

**Electoral Support Project in Armenia (ESPA)**

**Final Evaluation Report**

August, 2020

Report is developed by Prisma LLC.



**Acknowledgment**

This report is the result of close collaboration between the Prisma Research Company and the UNDP Armenia Programme team. The evaluation team would like to thank the Government of Armenia, the National Assembly, the Central Electoral Commission and other electoral management bodies, donor organizations, civil society representatives as well as citizens for their interest, participation and generously provided inputs for this evaluation.

**Project and Evaluation Profile**

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| **Project Profile** |
| **Project title** | Electoral Support Project in Armenia (ESPA) |
| **Corporate outcome/Output** | 2016-2020 UNDP Country Programme Action Plan Outcome 2 (11) “By 2020, people’s expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights are met by improved systems of democratic governance.” Output 2.5 “Mechanism introduced to increase credibility of electoral process, inclusiveness and participation in elections and capacity of the EMB to ensure its sustainable institutional strengthening |
| **Country** | Armenia |
| **Date project document signed** | October 23, 2018 |
| **Project dates** | **Start** | **Planned end** |
| 25 July 2018 | 31 December 2019 |
| **Project budget** | $ 4,201,281.80 |
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| **Funding source** |
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| **Implementing party** |

 | The Government of Armenia, the EU, Germany, UK, SwedenUNDP Armenia |
| **Evaluation Profile** |
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| **Evaluation type (project/ outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)** |

 | Project Evaluation |
| **Final/midterm review/ other** | Final |
| **Period under evaluation** | From: 25 July 2018 | To: 31 December 2019 |
| **Evaluators:** | Prisma LLC (Liana Poghosyan, Kristine Ter-Abrahamyan, Zaruhi Ohanjanyan) |
| **Evaluator email address** | Liana\_poghosyan@prisma.am |
| **Evaluation dates** | From: 20 April 2020 | To: 20 July 2020 |

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# List of Acronyms

CEC Central Electoral Commission of Armenia

CSO Civil Society Organization

CTA Chief Technical Advisor

CVIS Central Verification Information System

EMB Election Management Body

ESPA Electoral Support Project in Armenia

FGD Focus Group Discussion

GoA Government of Armenia

ICT Information and Communication Technology

IFES International Foundation for Electoral Systems

IOEM International Election Observation Mission

IRI International Republican Institute

IT Information Technology

NAM Needs Assessment Mission

NDI National Democratic Institute

OSCE/ODIHR Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe / Office for Democratic

Institutions and Human Rights

PEC Precinct Electoral Commission

SEPA Support to the Electoral Process in Armenia

KII Key Informant Interview

TEC Territorial Electoral Commission

ToC Theory of Change

TOT Training of Trainers

UNDP United Nations Development Project

VA Voter Authentication

VADs Voter Authentication Device/s

VE Voter Education

# Executive Summary

The “Electoral Support Project in Armenia” (ESPA) was initiated in response to a formal request from the Government of the Republic of Armenia to provide support for the 2018 pre-term parliamentary elections. The project’s overall strategy was to assist the Armenian authorities in holding credible and inclusive pre-term elections. The project also aimed to sustain achievements and build a solid foundation for credible, inclusive, