network are targeted directly on the project's objectives and it provides the means and opportunities for further programmatic work in the sector. It has the potential to affect structural changes within the EMBs in the near term, in particular with the development and/ strengthening of EMB gender units which is the first item on their agenda. They also want to increase women's participation in elections in the region which they stated was now about 20% to 30 - 40%. However, the network will need follow up to support its efforts and to ensure that it is functional and effective. As with the other areas, ensuring programmatic support for their efforts at country levels would significantly increase their effectiveness and impact.

The project could work with country offices and other international partners to have them include this element in their SDG 5 and SDG 16 programmes in the various countries. As part of this, the project is already in discussions with UN Women on developing a strategy for their respective engagements with the network after its launch. UN Women intends to sign an MOU with the network which it states it can provide with technical assistance and knowledge products and hopes to connect it with its ongoing municipal level election efforts and its Arab Women Parliamentarians Network which does advocacy at country levels for improved legislation. However, it also noted that the women's network first effort should be the development of its strategic plan.

Women's participation (3.3). The project intended to promote women's participation in the electoral process as voters, candidates, representatives and electoral administrators. It intended to do this through lobbying with political actors to include women, and ensuring educational activities included components targeting women's participation.

More than a third of the activity budget for Output 3 (USD 347,500 or 37%) was intended to be spent for this sub-objective. Estimated expenditures were about 32% of Output 3's expenditures.

Through Mosharaka, the project supported a study of Temporary Special Measures (TSM) in 2017 which it followed up with a meeting of experts from UNDP country offices in the region, the UNDP regional hub, UN Women and DPA on *Fostering Women's Political Participation*. They assessed the constraints facing women's participation and one of their findings was the importance of developing interventions that targeted political parties more directly[54] which something that should be followed up on in the design of a future project. They also decided to develop a research product to capture the experiences of TSM in the Arab region and the project funded gender expert to undertake the study. This was done through regional interviews and a survey (receiving 38 completed questionnaires from nine countries). The information was developed into a guidebook to foster

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[53] ArabEMBs, UNDP, IDEA, *Framework for the Regional Arab Network for Women in Elections*, p 3
[54] Annual Report 2017 – 2018, p 25

women's political participation that is expected to be disseminated at the launch of the women's network.

SIDA questioned the project on the need to produce such a product stating there were already a number of studies on the barriers to women's political participation in the MENA region, including one which it had supported through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which had a number of policy briefs that it felt the project could have used.[55] The project's response is that it undertook a review of all of the available resources and feels their document will serve as a complementary tool. It is intended to be a customizable manual for EMBs, CSOs, policy makers and UN agencies- which "*brings together all knowledge and best practices in Arabic, and with specific entry points.*" [56]

The test of its usefulness and need will come after its launch and publication on the various websites. The project could track the number of downloads from these sites which could give some indication as the level of awareness and interest in the product and its potential use.

Women, parliament and institutional strengthening (3.4). The project intended to promote gender mainstreaming in EMBs and parliaments as well as in their electoral and legislative processes, strengthen the capacity of regional electoral bodies to promote women's participation in key institutions among their member states, and facilitate networking and cooperation among women parliamentarians and political parties and leaders around issues of accountability, participation and representation. It intended to support the development of good practices on institutional reforms and constitution making, use South-South cooperation to share experiences on the effective participation of women and strengthen the networking of women parliamentarians. It intended to do this through workshops, ICT services to develop e-learning courses and other activities.

> **EMB Members of Women's Network Working Group**
>
> *UNDP opened a perfect bridge for us to contact each other. We can benefit from the experience in other countries and it opened another channel to enhance women in elections in the region. This is a really important mechanism and is needed in the Arab region and to work with each other.*
>
> *All EMBs are included in this effort. We hope it will increase women in elections, enhance their political participation and increase the number of women in leadership positions.*

The anticipated budget for this output was USD 248,500 or 26% of Output 3's activity costs. Estimated expenditures were about 12% of the Output 3 expenditures.

The project held a joint UN (UNDP-EAD) - OIC BRIDGE workshop on gender and elections in 2017. This was the first workshop on gender and elections organized in coordination with the OIC and was seen as a way to introduce the OIC participants to the role of women in elections. This workshop included the ArabEMBs and LAS as resource persons which was done to increase their own exposure and networking opportunities. This likely helped increase the awareness of the OIC staff on gender and elections issues however it is only the start of such an effort.

Preventing conflict and violent extremism (3.5). The purpose for this activity area was to support the full engagement of women in the constitutional making processes and facilitate dialogue on the role of women in preventing conflict and violent extremism. The estimated budget for this was USD 104,000 or 11% of the planned budget for Output 4. Estimated expenditures were about 13% of Output 3's expenditures.

Although the project reported no activities under this output in its annual reports, Mosharaka reporting stated that it developed a strategic partnership agreement with UN Women in 2017 to strengthen the role of women and youth in preventing violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean

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[55] SIDA email of 29 July 2019 to the project with comments on the 2018 – 2019 annual progress report
[56] Project's response to SIDA, 1 August 2019

region and held a meeting with 40 regional experts in July 2017 in Barcelona to identify key actions and approaches. It did not state if or how this had evolved afterwards. The project also contributed to the development of the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force (JTF) Toolkit on preventing violent extremism by funding a consultant who did the case study on the Arab region that fed into the 2018 UNDP-EU *Global Conference on Sustaining Peace through Elections* held in Brussels and toolkit. It also sent its Administrative Associate to Brussels to help with the logistics for the conference and funded the attendance of one of the ArabEMBs executive board members. The project intends to distribute the programmatic recommendations relevant to EMBs, CSOs and other partners once the toolkit is published.

There was a wide range of potential activities listed for this output in the project document that covered everything from promoting women's participation in constitution making, facilitating dialogue on the role of women, strengthening the capacity of regional organizations on responsiveness and accountability on gender issues, to conflict analysis and peacebuilding.[57]

This is very broad and needed a project-specific strategic focus. Given that the electoral process can be a trigger for violence as well as a process for resolving conflict peacefully, the issue is a high priority in the region given the context. The project has done some work on this, focusing the ArabEMBs conference in February 2019 on the theme of electoral violence and dispute resolution. This effort should be followed up by the project for the remainder of Phase II and be more fully developed as an objective for a future project.

Thought should be given to including the concept of electoral justice which would give the project the opportunity to address the issues in a more holistic manner and include the norms and standards that are a part of that concept as well as the broader range of governmental and nongovernmental actors and institutions that are engaged in these processes beyond the role of women. This would contribute directly to the project's ultimate goal to "*enhance the credibility, inclusivity, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes.*"[58]

3.2.4 Output 4. Role of youth promoted in the electoral cycle

The objective for this output was to *promote the role of youth in the electoral cycle.* The Project intended to do this through: developing *regional standards and guidelines for the role of youth in the electoral cycle* (Output 4.1); *increasing the participation of youth at the regional level (*Output 4.2); *engaging academia on citizen rights, freedoms and elections* (Output 4.3) and promoting *youth participation as prevention of conflict and violent extremism* (Output 4.4).

The project expected to achieve these results through workshops and annual youth leadership events, facilitation of youth participation in electoral observation missions, empowering youth, facilitating their networking, and educating youth through civic education in the schools and programs at two universities.[59]

The estimated budget for Output 4 activities was USD 732,050 (Table 12). With its share of the long term technical advisors it was USD 1,094,550 which was 15% of the overall project budget. Actual expenditures were USD 767,875. About USD 580,000 was spent on the YLP programme and the shared costs for the regional hub's gender and youth advisor who managed Mosharaka and YLP in Phase II.

Table 12: Anticipated Budget Output 4

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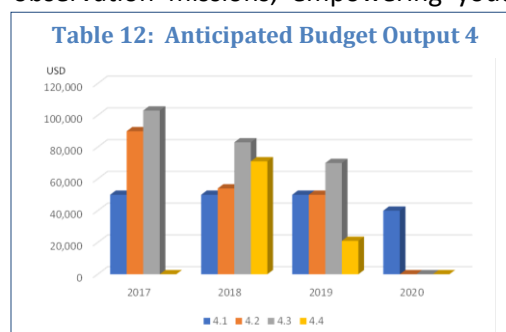
[57] Project Document, p 26
[58] Project Document, p 2
[59] Project Document, pps 27-28

As with Output 3 that focused on support for a particular demographic group, Output 4 focuses on the role of youth in the electoral cycle. Its theory of change is partially fleshed out in project reporting which states that voter apathy was an important problem because of the growing disillusionment of youth over unrealized expectations from the Arab Spring and the electoral process, which it believed was hindering its full participation. To address this problem the project would work to increase the awareness of EMBs and other stakeholders to better understand these expectations so that they could develop more effective strategies to address youth needs and increase their participation and at the same time increase the knowledge and awareness of the youth on the benefits of increased participation.[60] The unstated outcome for this was that these

efforts would facilitate and increase the constructive participation of youth in the electoral processes including turnout.

The project's approach to reach this outcome was to "*go beyond traditional approaches and responses and .. tap into the creativity of citizens to develop innovation solutions.*" It did this

primarily through the YLP which was the main focus for this output. The efforts with EMBs and other stakeholders were largely undeveloped as were links with political and electoral participation.

Regional standards and guidelines (4.1). The project intended to support the

Table 13: Activities Output 4				Number		
Date	Location	Topic	Participants	F	M	Total
11-13 Oct 2017	Mexico City	Election Challenges	LAS & Youth	3	4	7
26-28 Oct 2017	Beirut	Electoral Systems	St Joseph students	13	8	21
2-7 Dec 2017	Cairo	YLP 3	Youth	46	29	75
30-31 Jan 2018	New York	Youth Forum	ECOSOC Youth Forum	5	7	12
10-12 May 2018	Amman	YLP 4 Launch	Youth, Youth-Serving CSOs	33	26	59
29 – 21 Oct 2018	Beirut	Electoral systems	St Joseph students	10	15	25
14 – 17 Dec 2018	Tunisia	YLP 4	Youth, Youth-Serving CSOs	48	50	98
28-31 March 2019	Beirut	YLP 5	Youth, Youth Serving CSOs	44	36	80
9 – 16 June 2019	Tunisia	Political Participation	Youth (MedUni)	9	14	23

development of standards and guidelines for youth participation throughout the electoral cycle to promote youth friendly legal frameworks, a better understanding of youth participation among key stakeholders including EMBs, capacity building for the EMBs on these issues, and "*innovative and creative methods for youth participation*" including the use of ICT and social media during the different steps of an election such as voter registration, candidate registration, etc.[61] The estimated activity budget for this was USD 190,000 or 26% of the overall budget for Output 4. Estimated expenditures were about 15% of Output 4's expenditures.

The project produced the Arabic version of an e-learning course on *Youth Participation on Election Processes.* This is available on the EU-UNDP Joint Taskforce website. Data on the number of persons who have taken the course was not available during the timeframe of this project. This data should be collected by the project and provided in its annual reports. Nothing else was reported under this output although the activities with St. Joseph's were put here it the 2018-2019 annual report.

Regional participation of youth (4.2). For this output, the project intended to promote the inclusion of youth in regional electoral organizations, including the ArabEMBs and the electoral department of LAS, support youth participation in regional election observation missions and initiatives that promoted democracy, and increase their civic and political participation. It also intended to empower youth engagement through regional graduate education and networking among youth organizations.

The anticipated activity budget for Output 4.2 was USD 194,000 or 26% of the Output 4 budget. Estimated expenditures were about 57% of Output 4's expenditures.

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[60] Annual Report 2017 - 2018, p 25
[61] Project Document, p 28

The primary focus for this component was the continuation of YLP and the efforts for the other activities listed in the project document were largely undeveloped. The efforts for the regional graduate education are in the project's results framework under Output 4.3 (Engaging Academia) and are discussed there in this evaluation report.

YLP. YLP has become a flagship programme for the regional hub and was well liked by the project, regional hub and the UNDP country offices interviewed, all of which saw growth and potential in the youth who participated. YLP focuses on empowering youth seeing them as agents of change. YLP provided a platform for youth to meet other youth from the region and supported them to promote leadership, SDGs and to develop solutions for their community's challenges.

Data collected by the project from participants on their experience was all positive as was the feedback received from those contacted by the evaluation.

YLP was highlighted by Generation Unlimited, a UNICEF led initiative co-chaired by the Secretary General of the United Nations and the President of the Republic of Rwanda, which supports the transition of young people to work and engaged citizenship, as one of 20 initiative "*solutions*."[62]

YLP worked initially with individual youth which reached a limited number of persons. The regional hub has since focused on scaling up the initiative to expand its reach and since YLP 4 in 2018 has been working through youth serving CSOs in each country. This change has increased the project's reach from 100 youth to over 5,000 in 10 countries[63] and to 50 CSOs. The ultimate goal of the regional hub is to reach 100,000 youth and 1,000 youth serving organizations by 2022.[64] This is a much more appropriate scale and reach for a regional project. This change has also resulted in a more cohesive and programmatic approach that links regional and national efforts and develops an institutional foundation within each country that can be expected to increase YLP's impact as well as its reach.

> **Box 11: YLP Focus**
>
> **YLP 3 (2017):** *Accelerating Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development.* Done with youth from 14 countries
>
> **YLP 4 (2018):** *Innovating for Sustainable Impact.* Done with youth-serving organizations from 13 countries
>
> **YLP 5 (2019):** *Explore, Experiment, Expand:* Done with youth-serving organizations from 14 countries
>
> **YLP Declaration** (2017)*: We {are} a network of young leaders, innovators, and change makers responsible for advocating and working towards achieving resilient, equal, sustainable and peaceful communities.*
>
> **YLP Publication**: *Design Thinking: A Guide for Protyping and Testing Solutions for Sustainable Development Goals* done with UNDP Tunisia available in Arabic French and English.

The effort with youth serving CSOs has developed a defined way of working, starting each year with planning for its themes and the development of national action plans in each country to frame their activities, which the groups then implement. Some of these national plans are quite detailed and included outputs, indicators and targets such as in Lebanon. Some country offices work in coordination with national agencies, such as in Egypt which works with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The UNDP Country Offices select the youth serving organizations on a competitive basis within their country and work with them throughout the year. This interaction provides a type of capacity building for the CSOs and their participation in YLP is voluntary.[65] The regional hub and the Regional Electoral Support Project provide the overall coordination, support to country offices and facilitate a regional workshop at the start and end of each programme. The best CSO and youth innovations from each country attend the last forum. The five best solutions chosen from the different participants are then presented by the youth to the members of the Economic and Social Council

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[62] Generation Unlimited, *Solutions*
[63] Annual Report 2018-2019, p 12
[64] UNDP, *Regional Programme Overview*, p 9
[65] The CSOs receive no funding for their participation. The UNDP Country Office in Jordan felt that some of the key CSOs, which have large youth engagement projects, did not apply for the programmes because of the absence of funding to cover the expected activities.

(ECOSOC) in New York during its annual youth forum. According to the project "*our youth represent the Arab region there. This is our seat inside. We are the only region doing this.*"

The project is also working on a guidebook for youth on political participation and civic engagement that is expected to be completed by the end of the year. It also developed *Design Thinking: A Guide for Prototyping and Testing Solutions for Sustainable Development Goals* done with UNDP Tunisia.

The impact of YLP is difficult to judge from the perspective of this broader review and it should have its own programme evaluation at some point. It does appear that it has gained in visibility at national levels as well as regionally since it started working through national level institutions. The level of results has also been raised from the individual levels of the youth and their solutions to the community and national levels. The results from each country are not aggregated as each country uses different indicators beyond numbers of participants and CSOs. Developing some common results level indicators and tracking this, and the participants and CSOs, over time could help better identify project results and its impact over time.

The project does some tracking of its youth participants who have kept in touch through the social media managed by the project's youth consultant who created a Facebook page, twitter and other social media accounts. He also pulls and analyses the analytics for the use of the sites. These give some indication as to the interest and activities of some of the youth.

Box 12: YLP Facebook: total page followers

Total Page followers

Total Page followers
7,321
5 Jul 2019
Click or drag to select

The analytics show a substantial increase in the number of followers on the YLP Facebook site from its start in March 2018 (Box 12).[66] The top post for the site was a UNDP employment ad that reached about 20,000 persons, showing there is potential in the site to reach a large number of persons. The average reach for other posts was about 850 persons per post.

It would also be useful for the project to track the status of earlier YLP efforts, such as the 2017 YLP group that issued the *YLP Declaration* and what happened with this, if and how it was used going forward, and if any more youth or organizations have since endorsed it or modified it in some way. Another area would be the status of the youth solutions supported by the project, and if they were operational, their reach and results.

YLP in its concept and delivery is a broad SDG focused programme. Having YLP housed and managed by the focal point for youth and gender within the regional hub is a good home for it. Youth empowerment and constructive engagement are cross-cutting issues for every programme in the region. As YLP moves forward, the regional hub should seek the participation of its other projects in YLP in furtherance of their different objectives and SDG goals. This would help diversify YLP's funding sources and reduce its dependence on the electoral project.

This might also be valid for the MedUni effort and the potential collaboration that will be explored by the project. In this way, the regional project can remain engaged in these efforts, but also turn its focus more directly on the issues related to its intended outcomes. This was also a recommendation of the final evaluation of Phase I that noted that there was "*room now to drill down into the election*

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[66] UNDP Regional Electoral Support Project, *Social Media Report YLP* , p 6

*related implications of the policy frameworks and overall experiences of Phase 1 and to …
[strengthen] issues of youth participation and gender in political and electoral processes".* [67]

Mapping. The project has done some work in this direction by undertaking a mapping of
organizations and networks working on youth civic/political/electoral participation in the Arab
States. The intention was to develop a directory of organizations and their efforts, along with the
challenges related to youth engagement. Although it was not
a representative sample,[68] it still provides some useful
insights that can be used to target project interventions as
well as to serve as a type of baseline to measure changes
over time if repeated.

The main findings related to the project's purpose are
highlighted in Box 13 The mapping report provides a list of
recommendations on how to strengthen youth engagement
in electoral and political processes. Some of these ideas
could be used to strengthen future programming, such as
conducting a regional electoral needs assessment to better
target youth activities and programmes, although doing this
through a professional poll with a representative sample
would likely provide more specific and useful data than the
general type of information that would emanated through a
regional consultation which is what is mentioned in the report.[69]

> **Box 13: Mapping Findings**
> Pertinent to project outcomes
>
> - Weak work in electoral process areas
> - Most focus on civic awareness &
>   capacity building
> - Fewer on policy dialogue & legislative
>   recommendations, youth councils
> - Little effort on elections specific
>   efforts & youth
> - Weak work on research, policy papers
>   on youth civic & electoral engagement
> - Lack of information on youth-specific
>   interventions in the electoral cycle
> - Key challenges: cultural norms &
>   traditions, weak trust in the political
>   system & political apathy among
>   youth

Mediterranean University. The project participated in the Mediterranean University on Youth and
Global Citizenship run by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe which was held in Tunisia
in June 2019. According to the North-South Centre, its MedUni is a bottom-up one week residential
event, where each group brings their own activities and ways of working and interacts formally and
informally with the other groups to develop specific topics. The purpose is to provide a safe space
for youth to learn how to interact and dialogue with policy makers, so that when the time comes,
they are able to approach them in the real world on their issues. UNDP provided a social innovation
camp with the participants selected by the different UNDP country offices.

This was seen as a window of opportunity by the project's consultant for youth who saw its notice
for applications and applied on behalf of its youth partners. The project stated that it felt that one
activity alone could not reach all the youth in the region and saw the need to work with other
partners to "*leverage, complement and multiply*" its efforts. They focused on the issue of voter
turnout and youth apathy which is a relevant topic for the project. The youth reportedly enjoyed
the engagement although they stated that the methodology was "heavy" and gave the project a 3.5
out of 4 (4 = best) in the feedback collected by the project.

MedUni appeared to be a useful and interesting experience that had mutual benefits for the North-
South Centre and UNDP. UNDP presence increased the visibility of the event for the Centre while
the project felt it expanded its reach and opportunities for youth. The project has since entered into
discussions with the Centre about collaborating on its next annual event and increasing its role
beyond supporting a contingent of youth. The North-South Centre sees its role in this relationship as
providing the space and creating bridges and cooperation among the youth and policy makers, and

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[67] Phase I Evaluation Report, pps 20-21

[68] The mapping effort attempted to reach 150 organizations and others through project contacts, Facebook and UNDP
country offices with its questionnaire. It received 83 responses from 13 countries, 73% of these were national NGOs
and 84% were part of a network (national, regional or international). Most respondents were from Morocco and
Palestine (14 each) followed by Algeria (13), Yemen (12) and Jordan (10).   Project*, Mapping, Report,
Organization/Networks focusing on youth civic/political/electoral engagement, Arab States*, p 18

[69] Ibid, p 23

the UN as providing the capacity building elements. As with YLP however, its eventual home within UNDP is likely best situated within the regional hub's broader youth programmes given the individualized-based nature of this activity.

Engaging Academia (4.3). For this output, the project expected to develop materials for use through the schools (middle and high school curricula) and universities (democracy and elections) as well as providing professors to teach the university level courses. It also intended to grant fellowships to graduate students, and develop e-learning courses on "*different relevant matters with issuance of relevant diplomas.*" It intended to liaise in this effort with other bodies, including UNICEF. [70]

The anticipated budget was USD 256,000 or 35% of the activity budget for Output 4. Estimated expenditures were about 15% of Output 4's expenditures.

As outlined in the project document, this was a very ambitious activity area. Most of the focus during implementation was on continuing the course at St. Joseph's and including the LAS Electoral Department. Nothing else was mentioned in the annual reports other than the Arabic translation done for the JTF manual on youth participation noted in Output 4.1.

Youth Participants

It was effective, especially in connecting youth from all across the region from different backgrounds. It gave all of us a window that throughout we can see how democracy ought to work and how the political situation really is in their country.

The professor is one of a kind to be honest. He is an expert in the electoral systems …. And the course material was presented very clearly and it was highly engaging for the students with several in class activities and team work.

The field visit was great and you [should] always insist on going to an NGO that supervises the elections as it shows students what is happening on the ground.

The course at St. Joseph's was an initiative of the project started in 2016. It is a 12 hour session on Electoral Systems which the project delivers to the graduate students in the master's programme for political science. This master's programme is part of an international exchange effort done by the university and three partner universities. It selects 25 students and year (about 60% from the Arab region and the remainder from Europe and elsewhere) and the programme is rotated among the universities every three years. The course was developed and delivered by the project's senior consultant with the support of the project staff.

In 2018, the project invited four electoral practitioners from the LAS electoral department and UNDP[71] to attend the course. Two sessions were held, one session with LAS/UNDP and one of LAS with the students. The practitioners received a certificate for their participation. The university saw this as an interesting experience which allowed them to divide the class into smaller groups that could go deeper into the issue of rights when they were analysing legislation.

The university also noted however in the evaluation interviews that one of the lessons learned from the effort was that practitioners have a different dynamic from students who are at a more theoretical level. It is still interested in training practitioners but as a separate group. The project did however bring back the LAS Deputy Director to co-instruct the class for 2018 which the university appreciated. They felt it attracted students to the course and empowered the LAS participants. The LAS deputy director saw it in the same light and as a first for LAS. The project saw it as a way towards sustainability of the effort[72] while the students interviewed did not seem to notice, only noting that the other(s) present helped with the working groups.

The course also added a field trip to the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) in Beirut which works on election reform, voter education and election observation in 2018. This was

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[70] Project Document, p 29
[71] Deputy Director of the LAS Electoral Department and three staff, and from the UNDP side, one from the Electoral Support Project in Somalia, a contractor from Cairo and the youth and gender advisor from the regional hub,
[72] Annual Report 2018 - 2019, p 10

appreciated by the participants and the university felt it was an interesting way to share experiences and learn outside of the classroom, and is something that should be continued in the future.

The project's efforts to institutionalize the delivery of the course through the participation of LAS as co-instructor is a step in the right direction. However, the university stated for it to be sustainable it needs to become a separate electoral course for credit. It is now an additional feature of a larger course. This would require more than doubling its content as a European credit requires 26 contact hours and more work hours for study. According to them, this would take a lot of work and would need a complete redesign. They are interested in developing a comparable course on electoral engineering, the way the law is applied to get certain results, campaign financing and its effects. The university says it can teach the theoretic side of the courses if it has funding, but it would still like a practitioner to deliver the practical side.

The project will need to have discussions with the university on how its course could become a permanent part of the curriculum so it won't be discontinued after the project engagement ends, and whether expanding it so it could be a full credit course would be worth the investment, especially if such a course already exists in other universities.

In the near term, as the course has already been delivered successfully three times and provides the university, LAS and UNDP with a model and syllabus for the sessions, the project should see how this could be replicated cost-effectively in other academic settings. It could also consider using the project's senior advisor to train university professors themselves so that existing faculty at different institutions could incorporate the course contents themselves into their relevant courses.

Thought could also be given to videotaping the next course so that it can be provided online as a certificated e-learning course open to any interested person. This could be an easy and cost-effective way to extend the reach of this resource and the impact of the effort. This would also institutionalize the delivery of the course by the senior expert and provide a training tool for faculty members in other institutions. In this the project should ensure that it has permission from the participants for the videotaping, as the students interviewed questioned the extent of the photography that had been done during their course, seeing it as a privacy issue. The project stated that it documents its activities and had ensured it did not include the one student who had objected to being photographed at the time.

The model curricula mentioned in the project document is an important concept and could be developed and promoted through the ArabEMBs and its members for high school youth and their teachers. This should be included in a future project given the time it would take to do this, and done in coordination with the country offices which could support its dissemination and national level efforts with the educational systems to adopt and implement the curricula.

Participation to prevent violent extremism (4.4). The project intended to support research, knowledge generation and dialogue on youth civic and political participation as a means to prevent violent extremism and to support youth and peace-building. It intended to do this through TA, research, publications, workshops, training and South-South cooperation. The anticipated activity budget was USD 92,050 or 13% of the Output 4 budget. Estimated expenditures were roughly 13% of Output 4's expenditures.

As noted, the project document outlines the rationale for this focus, that inclusive and credible elections can provide the necessary political space for disaffected youth to voice their opinions and have a say in the policies and decisions that govern them."[73] Although no activities were reported for this component in the annual reports, as noted in Output 3.5, the project stated that it had sent an ArabEMBs executive board member to the UNDP-EU global conference on *Sustaining Peace*

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[73] Project Document, p 29

through Elections in Brussels in 2018 and also contributed to the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force toolkit on preventing electoral violence through elections.

The elements of political space could be strengthened in the design and during implementation by focusing on increasing youth voice in the policy area and with policy makers, and by becoming more informed voters or representatives, and by ensuring a direct causal relationship between these activities supported by the project and the intended outcomes.

3.2.5 Support to UNDP country offices and projects

This area was not included as an output in the project document but should have been as this was an understated but important component of the project.

The project provided a significant level of support to UNDP country offices and projects in the region in terms of advisory services, technical assistance, human resources and in some cases financial support for individuals or efforts. Although the financial support for individuals in other offices and projects appears to have been more limited in Phase II, the scope of this and the other support services provided is difficult to determine since it was not an area that the project reported on other than a short paragraph in each annual report noting this or that. However, from the evaluation interviews and anecdotal information provided it was clear that this type of project support enabled some critical processes to continue, provided valued advisory services and in some cases facilitated UNDP relations with partners at country levels.

The project was flexible, trying to help out where needed, much of it based on an immediate or near term need. It was also undefined. In interviews, some of the country level staff felt the project did not provide enough support, especially for those whose projects were in dire financial difficulties and were closing as a result. Others were grateful for the "*limited*" support they received such as enabling a staff person who was about to be terminated for lack of funds to continue by linking their effort to the regional project's work. It also lent support to the EAD for the logistical aspects for some of its work and for the planning of assistance to some of the post-conflict countries such as Syria. The project also sent its own staff to assist other places. Sometimes it was just for a discussion on the side lines of a workshop or other project activity. Other times it was to directly support the other efforts. The extreme case is its Financial Associate who has been on detail for ten months to support the Libyan elections effort based in Tunisia (discussed in Section 3.3 on Efficiency).

Included in this is the work of the Regional Electoral Advisor whose role in practice covered everything from his participation in NAMs to providing advice to UNDP Resident Representatives to the smoothing of relations in some cases between UNDP projects and EMBs. For instance, the EMB in Libya stated, "*We trust his [Regional Advisor's] experience. He visits us many times to tackle some of the difficult problems with partners and solve them. He was very professional in Libya and we miss him a lot.*"   The lack of well defined roles however also resulted in occasional tensions with some of the Chief Technical Advisors attached to country-level projects on the advisory aspects of their work.

It would strengthen the next project to have this element clearly defined in its design and as a separate output that details its roles and responsibilities and the parameters for support. This would help country offices, BPPS and others to know what they could expect from the project, as well as help the project with its own planning, management and monitoring. This would also ensure that it had adequate resources allocated as well as had the indicators that could measure performance and be better reflected in project reporting.

3.3 Efficiency and project management

This section starts by looking at project implementation and continues with the findings on project management, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

Regional Electoral Support Project Midterm Review Report

Project implementation. The project was flexible in its approach and able to adjust its programming to the context and challenges. Its implementation was widely participatory and seen by the regional partners as joint initiatives.

Project implementation often started with brainstorming, moved to concept development, creation of a working group and putting the concept into action. The event process also followed a similar pattern of holding an event to increase awareness and share information, developing a network or tool from that event and then putting the network/tool to use to move the objectives for that event forward. This seems to have been an effective strategy for Phases I and II. The key to its continued effectiveness once the networks and tools are developed will be to ensure that the network efforts connect with the country level ones so that sustainable change can be made to improve their respective electoral and political processes.

The number of events held and the costs to fly to all those events, and for the regional project staff, advisors and consultants to go to the different places in terms of results achieved was raised by several during the evaluation interviews. This is difficult to judge from the perspective of this short midterm review, especially when the cost information is not disaggregated by sub-output levels.

However, in general, the greater the results emanating from an event, the more cost-effective, and effective it becomes. In this, the project should seek to document its results beyond the event and ensure that event-level results are put into action with the respective institutions and members. The project is doing this with many of its events, such as the workshops that developed the concept that led to the development of the Women's Network. After this becomes operational, the project should find partners that can pick up the efforts and move them forward at country levels to expand the project's results.

Table 14: Partners' financial expenditures in support of project efforts		
Partner	**Purpose**	**USD**
EAD	Joint activities listed in Table 17	530,620
UN Women	Joint YLP activities	165,000
Al Makhtoum Foundation	YLP	30,000
International IDEA	Joint ArabEMBs & Women Network efforts	94,000
UNITAR	YLP	200,000
ANNHRI	Human Rights Conference	12,000
Venice Commission	ArabEMBs joint meetings	70,000
UNDP JTF	Knowledge Products ??	15,000
UNDP Somalia	Bring IEC Somalia to Nairobi for ArabEMBs TA	25,000
TOTAL		1,141,620

In terms of actual costs, the project noted that travel was inherent in a regional project that needed to bring people together from different places, but that it had learned over time which cities were the most economical locations to hold events. It also noted that some of the working group and ArabEMBs Executive Committee meetings were held by skype which helped to limit the costs in those cases. The project is also making use of social media to maintain its contact with its youth participants. This is a cost-effective way to continue its engagement with them and strengthen their contribution to project results.

The project also entered into a number of partnerships that have helped to defray some of the implementation costs as well as enabling the project to increase the range of support for its partners. This was a lesson learned from Phase I when it worked alone. Some of these partners, such as the Venice Commission, bring in experts who participate in ArabEMBs conferences as well as split costs for some of the ArabEMBs conferences and general assemblies. Others such as International IDEA, have shared costs at some ArabEMBs events and in the development of the Women's Network. Some of the ArabEMBs members have also covered the costs for their own people to participate at some of the project facilitated events. And if an event were held in their country, they also shared costs in terms of providing the venue or the airport transportation (Tables 14 and 15).[74]

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[74] Information for Tables 15, 16 and 17 provided by the project

These partnerships have also facilitated project implementation beyond cost sharing. The project's main partner outside the regional hub has been EAD. This is a necessity for a project of this nature

and partners. EAD had relationships with some of these partners, such as LAS and the OIC, dating back years which helped the project to connect with these organizations. The project and EAD saw their work as a partnership that extended beyond information sharing to planning and implementing joint activities which is a best practice.

EAD has contributed to the costs for some of the joint efforts (Table 16). Some of these were for the project to provide logistics for its direct efforts, others were contributions to joint efforts.

IDEA is also a programmatic partner with the project on support to the ArabEMBs, providing complementary assistance. For example, it is working directly in the development of the manual on the independence of EMBs. This is expected

Table 15: In-Kind Contributions

Partner	Purpose
LAS	Co-funding of LAS-EMB forum, co-organizing of BRIDGE trainings, staff/experts participation in events, logistical support
Election Commission Mauritania	Accommodation, in-country transport and food for ArabEMBs election visit
IEC Jordan	Staff/expertise for visitor programme & conference/general assembly, facilitation and logistical support
ISIE Tunisia	Staff/expertise for visitor programme, logistical support
CEC Palestine	Dedicated staff/expertise (ArabEMBs website, graphics design, women's network)

to be launched in October 2019 on the eve of the Tunisian elections which the Tunisian election commission felt would give more visibility to the effort. IDEA believes both organizations are working to their own comparative advantages in this partnership. It sees itself as bringing its extensive collection of knowledge products and status as an intergovernmental organization with existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with most of the EMBs in the region, while the UNDP project sees it as increasing IDEA's visibility

Table 16: EAD financial contributions

Approval date	Activity	USD
8/17	OIC Gender Workshop	39,720
6/18	Iraqi Recount	265,100
6/17	Syria (OCV)	58,800
5/18	Electoral Dictionary	30,000
Nov 2018	UN-LAS Forum	40,000
July 2019	LAS partial contribution (July – December 2019)	97,000
	TOTAL	530,620

and entry points at the regional level at the same time that IDEA is helping to reduce project costs through cost-sharing.

A key implementation factor in all of this is that the regional project has a committed donor who shared the long-term regional perspective of the project and was willing to make funds available for

a multi-year project, including its continuation through Phase II. This allowed for the project to take a longer term perspective which was essential when developing associations such as the ArabEMBs or YLP from scratch. SIDA also saw this as a responsibility that should be shared in the future among multiple donors, so that the project is protected if one of them has financial issues or a change of regional priorities.

The project itself is implemented within a complex environment. The region is a diverse mix of countries at different stages of democratic transition, with the conflict in the region adding another layer of complexity. Security issues in those places complicated project implementation, limiting the ability of participants in some regions to travel or to hold regional events in their country. In the case of Libya, those interviewed stated that the airport was frequently closed or flights were cancelled and they needed the ability to have more flexibility in purchasing tickets than allowed by UNDP regulations. They also noted the need to have a foreign account to receive the per diems which was difficult in those countries.

Project implementation efforts were also multi-layered. As a component of GPECS II, its approvals needed to go through New York even though it worked more directly on a daily basis with elements of the regional hub. The regional hub saw the project as part of its team working with it through

Mosharaka and YLP. At the same time, the hub noted that its relationship with the project was ad hoc and the lack of systems to link it to the regional hub only worked because of the personalities involved. Its recommendation is to systematize the relationship and have the project attached to the regional programme.

The project also coordinated with the UNDP country offices for its project implementation on specific things. This was more widespread and systematic under the YLP which dealt directly with each country office, while it was more needs based for other activities. For instance, a country office or project would help facilitate the regional project's efforts if it were holding a conference or having an exposure visit in their country. The country office for Libya (based in Tunis) for example facilitated the project with its MedUni effort that was held in Tunisia. Extending this coordination programmatically to the country offices for the other activities would strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the project and the delivery of results.

The project document referred to the project developing consistency among UNDP electoral assistance efforts in the region. There was a joint meeting of Chief Technical Advisors (CTAs) in 2015 which was seen as a useful exchange of information and ideas. However, this was not continued and was attributed, rightly or wrongly, to the lack of a country window in Phase II. Although UNDP now has fewer election support projects in the region, a semi-annual coordination meeting among all the country offices and CTAs, and quarterly one with offices engaged in election-related support, would help with the effort to develop consistency and mutually supportive programming. This could be done by video conferencing which would not incur any costs.

The project did make good use of UNDP's global electoral network and experience in terms of providing exposure and models for regional cooperation. It also took advantage of some of its global knowledge products to translate into Arabic so that the resources were available for Arabic speakers.

Project branding seemed appropriate and includes the UNDP and SIDA logos. Joint efforts with partners, such as the ArabEMBs also included their logos. Visibility of the project and the donor seemed good for the events held and in the publications developed.

> **Project Staff & Consultants**
>
> *I'm very proud. This is working towards democracy.*
>
> *The project is really important. We are the backbone for the Arab region. We bring all the EMBs together, if we don't support them we will miss the opportunity for integration of the Arab States. These exchanges are very important.*
>
> *Our biggest accomplishment is creating a community of electoral people, information and knowledge, connecting different people, creating a dialogue on issues, putting them into practice and sharing pride in their work.*

Project management. The project was managed directly by the project team located in the Arab regional hub in Amman with the support of the regional hub and GPECS II in New York. This project was executed directly by UNDP which was the most appropriate mechanism for a project of this substance and nature.

The project staff was headed by the Project Manager who also served as the Regional Electoral Advisor for all of the UNDP country offices in the region. He is based now in Belgium, earlier in Amman and Istanbul. His deputy was the Regional Policy Specialist based in Amman. These two have been with the project since its beginning which has helped to provide an institutional memory and continuity for the project and built the long term relationships with the project's partners and stakeholders. They are assisted by an Electoral Analyst, an Administrative Associate and a Financial Associate.

The Regional Electoral Advisor's dual role facilitated his work as it increased his familiarity with the electoral and political activities in the region. He also saw this gave him the ability and flexibility to work where he felt he could be the most useful. But it also required balancing his time between the

two responsibilities. The Regional Policy specialist also provided country office support in the design and development of national project documents and in conducting NAMs.

The project has also contracted two long term consultants during Phase II as its Political Engagement and Youth Participation Consultant and Regional Electoral Consultant, both of which served in the office in Phase I as a UN Volunteer and an unpaid international intern respectively. They sit with the project in Amman. The project has also engaged a renown international consultant as their Senior Elections Advisor for Arab States who helped the team develop its strategy, participates in some of the events, helps with the development of some of the knowledge products, and delivers the course at St. Joseph's. It engaged other consultants on an as needed basis, mostly to help with the voter registry mapping, electoral dictionary, human rights monitoring guidebook, social media and other products.

The project team was widely seen as efficient, responsive and competent, with its management, administration and reporting done in a timely manner. They seemed to be well organized, knowledgeable, worked as a team and were well liked and well regarded by partners, participants, and stakeholders. This is an accomplishment in such a complex environment with so many different actors, institutions and interests.

SIDA raised the issue of staffing seeing the project as understaffed. The project does not believe it is understaffed and stated that it uses the regional hub and other UNDP staff to fill some of the duties as needed. It did use several of the regional hubs experts to support its efforts including the advisors for youth and gender, peacebuilding, human rights and social innovation. The project was extremely generous with the loaning out of its staff to other projects and entities in need. For instance, the Electoral Analyst was on detail to EAD for a year, the Financial Associate has been on detail to the Libyan project for ten months and the Regional Electoral Consultant took a year's break in between contracts to finisher her master's degree.

From an evaluation perspective, the project is understaffed. It has been able to hold timely events, move activities forward for all of the outputs and has effectively engaged the regional hub experts in its work. But there were elements in the project document within those outputs that were not developed or consistently followed up and likely would have been if the project had more full-time staff focused on those areas.

The long details leaving empty posts within the project is another issue. On the surface it would look as though these positions were not needed since they were gone for such extended periods of time, but in reality their work is covered by the others who do this in addition to their own work and/or they put in extra time during their detail to help out the project and/or it goes undone. Either way, this affects the efficiency and ultimate effectiveness of the project and should be done within a reasonable timeframe. UNDP's ExpRes Roster in the Crisis Bureau can quickly deploy experts if requested and if the funding is available. If the ExpRes roster is lacking Arabic speakers, the project could work under its Output 1 to encourage qualified Arabic speakers to apply.

The project receives operational support from the regional hub which handles its procurements, payments and recruitments. GPECS II holds its chart of accounts which requires any transaction done by the project to receive BPPS authorization. The regional hub asked for a delegation of authority to expedite its work, but it was not granted. Going to NY for approvals added time to every transaction and an extra layer of work for the regional hub. This is in contrast to other BPPS efforts for social innovation and gender supported by the hub which it stated had given them the needed levels of authority.

Project expenditures are reported through UNDP's Atlas system. This was set up in Phase 1 to be entered at the output level which the project had to continue for its Phase II. This means that the expenditure data can only be disaggregated down to the level of the four main outputs and it is not possible to get disaggregated totals by the sub-outputs (1.1, 1.2, etc.) without a prohibitive amount

of effort. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in a future project. The project allocates resources in its results and resources framework and annual workplans by these sub-outputs and this level of detail also needs to be available for the expenditure reporting for project management and monitoring purposes.

Supervision of the project is split between GPECS II in NY and the Governance Advisor in the regional hub. From the evaluation's interviews it seemed distant in both cases. The project noted it had no project board per say in Amman but they coordinated closely with the Governance team in the hub and with the donor. The project was monitored by GPECs II in NY and by its annual board meeting held in NY which was attended by the SIDA representative in NY. The regional hub did include the project in its Governance cluster meetings so it was aware of what the project was doing but stated that this was not oversight.

The project had regular interactions with the donor which was based in Cairo until recently through email and during visits to the country. The SIDA representative, who has also changed over time, recently moved to Amman. This will facilitate more face-to-face discussions and interaction with the project leadership and staff. This will also facilitate the holding of the Arab States Regional Coordination Group between the project and SIDA which was foreseen in the project design and was intended to meet quarterly to discuss project progress and issues.

SIDA was the only donor for Phase I and II and looks to have this expanded for future projects. It felt the project could have made more of an effort to mobilize other donors and instead relied on the SIDA to continue its engagement which put it in a vulnerable position. The head of the regional hub indicated that he and the Regional Electoral Advisor would be exploring collaboration with the EU in the fall. This is a good step towards diversifying funding and developing possible programmatic synergies with other EU-funded electoral support projects in the region. Other possible donors should also be approached.

Project reporting: Project reporting followed the requirements of the project document and was done on an annual basis. It focuses on the activities implemented, followed the results framework, and provided updated data on its indicators which is a best practice.

Reporting is mostly descriptive and covers the activities, highlights key accomplishments, lists its challenges and has a "future direction" section that outlines its intentions for the next year. Although the key elements are there, it could still be strengthened by including an analytical perspective that explains some of the "whys" (i.e.: why the project is doing this activity or event or why is it is sending this person to that conference) and gives a better indication of the progress made towards achieving the end state expected by the project. This, with more performance based indicators, would provide a better indication of the project's actual performance.

Reports also include a section on the region, but it is brief. Expanding this would increase the usefulness of the reporting and answer some of the questions that donors and others asked about whether the actions of projects such as these are making a difference in the region, if this type of assistance is still needed, if there are emerging opportunities that the project or others could take advantage of and which places need continued support and attention. This update is particularly relevant since the project supports the post of Regional Electoral Advisor who would be advising country offices on these issues. A reader of the report could also get a better understanding on what the project did and how it worked, if the reporting could make a clearer distinction between activities organized by the project and those organized by others where the project may have participated by sending a participant or panellist.

Project reports provide the annual financial data for the project, but as noted this is at the output level, which is insufficient. Apparently this cannot be changed as long as the current project continues. This is a good reason to start fresh with the next project instead of continuing with a "Phase III."

Monitoring and evaluation. The project followed the M&E requirements in the project document and tracked its results according to its results framework and indicators. It reported annually and included updated data for its indicators. It arranged for this midterm review of its project as required in the project document. It also has documented its workshops, collected feedback from participants on the quality of the efforts and their suggestions for improvements, and kept disaggregated data on participants for each event it supported. It also is keeping track of its social media sites for youth and collecting its user data.

The project's indicators however do not give good indication of the actual results achieved by the project beyond the holding of an event or number of participants. The inclusion of more results-based indicators, that can track changes over time resulting from project efforts, would provide a better indication of the actual level of project effectiveness and the progress made towards the achievement of its intended results.

The effectiveness of its data collection could also be strengthened by ensuring it had pre-measurements as well as post-measurements for its main awareness and capacity building efforts which could help determine if there was an increase in the level of knowledge and skills of the participants. Repeating these months or more later through a post-event questionnaire could also help determine if the participants still remembered the lessons, if they had been able to use them in their work and if this had generated any improvements or changes.

The project's 2016 mapping of organizations working on youth political and electoral engagement can serve as a type of baseline for some of the projects efforts through YLP. Undertaking a follow up survey might help provide information on the general evolution of the sector since it was done and might be able to indicate if the project had any impact by working with these youth-serving CSOs across the region. Additional questions could be asked on whether anyone in those organizations had been a part of YLP, MedUni or St. Joseph's or other initiatives such as the Women's Network, and if so what their role and effect was on that institution and its work.

The project relied on UNDPs (and EAD's) familiarity with the EMBs and institutions assisted in the project to develop most of its activities and efforts. It should consider developing a baseline survey for EMBs to complete annually on their actual status, level of staffing, systems, training plans etc that would provide baseline data and be able to show institutional development and capacity

improvements over the years. In addition to being an M&E tool, this would be beneficial for the ArabEMBs in the targeting of its efforts to support its members as well as for UNDP and other development partner's efforts to strengthen the EMB institutions and their systems at country level. The project could also tailor assessments for LAS and OIC and if more work is done with NHRI's, with those institutions through their association.

3.4 Sustainability

This section looks at the sustainability prospects for the different elements of the Regional Electoral Support Project.

The project undertook its activities with a sustainability perspective however it also realized that creating a new association and networks, and strengthening existing ones, required a longer term perspective and engagement. Its model for this effort was Latin America which built its structures, systems and capacity with international support and which was now not only fully developed but providing assistance to others undergoing similar transitions.

Project efforts with existing institutions were institutionalized, especially within LAS and to a lesser degree with OIC. LAS has developed into an electoral department with trained staff, and is building a network of experts in the region. It has incorporated BRIDGE, is using it for its trainings that have already reached half of the 200 LAS staff who serve as its observers and is starting to Arabize it. It has already held two LAS-EMB forums with project support and which it co-funded, and it has committed to holding a third forum in 2020. This is a good indication that these forums are institutionalized and will continue in the future beyond the end of the project. LAS wants to provide technical assistance to EMBs and the project is supporting this effort, organizing an exchange visit to its office to familiarize them with its work. It sees LAS taking on an EAD assistance type role which could help the EMBs in the future when international assistance is reduced, and expects LAS will eventually take over some of efforts of this project.

The members of the ArabEMBs interviewed seemed to own the concept of their association and were engaged in its efforts. However, it is still dependent on the financial, logistical and institutional support provided by the project. According to experts interviewed, the organization will take years to consolidate and become a self-sustaining pro-active organization. The association has made significant steps towards institutionalization by registering and now collecting dues. It has also entered into partnerships with other associations and development partners, such as International IDEA and the Venice Commission which have worked with the project to provide assistance and shared costs at some of the organization's events.

Box 15: Lessons learned

- Importance of partnerships in implementing a regional project in a complex and transitional environment. Not only for cost sharing purposes, but for the benefits and comparative advantages that each institution can bring.

- Clearly articulating the project's theory of change in the project's design which provides the rationale for why the project has selected its different outputs and activities, and ensuring that all of these contribute to the higher level purpose for the project.

- Usefulness of country level synergies in the implementation of a regional programme and in extending its reach to national levels

- Need for results based indicators, baseline and end of project data, with an M&E plan that sets milestones and can track progress made towards achieving those milestones.

- Importance of having project expenditure data at the sub-output levels for project planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes.

All of the ArabEMBs conferences and activities have been documented in English and Arabic and are available on their prototype website along with the voter registration mapping, giving it the start of its institutional memory. It has developed relationships since its establishment with other institutions which can help provide expertise and exposure outside of this project. This includes MOUs with IDEA and IFES signed in Phase II, and with the Association of European Electoral Bodies (ACEEEO), the Association of World Electoral Bodies (A-WEB), the Central Electoral Commission of Russia and the Venice Commission signed in Phase I,

The Women's Network is being created under the ArabEMBs which will provide an institutional home for the network. It has a working group of committed persons and also support from IDEA. Since it has not yet launched, it is too early to know how active it will be and if this network and its activities will be sustainable without continued technical, financial and facilitation support.

YLP as a programme appears to be something that the regional hub intends to sustain for the medium term. YLP needs this continued support since the UNDP regional hub is its institutional home. UNDP could look to a broader UN partnership to help sustain this effort in the future given its broad SDG focus, with UNICEF, UN Women and others. It is too soon to know if the youth-serving CSOs or any of the national level networks created as part of their annual plans will continue their efforts after the end of each YLP. The knowledge and experience gained by the youth participants and CSOs are anticipated to remain with them. The project is currently maintaining the social media sites that connect the groups. The youth seem to have maintained contact as well with the friends they made in the programme through their own social media accounts. The MedUni participant noted that he is a member of the project's WhatsApp group as well as the group from the MedUni. This youth himself reaches almost 130,000 persons through his own vlog on his Facebook page which is not political in nature.

The knowledge products produced by the project are disseminated to partners and are available online when done. There is a repository of materials on the ACE website as well as for some of the material at the EU-UNDP Joint Task Force site. The ArabEMBs website and LAS are also expected to be repositories.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

1. *The project addressed a critical need to strengthen the quality of the electoral processes and the goals of SDGs 5 and 16 in the region.* Maintaining the gains made by EMBs and other relevant bodies in their respective institutions following the Arab Spring was critical to addressing these needs, as was addressing the issues of meaningful and inclusive participation, election integrity, availability of reliable information, and strengthening the role of women, youth and others in the processes.

2. *The project provided a trusted and effective platform of electoral support that brought key stakeholders and partners in the Arab world together* to address these issues in a more unified and coordinated manner at the regional level for the ArabEMBs, LAS, OIC and ANNHRI. The YLP also provided a platform for UNDP efforts with youth in the region.

3. *The Regional Electoral Support Project played a valuable role bringing the EMBs in the region together under one umbrella association* that seems to be owned by its members and which can serve as a platform to address common areas of concern and better elections.

4. *The project also played a valuable role in the provision of regional advisory and support services to UNDP country offices/projects as well serving as a quick response mechanism for emergency support,* such as for the Iraqi recount mission. Efforts however were open ended and needed more definition in the project design.

5. *Results for Phase II cannot be seen in isolation from Phase I.* The results seen in Phase II are the cumulative effects of the work of the project since its inception.

6. *Attribution for impact level results is difficult due to the number of other factors and actors in the region and the lack of results-level data, but major accomplishments include:*

   ✓ *Strengthened the profession of electoral administration by unifying and empowering EMBs in the region* around a common purpose *and by creating a credible recognized entity in the ArabEMBs that has participated successfully in regional, South-South and global events* since its creation, grown in membership and is about to launch a women's wing. The association has the potential to improve election administration and standards among its members as well as their related electoral and political processes within the region.

   ✓ *Strengthened the role, capacity and visibility of the LAS Electoral Department* through its establishment of its bi-annual LAS-EMB forum attended by its member states' EMBs on better elections in the Arab region, strengthened election observation efforts and its participation in the delivery of the university course on electoral systems.

   ✓ *Strengthened the position of women in EMBs through the creation of the Women's Network within the ArabEMBs.* The benefits of this remain to be seen but it has already appears to have strengthened the confidence of the women in the Working Group about their ability to effect change and increased networking among a broader group of women in the region engaged in the network's development, including CSOs which can expand this networks reach and influence.

   ✓ *Planted seeds among participating youth* for more productive citizenship and improved their understanding of the importance of the electoral process and civic engagement. There is not enough information to know if the youth's solutions made an impact or its nature.

   ✓ *Mobilized CSOs in a volunteer effort that engaged youth in national programmes promoting the values of the SDGs and constructive youth participation.* It is too early to know the results of this mobilization and their national programmes but it likely has potential for some interesting results.

   ✓ *Expanded the concept for the role of the national human rights institutions in the electoral process, raising it from observation to monitoring.* This has potential to yield significant results in the future beyond strengthening the integrity of elections if adopted and implemented.

   ✓ *Strengthened the relationship between EAD and UNDP* through its collaborative and constructive working relationship. This drew on the institutional advantages of both UN organizations and resulted in a unified programme of assistance to stakeholders.

   ✓ *Normalized (to a certain extent) discussions of certain culturally sensitive electoral topics by electoral stakeholders* (such as gender) through the continued inclusion of these concepts in project efforts.

5. *Accomplishments in other areas, such as media and strengthening the role of youth directly in the political and electoral processes are likely more limited* due to the sporadic nature of the events for media and the broader based nature of the efforts with youth.

6. *Project's close coordination with UNDP country offices in the implementation of the YLP programme developed into a mutually synergistic and joint programmatic effort.* This programmatic synergy was largely missing for other outputs and would strengthen the project significantly if developed.

7. *The project's M&E plan was not sufficient to be able to measure the actual effectiveness and results of the project.* Results may be greater for some of the activities than what was visible during the evaluation especially in terms of ripple or multiplier effects.

8. *Assistance at the regional level is still needed and important.* The democratic transition in the Arab States is still underway and under stress in many areas. The conflict in countries will likely end in negotiations and elections. These processes will need significant support, not only at the national levels, but regional.

4.2. Recommendations

For the remainder of Phase II:

1. *Complete efforts underway with the main partners.* Ensure any new activities focus directly on achieving the project's intended goals.

2. *Continue support to the ArabEMBs for its institutional development and programmatic efforts.* Continue election visits and efforts for the ArabEMBs to provide technical assistance to other EMBs. Support the women's network and its efforts to become an effective means for women's advancement in the political and electoral processes.

3. *Continue efforts with LAS and OIC for the development of their electoral departments and programmes.*

4. *Finalize the Guidebook for NHRI monitoring and start work with their association to implement the work. C*oordinate this with efforts of others at the country level who can help the national NHRIs to implement the guide and undertake the monitoring.

5. *Increase efforts to track and aggregate the results of the YLP programme* at country levels and work with the regional hub to expand the projects engaged in the YLP efforts to expand its base and contributions.

6. *Extend the Electoral Systems course to at least one other academic institution in the region* since the concept and curriculum are already developed. *Ensure the course at St Joseph's* will continue after project participation ends through a better understanding of the University's intent for the course post-project.

7. *Strengthen ties with country-level programmes (UNDP and others)* to develop follow up efforts for the members of the regional associations including NHRI's after the guidebook is published, and to help track the results of project efforts at the country levels

8. *Strengthen the next annual report by including analysis of the progress made towards the achievement of the project's intended outcomes and* ensure clarity in reporting on the who did what and why for events and knowledge products.

9. *Collect more results-level data to use to target future efforts and to monitor project effectiveness.* Supplement the M&E plan with the addition of a few results-based indicators for each main output for the remainder of the project.

10. *Develop an exit strategy* in case there is not a follow-on UNDP project that would continue the key efforts and include progress made on this in reporting.

11. *Continue close collaboration and partnerships* with EAD, IDEA, Venice Commission, UN Women and others and expand these where possible.

12. *Start the design process now for a future project and avoid extending the project indefinitely.*

For future efforts

At the strategic level:

1. *There is still a need for a regional project focused on strengthening the electoral and political processes and their integrity, equity and inclusion in the Arab region.* Electoral processes provide an effective entry point for broader good governance and policy reforms and for the promotion of democratic norms and the rule of law without the level of sensitivities inherent in a "democracy and governance" project.

2. *Start the next stage of assistance by conceptualizing the future project within the broader framework of UNDP's electoral and political processes support to the region as a whole*, and within this framework how the regional and country levels can work together to strengthen the processes in the region. To support this effort, UNDP should develop a five-year integrated strategy of assistance that covers the regional and country levels and includes a common theory of change, common goals at the outcome level and mutually synergistic programming. This strategy should include a few joint indicators that both levels can use to measure their progress towards achieving those goals. The strategy should also identify the partners that can help UNDP at country and regional levels to implement its strategy and how this would be coordinated. Use this as the foundation for the design of the next regional project and for any new country-level projects, adapted as appropriate for the country contexts.

3. *Continue efforts from Phase II that show the most promise in terms of impact*, notably, the consolidation of ArabEMBs and its efforts with its members, further professionalization and development of LAS as a regional resource and defender of norms for member states on electoral and political processes, the strengthening of the human rights network efforts as protectors of human rights and democratic norms throughout the electoral process and similar efforts with the OIC.

4. Think through how to strengthen the project's impact at the regional level for the political participation of women and youth beyond existing efforts as well as building on successes. Include PLWD in this. As part of this, strengthen ties with specialized organizations especially in light of the UN's repositioning that looks for "*a stronger UN institutional response and system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda.*"[75]

5. Strengthen efforts to address issues of electoral violence, electoral dispute resolution and the broader areas of electoral justice, the constructive role of media and transparency of EMBs and other institutions (especially in relation to open government and data),

6. Explore relationships with UNDP's other on-line platforms beyond ACE related to project goals such as iKNOW POLITICS and AGORA. Look into UNDP's open data efforts in relation to standards that could be adopted by regional institutions for their members and the possibility of supporting the ArabEMBs to promote ISO certification within its member EMBs which could contribute significantly to the professionalism and reliability of their work as well as to the outcome level goals of reliable and accurate election administration.

7. Expand the reach of the Electoral Systems course by developing a certificated e-learning course that would be open to university students and others, including electoral practitioners throughout the region and market it widely.

8. Provide a country window focused on strengthening coordination and developing programmatic synergies, and measuring progress made under the integrated strategy.

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[75] UN, *Development System Repositioning. Frequently Asked Questions*, p 1

Avoid a country window for the purpose of filling country level funding gaps unless this is developed as part of the project's design and the parameters for this type of support are well defined.

9. Develop the role of the regional electoral advisor and project in assisting other UNDP offices and projects in the integrated strategic plan and project design. Ensure the parameters for this are well defined and it has its own output, resource allocation and performance indicators.

10. Attach the regional project to the regional hub rather than continue as a part of GPECS to formalize its integration into the larger UNDP regional programme, strengthen project oversight and streamline its administration. Ensure the set up of the project accounting system is designed to enter data at the sub-output level (1.1. 1.2 etc.) so that the project can better track its expenditures and monitor its efforts.

11. Develop a full M&E plan as a supplement to the project document with performance based indicators, tracking tables, roles and responsibilities for monitoring and aggregating data, etc. Use country offices to help collect M&E data that can help track results at country levels that when aggregated would show results at the regional level. Ensure the collection of baseline data at the start and end of the project.

12. Broaden the donor base to make it a more collective international effort and to help ensure stability and adequate funding for efforts. Allow earmarking of funds so that donors can support their areas of particular interest.

Attachment 1: ArabEMBs Activities

Activity	Date	Supported by	Notes
Workshop for IEC Somalia on registration and financing of political parties, Nairobi Kenya	10 -13 July 2017	UNDP,[76] IEC Somalia, UNSOM	Organized in cooperation with the IEC Somalia and supported by the IESG, UNSOM, and UNDP
Visit to Jordanian municipal and provincial council elections, Jordan	14 – 16 August 2017	UNDP	Organized by ArabEMBs in cooperation with IEC Jordan and supported by project.
Participants in A-WEB training on electoral information and education, Incheon, South Korea	25 July – 4 August 2017	A-WEB	ArabEMBs presented its organization. IHEC Tunisia presented "Increasing the participation of young people in the elections in the Arab countries" and "Informing voters in Arab world to address the problem of voter distrust in elections"
Participants in 3rd General Assembly and periodic A-WEB conference, Bucharest, Romania	31 August – 2 September 2017	A-WEB	Conference: Using technology to count and sort ballots to enhance the transparency of the electoral processes. ArabEMBs made 3 presentations and introduced 2 Arab experiences (Iraq and Egypt)
Participants in 26th ACEEEO conference, Bulgaria	8 – 10 November 2017	UNDP, ACEEEO	Conference: Voter education in the era of digital communication. ArabEMBs made 2 presentations and introduced 2 Arab experiences (sensitize and education young voters -Jordan; and role and responsibility of EMBs in voter education and awareness - Palestine
Participants in workshop on use of information technology in electoral processes, Cap Verde	23 – 24 November 2017	RECEF, EMB Cap Verde	Organized by Electoral Skills Network for French Speakers (RECEF) in cooperation with IDEA, la Francophonie and EMB Cap Verde. ArabEMBs made 2 presentations and introduced the experience of IEC Jordan on the Impact and Challenges of Electronic Connectivity, and of the IEC Iraq on Biometric Registration Process, Impact and Challenge.
MOU signed with International IDEA, Jordan	2 December 2017		UNDP support for logistical preparations
MOU signed with IFES, Jordan	2 December 2017		UNDP support for logistical preparations
Visit to presidential elections in Russian Federation	18 March 2018	UNDP, CEC Russia	Invited by CEC Russia. ArabEMB delegation was of EMB representatives from Jordan, Palestine, Libya
Participants in 15th Congress of European Electoral Administrations, Oslo Norway	19 – 20 April 2018	Council of Europe	Organized by the Council of Europe and the Electoral Section of the Ministry of Local Government, Development of Norway and

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[76] UNDP in this table refers to the Regional Electoral Support Project

Activity	Date	Supported by	Notes
			the Venice Commission. Arab EMBs made a presentation on their association.
Advisory Group Meeting, Turkey	28 – 30 April 2018	UNDP,	First step in creating the Arab Network for Women in Elections
Visit to Tunisian municipal elections	5 – 7 May 2018	UNDP, IDEA	Organized by ArabEMBs in cooperation with ISIE Tunisia with UNDP and IDEA support.
1st Working Group Meeting, Women's Network, Tunisia	13 – 15 August 2018	UNDP, IDEA	
Participants in EU/UNDP global electoral conference, Brussels, Belgium	8 – 11 October 2018	UNDP	Conference: Sustaining Peace Through Elections
Participants in 2nd Forum of Electoral Administration in Arab Countries, Cairo, Egypt	13 – 14 November 2018	UNDP	Organized by LAS and UN on Voter Registration. ArabEMBs presented its organization and on technical preparations for voter registration, shared its voter registration mapping, and held bilateral meetings on the side lines with non-member EMBS to invite them to join the association
2nd Working Group Meeting Women's Network, Tunis	3-5 December 2018	UNDP, IDEA	
3rd General Assembly of ArabEMBs and Regional Conference, Dead Sea, Jordan	3 February 2019	UNDP, Venice Commission	Conference: Electoral Complaints and Appeals in the Arab Region
Participants in Global Conference on media and elections, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	1 – 3 May 2019	UNDP	Conference: Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections at a Time of Media Misinformation . Organized by UNESCO, Government of Ethiopia and African Union
Visit presidential elections, Mauritania	21 – 213 June 2019	UNDP, EC Mauritania	
ArabEMBs signing ceremony for its registration in Jordan as an association.	25 June 2019	UNDP, IEC Jordan	

Annex 1: Persons interviewed

Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions
Ghaffar Al-Ali, Legal Advisor

ArabEMBs, EMB members and Women's Network
Dr. Khalid Alkaladeh, ArabEMBs Executive Board Member and Chairman, Independent Election Commission, Jordan
Abdulhakim Chaab, ArabEMBs Executive Board Member and Chief Electoral Commissioner, High National Elections Commission, Libya
Hisham Kuhall, Chairman of Executive Board, ArabEMBs and Chief Electoral Officer, Central Elections Commission, Palestine
Suaad Elhaj Hammad, Director Training Department, and member Women's Network Working Group, National Elections Commission, Sudan
Suhair Abdeen, Head Training and Member Women's Network Working Group, Central Elections Commission, Palestine
Vera Baboun, Former Mayor, Bethlehem and Member of Working Group for Women's Network
Bedriedh Belbeisi, Former Secretary General ArabEMBs and former Acting Secretary General, Electoral Commission, Independent Election Commission Jordan

Council of Europe
Graziano Tullio, North South Centre, Lisbon
Serguei Kouznetsov, Venice Commission, Strasbourg

International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Alexandra Brown, ACE Coordinator, Washington DC

International IDEA
Serif Alaa, Programme Manager, Africa and West Africa, Tunis
Peter Wolf, ACE IT, Burma

League of Arab States
Hadia Sabry, Director Electoral Department, Cairo
Ahmed Amin Sultan, Head of Election Observation Division, Electoral Affairs Department , Cairo

Organization of Islamic Conference
Nouria Abdallah El Hammami, Director, Arab Department in the Political Department and Head of the Electoral Unit, Jeddah

Regional Electoral Support Project Arab States
Luis Martinez-Betanzos, Regional Electoral Advisor for Arab States and Project Manager
Najia Hashamee, Regional Policy Specialist for Arab States
Mais Al-Atiat, Electoral Analyst
Ban Kastor, Administrative Associate
Sana Sharbati, Financial Associate
Osama Jaber, Consultant, Youth Participation
Razan Masad, Consultant, Regional Electoral Consultant, ACE Focal Point
Abdallah Almomari, Consultant, ArabEMBs Coordination and Liaison Officer
Rafael Lopez Pintor, Consultant/Senior Elections Advisor Arab States
Evrard Houadio, Consultant, Voter Registration
Amor Boubakri, Consultant, Electoral Dictionary
Hiba Ali Balaha, Consultant, Voter Registration Editing
Chris Sidoti, Consultant, Election Monitoring Guidebook for NHRIs
Ronan McDermott, Consultant, Senior Electoral Database Expert

SIDA
Izabella Eriksson, Regional Programme Manager, Democracy and Human Rights, Amman

UNDP Country Offices and Projects
Richard Chambers, Former CTA, Electoral Support Project Jordan
Danakhan Malhas, Team Leader, Development Impact, Policy and Planning, Gender and Youth Focal Point, UNDP Country Office, Jordan
Yara Mubaldin, Socio-Economic Portfolio Associate, YLP Country Office, Jordan
Dan Raduelscu, CTA, Electoral Support Project Lebanon
Gerardo Noto, Resident Representative, UNDP Libya
Panto Letic, Former CTA, Electoral Support Project, Libya
Riccardo Barranca, CTA, Electoral Support Project Tunisia

UNDP NY
Niall McCann, Former Electoral Policy Advisor, BPPS, New York
Aleida Ferreyra, Former Electoral Policy Specialist, BPPS, New York

UNDP Brussels
Dan Malinovich, Electoral Specialist, EU-UNDP Joint Task Force

UNDP Regional Hub in Amman, Regional Bureau for Arab States
Khaled Abdel Shafi, Director
Hudda Khattab, Operations Manager
Malin Herwig, Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Programme Advisor
Yakuk Beris, Former Regional Programme Coordinator
Kawtar Zerouali, Gender and Youth Focal Point

United Nations
Mansour Sadeghi, Electoral Affairs Officer, Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political Affairs, UN, NY

UN Women
Janneke van der Graaff - Kukler, Regional Director a.i./Deputy Regional Director, UN Women Arab States Regional Office, Cairo
Simone Ellis Oluoch-Olunya, Policy Advisor, Women's Political Participation Arab States Regional Office, Nairobi

University of Saint Joseph
Jihad Nammour, Academic Coordinator, Arab Master's programme in Democracy and Human Rights
Ahmed Samy Lotf, MA Student with a specialization in Human Rights and Democratization
Hazem Mizyed, MA Student in Democracy and Human Rights

Youth Participant MedUni
Johar Ali Abdulkarim, Libya

Annex 2: Documents

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ACE Annual Reports 2016 and *2018; Quarterly Report Q4, 2017*
Arabic User Survey 2017 Results
Data and Market Analysis, FY2020 - 2024 Strategic Planning Process

Arab Barometer
Arab Women as Political Leaders, , https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/Arab-Women-Political-Leaders-2016.png
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Women in the Middle East and North Africa, A Divide between Rights and Roles, 2018

ArabEMBs
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Establishment of the Organisation of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs) 2015, Facebook https://www.facebook.com/ArabEMBs/
MOU between Venice Commission and ArabEMBs , October 2015
Summary report Arab EMBs election visit to the Presidential Elections at the Russian Federation, 16 – 19 March 2018
Visitor Programme Palestine
*Voter Registration Mapping, Case study of 8 countrie*s, power point, 2018

ArabEMBs and UNDP
Roadmap towards Establishing a Regional network to Promote Women in Elections, 26 – 30 April, Istanbul, Workshop Report

ArabEMBs, UNDP and IDEA
Framework for the Regional Arab Network for Women in Elections

ArabEmbs, UNDP and the Independent Election Commission of Jordan
Summary Report, Visitor Programme to the Jordanian Municipal and Governate Elections, 2017

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Solutions, https://www.generationunlimited.org/our-work/solutions

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Youth in the MENA region. Coping with Uncertainty, An Overview, , https://www.fes-mena.org/topics/youth-study/

International IDEA
Where we Work: Africa & West Asia/Tunisia, https://www.idea.int/our-work/where-we-work/africa-west-asia/tunisia

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Annual Progress Report, 2015 – 2016
Evaluation of phase 1 Regional Electoral Support Project: Middle East and North Africa, Evaluation Report, July 2016

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Annual Progress Report June 2017 - June 2018, 2018
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Combined Delivery Reports July – Dec 2017, Jan Dec 2018, Jan – June 2019
Feedback from participants of social innovation camp in Tunisia 9 – 16 June 2019
Gender strategy, 2017
List of project activities June 2017 – July 2019
List of project staff, consultants and companies, July 2019
Mapping, Report, Organization/Networks focusing on youth civic/political/electoral engagement, Arab States,
Project Document, 2017
Project estimates for percentage expenditures by sub-outputs, August 2019
Project's response to SIDA, August 1, 2019
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Social Media Report YLP 02/2018 – 06/2019
UNDP Course on Electoral Systems from a Comparative International Perspective, St Joseph University, 29 October – 1 November 2018, Agenda, 2018
UNDP Social Innovation Camp, Youth Innovation for Political Participation, 9 – 16 June Tunisia, Workshop Report, 2019

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Cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States

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Email of 29 July 2019 to the Regional Electoral Support Project with comments on the annual progress report for 2018 – 2019, 2019

Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden
Regional Strategy for Swedish Development Cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) 2016 -2020, 2016

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United Nations and League of Arab States
The Forum for Electoral Management Bodies in the Arab States, League of Arab States – United Nations, Cairo, 9 – 11 May 2016, 2016

United Nations General Assembly
Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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YLP 3, Accelerating innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development, Narrative Report, 2017
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 Gender Gap Index 2018 , http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/

Annex 3: Midterm Review Methodology

1. Introduction

This Midterm Review Inception Plan for the Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) in the Arab States (Phase II) was developed based on: the Terms of Reference (TOR) prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional hub in Amman Jordan for this midterm review; UNDP evaluation guidelines; and, an initial review of available project documents and reporting.

1.1. Purpose for the Midterm Review

The purpose for this project review is to provide UNDP, project partners and stakeholders with an independent assessment of Phase II of the GPECS Arab States component and its progress towards achieving its intended outcomes and outputs, document its lessons learned and provide recommendations and a roadmap to improve future efforts. The Phase II Regional Component is a three year (2017 – 2020) USD 7.4 million project intended to improve the accountability, participation and representation in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region through strengthening knowledge, awareness and capacity on electoral processes and enhanced regional cooperation among electoral stakeholders. The overarching goal is to develop a shared regional perspective on citizenship building and democratic elections within the region.[77]

Specifically, this review will:

1. Assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project to the situation in the region and to UN/UNDP electoral/development goals, including the participation of women;
2. Assess the project's effectiveness, challenges and its achievement of intended outputs and outcomes;
3. Assess the efficiency of project implementation, management and use of resources;
4. Assess the level of ownership, participation and partnerships in the project, and in the promotion of its objectives, and the sustainability of the efforts;
5. Capture the lessons learned and best practices from project implementation; and,
6. Provide recommendations to strengthen the project and future efforts moving forward.

1.2 Background and context

UNDP has provided regional support to the Arab States through a GPECS regional component since 2013. Phase I was a USD 5.5 million project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and ran from 2013 – 2017. An evaluation of the project in 2016 found that the project "delivered convincingly and consistently on its objectives" and established strong linkages with key regional bodies that facilitated the creation of the establishment of the Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs). It also found that it delivered "significant impact" through its engagement with key actors, focus on knowledge management, the participation of women and youth, and the building of relationships through learning exchanges. The evaluation also made a number of recommendations to strengthen the project for Phase II. These included: developing a clear gender strategy and having dedicated experts; creating additional networking opportunities for the ArabEMBs with their broader stakeholders; becoming a regional resource for advisory support and capacity building; strengthening its core team, programmatic focus and

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[77] UNDP, *Regional Electoral Support for Middle East and North Africa Phase II Project Document*, p 1

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) aspects; adopting more realistic objectives; and, clarifying roles and responsibilities between national and regional projects.[78]

Phase II continued the efforts of Phase I and received continued funding from SIDA. According to the project document, it intended to build on the accomplishments of Phase I and focus on the initiatives that had the potential for the greatest impact in the region. It organized its activities around four main objectives:

1. Enhanced regional electoral capacity and knowledge (Output 1)

2. Strengthened profession of electoral administration through regional cooperation (Output 2)

3. Enhanced civil and political participation of women (Output 3)

4. Role of youth promoted in the electoral cycle (Output 4)

The project is executed through a direct execution modality by UNDP. GPECS is a global project managed by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS). The MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Regional Component was to be led by the Regional Electoral Advisor for Arab States under the supervision of the Governance and Peacebuilding Regional Team Leader in the Regional Hub in Amman and the Lead Electoral Advisor in New York. Its management and implementation were to be coordinated with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States. GPECS has a Project Board that meets once a year and the Regional Component has an additional Regional Coordination Group that was to meet quarterly. This was to consist of the project implementation team in the region, SIDA and other partners as appropriate. The Regional Electoral Advisor is responsible for the implementation of the project and was to be supported by a Regional Electoral Policy Specialist and support staff. The project operates out of the UNDP Regional Hub in Amman with UNDP providing project support and quality assurance.

1.3 Scope of the midterm review

This independent midterm review will:

- Undertake a review of relevant documents, including the project document, progress reports, Project Board and Coordination Group minutes, any Letters of Agreement/ Memorandums of Understandings issued, project products and combined delivery reports.

- Undertake discussions with Phase II partners, Governments and non-governmental agencies, stakeholders, UNDP country level projects and others working on electoral cycle support in the region on the project's design, implementation, performance, challenges, lessons learned, best practices and results.

- Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and inclusiveness of the project interventions and their results taking into consideration the project objectives and the progress made towards achieving those objectives, along with the project's management and quality of implementation.

- Assess the qualitative and quantitative data available on the results achieved and progress made, especially in terms of its contribution to achieving the objectives and outputs as outlined in the project document.

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

- Validate preliminary findings through discussion, interviews and the review's debriefings.

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[78] UNDP, *Evaluation of Phase I Regional Electoral Support Project: Middle East and North Africa 2013 - 2016*

- Provide a report on the midterm review's main findings with practical and forward looking recommendations for improving programming and project management as well as providing recommendations for future phases that could improve its relevance, effectiveness, partnerships and sustainability among other areas.

The midterm review will cover Phase II from its start through June 2019.

2. Methodology

2.1 Review criteria and questions

In addition to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability questions listed in the TOR, the review will seek to answer the following questions that are based on the project's intended outputs and results framework:

Outcome & Outputs	Main Questions	Sub- Questions
Building more engaged citizenry and democratic electoral processes	• What are the trends for democratic electoral development and citizen participation in the MENA region? • What were the major factors for/against this development? Did the project address any of these factors?	• Did the project succeed in building a more engaged citizenry and democratic electoral processes in the region? Why or why not? Was this uniform across the region? If not, why not and what were the factors that led towards successful outcomes vs those that inhibited this? • DG issues in region are sensitive. Is it easier/more effective to address these on a regional basis rather than country level?
Strengthened regional electoral capacity and knowledge	• What is the level of knowledge in the region on electoral cycle processes/issues by citizens, CSOs, media, political actors and relevant institutions? Is this knowledge increasing? Why and what are the main factors for this trend? • What was Phase II's role in strengthening regional electoral capacity? Was this approach appropriate? What issues did it face in fulfilling this role? • Was regional coordination strengthened between national and regional bodies/networks as a result of project efforts? How? Did this coordination strengthen project effectiveness and the achievement of intended outcomes? • What are the main Arab speaking election-related networks and databanks? Have these increased in the past decade? How active are they? Did Phase II play a role in this? What were the benefits of developing these networks? How sustainable are the Phase II supported networks and activities? What is the balance of M/F and countries? • Has the role and capacity of the League of Arab States in electoral cycle related efforts increased and what is the general perception of the quality of its efforts? Is this a result of the project and/or other factors, and are gains sustainable? • Did the project support the League of Arab	• How timely and inclusive were Phase II efforts to strengthen regional capacity? Was it able to reach the key actors? • Did Phase II leverage country-level projects in this effort? How? • Was gender mainstreamed in these efforts? How? Impact? • What did Phase II contribute to the Arabic site of ACE? Is it used? Who are the users and what is most useful for them? • Did the project engage regional media networks or regulatory bodies? How? Results? • Did Phase II support increase the number of trainers/experts? In what? What are they doing now? Did it develop e-learning courses? • What information products did the League of Arab States produce and which ones of these were supported by the project? How were these disseminated and what was their reach? What did the recipients think about the usefulness of the information and products? • What conferences were supported and what tangible outcomes came from those conferences/workshops? • How many study tours were taken during Phase II, where, why and who attended? What was the result of these tours after

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Outcome & Outputs	Main Questions	Sub- Questions
	State's TA and electoral observation work? How? Was it useful? How are their TA and observation efforts perceived by stakeholders in the region?	• participants returned home? • Was there more that Phase II could have done to strengthen this effort? Missed opportunities?
Strengthened EMB profession through regional cooperation	• How did Phase II strengthen the EMB profession? Was it successful? What were the main challenges and if/how were they overcome? • What was the perception of stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries on the quality and usefulness of the various Phase II efforts to strengthen the profession of electoral administration? • What is the role of the ArabEMBs organization and how active and effective has it been? What is its reach? How important a factor has Phase II support been in this? Why? Are all EMBs in the region members? If not, why not? • Are there other regional EMB networks and organizations? How active/effective are they and did they coordinate with ArabEMBs? Why or why not? • Were relationships institutionalized with other EMB regional associations? How? Outcome of this? • Do EMBs and others in the region perceive political rights as human rights? Why? What did the project do to promote this perspective?	• How appreciated and effective were BRIDGE and other trainings/workshops? Why? What did participants do following training, conferences or workshops? Did they make any changes? • How much support is provided to the ArabEMBs and what is the level of EMB ownership in the organization? How sustainable is it? How is it perceived and used by the EMBs in the region? • Does the ArabEMBs mainstream gender and support inclusive and equal participation? What is the balance of M/F in the organization's leadership? Does it have a gender and social inclusion policy? • Did the project support website development for the ArabEMBs? Who are the users and how frequently do they use it? • How actively did Phase II engage on election ethics with partners? How? Results? • Did the project provide follow up to the different activities? Why or why not? Was this adequate for the needs?
Enhanced political participation of women	• What is the situation of women's political participation in the region and the trend? How did the project address this? Was it an effective approach? Why? • Did Phase II efforts result in increased participation of women as voters, candidates, representatives or electoral administrators? How and where? • Did the project support regional networks of women involved in public life? How? Did this group coordinate with other existing networks of women in the region/ countries? • How did the project advocate for the advancement of women in EMBs? Was this effective? How did it target grass roots and top down change?	• Did the project develop and implement a gender strategy? Was it useful and effective? Why? • Did Phase II efforts strengthen gender equality through constitutional drafting and improving legal frameworks? If so, how and where? Results? • What products did the project produce and what was the impact of this? • Did Phase II facilitate dialogue on the role of women in preventing conflict and violent extremism and did it relate this to women's political participation? Outcome of this? • Was gender mainstreamed within project activities?
Role of youth promoted	• What is the situation of youth participation in electoral and political processes in the region? Is it improving? What are the main factors? • How did the project advocate for the increased participation of youth at the regional level? Were the numbers of youth increased in regional events and for	• What youth age group did the project target and did it reach these groups? How? Was it an effective strategy? • What did the project do about youth participation to prevent conflict and violent extremism? Challenges and results? • Were materials developed for middle and

Outcome & Outputs	Main Questions	Sub- Questions
	observation missions? • Were standards and guidelines for youth participation in the electoral cycle developed with support of the project? Used? How? Was this innovative? With ICT and social media? • Did the project support the networking of youth groups and promote regional graduate education activities?	high school curricula and distributed? What type and where? Were they used? • Was the course at the University of St Joseph in Beirut expanded? How many fellowships granted? Any e-learning courses designed? Number of students receiving diplomas? Was this more or less than previously? What was the demographics of the participants?
Project design and management	• How was Phase II designed? Was there participation and ownership from relevant bodies in the region? • How relevant, appropriate and timely was Phase II and its implementation? Was the timing of assistance appropriate for the national/regional needs? • How were the networks, organizations and participants selected? Were these the most appropriate? Why? • Was the project able to use an electoral cycle approach? How? Benefit? • What were the main constraints to project 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 and regional ownership in the different efforts? What were the factors for this? • How visible was the project/donor and was this level of visibility appropriate? • How effective was GPECS, the Regional Hub and UNDP in general in providing backstop support and quality assurance for this project? • Did the project design and implementation incorporate a human rights and gender equality based approach? • Was the M&E plan adequate and able to capture project results? • What was the main driver for the project?	• Was GPECS Phase II seen as impartial and effective by partners and beneficiaries? • How coordinated were project efforts with other country-level/regional assistance efforts? Did any of these provide follow-up for Phase II activities (or vice versa)? • Was synergistic programming developed with other relevant political/electoral processes and democratic governance projects and efforts? • 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? • What were the underlying project assumptions and were they 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? • Did Phase II participate in the conflict-prevention analysis conducted by the Regional Hub and use the findings in its programming? • Did the project have programmatic glue and follow up for activities? • How was project coordination/cooperation with EAD? Factors facilitating/hindering this? • Any cost sharing of activities with partners?

2.2. Approach

In answering the review questions, the reviewer will use mixed methods for analysis, synthesis and drawing conclusions. These include: trend analysis of key outcomes, analysis of associations between observed outcome and Phase II-assisted efforts, assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and results of Phase II assistance and validation through triangulation (validation discussions with UNDP, SIDA, partners/beneficiaries, project staff and other partners/beneficiaries, by information provided in the documents reviewed and by the quality of the electoral processes and knowledge in the region as reported by impartial national/international observers and measured by the relevant global indexes and available survey data). As a result,

based on the information available and stakeholder perceptions, the reviewer will make judgments on their value and the extent that Phase II outputs contributed towards the achievement of its intended outcomes.

The questions outlined in Section 2.1 are specific yet general enough to allow for flexibility in questioning as well as to allow for flexibility in responses. This allows for a participatory approach and provides opportunities for respondents to raise their own issues and concerns. The reviewer 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 reviewer and the 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 reviewer will interview available partners, stakeholders and project staff as detailed in Section 2.4. Review questions will be tailored to the different institutions, their mandate and role in the project and/or sector. Particular attention will be given to the regional nature of the project and differing contexts, timing/political constraints, programmatic content and effectiveness, synergies with other projects/programmes, sustainability of efforts and management challenges.

The reviewer is an international expert recruited directly by UNDP. The reviewer is responsible for the delivery of the Inception Report, Preliminary Findings, and the Draft and Final Reports and will report to the GPECS Regional Electoral Advisor for Arab States.

2.3 Measuring results

The reviewer will use her professional judgment to assess the information collected and to answer the review questions. Results will be measured in terms of the expected results outlined in the project documents and its results and resources framework, as well as by the participants' perceptions of the project and the reviewer's assessment of the results found. Attribution of results directly to the project may not be possible in some cases due to the time available for the evaluation, and the work that has been done in the region/countries by other organizations over time that are likely to have contributed to the same outcomes. However, where a direct correlation seems evident, this will be noted in the Midterm Review 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 review 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 Phase II and secondary data; in person interviews in Amman; and Skype and/or e-mail interviews for other key actors who are located elsewhere. The reviewer will review available documents before, during and after the field work as needed. The in-country work is expected to be done during regular UNDP working hours.

The persons interviewed will be the GPECS MENA Phase II staff and consultants, SIDA and other development partners, UNDP (BPPS, Regional Hub, country offices and their electoral support projects), Electoral Assistance Department (EAD), the League of Arab States, ArabEMBs, University of St. Joseph, electoral/women/youth networks and partners and other relevant partners and stakeholders. The reviewer will review the most pertinent documents related to the electoral processes in the region including partner products; political analyses; public opinion polling data on electoral processes, inclusion and democratic participation; country level project reports, the UNDP regional programme; and, available project monitoring and evaluation data and progress reports.

The data collected through interviews, observation and document review will be processed and the main findings extrapolated and listed against the intended outcome areas of the project. The reviewer will synthesize those findings into the main points that will be discussed in the Midterm

Review Report. The reviewer will maintain an impartial and professional view towards developing the evaluation's findings, and will base them on the evidence found and against the anticipated outcomes according to the project document.

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

Annex 4: Terms of Reference

Regional Electoral Support Project Midterm Review

Background

The United Nations Development Programme implements regional electoral assistance in the Arab States through its Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) Arab States. The regional project is based in UNDP regional hub in Amman and it aims to strengthen regional knowledge and cooperation, establish and enhance capacities of regional actors engaged in the field of elections, and to reinforce inclusive political participation throughout the electoral cycle in the region, with an overall objective to enhance the credibility, transparency, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes in the region. In particular, the GPECS adopts an electoral cycle approach –as opposed to election day- looking at the electoral process over time, while seeking also to integrate electoral assistance into a wider framework of democratic governance and peacebuilding, as well as to engage with different actors throughout the cycle.

With support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), GPECS Arab States is in its phase II of implementation, focused on the following key outputs:

1. Regional electoral capacity and knowledge enhanced

2. Profession of electoral administration strengthened through regional cooperation.

3. Civic and political participation of women enhanced

4. Role of youth in the electoral cycle promoted

Duties and Responsibilities

The midterm review consultant is expected to assess the level of progress made towards achieving Phase II project outputs. The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with relevant counterparts. The evaluation should result in concrete and actionable recommendations for any proposed future programming.

The evaluation should be able to:

- Assess the level of progress made towards achieving the outcomes and outputs of the project;

- Capture lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of the project.

- Provide concrete and actionable recommendations (strategic and operational), taking into consideration phase I final evaluation.

- Provide a comprehensive roadmap for the project, based on evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. The roadmap should delineate how in its next phase the project could improve, inter alia, its relevance, delivery of results and engagement with stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria and key guiding questions:

UNDP Regional Electoral Support project applies the electoral cycle approach as its policy context. The electoral cycle approach focuses on creating an inclusive and participatory electoral process and a professional electoral administration to enhance the credibility of the process and trust in electoral results. Taking a longer-term development view, the electoral cycle approach seeks to increase national ownership and build capacity of national institutions and processes.

The evaluation will use the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and

sustainability as defined and explained in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. The final report should comply with the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports.

http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#handbook

http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/607

Below are the criteria to be considered for the evaluation process:

Relevance and appropriateness

- Was the project relevant, appropriate and strategic to the electoral needs in the region?
- Was the project relevant, appropriate and strategic to the UN electoral assistance mandate and UNDP development goals?
- How well the project addressed the issues of gender inclusion, women's participation and empowerment. How well gender perspectives have been mainstreamed into the design and implementation of the project?
- What has been the capacity of the project in identifying priorities and challenges and developing alternative options and contingency plans?
- Assess mechanism of coordination with main stakeholders and donors.

Effectiveness

- What have been the main challenges faced by the project and how the project sought to overcome them?
- What unforeseen and foreseen factors have contributed to achieving (or not achieving) the intended outputs?
- To what extent were the project outputs achieved?
- In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements?
- In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?
- Are the projects objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame?
- To what extent have stakeholders been involved in project implementation?
- To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?
- To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of its constituents and changing partner priorities?

Efficiency

- To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?
- To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?
- Has the project managed risks effectively?
- Assess the project efficiency in terms of technical assistance and advisory support provided

to key electoral stakeholders, during the implementation of the project;

- Were the resources utilized in the best way possible?
- Were the resources (time, funding, and human resources) sufficient?

Impact and sustainability

- Will the outputs/outcomes lead to benefits beyond the life of the existing project?
- Were the actions and results owned by beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders?
- Was capacity (individuals, institution, systems) built through the actions of the project?
- What is the risk that the level of stakeholders' ownership will be sufficient to allow for the project benefits to be sustained?
- Did the Project address cross cutting issues include gender and youth?
- Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?
- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project's contributions to project's outputs and outcomes?
- Was the project able to establish and maintain sustainable and efficient partnerships and cooperation, in the implementation period
- To what extent do stakeholders support the project's long-term objectives?
- To what extent do UNDP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies?
- What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?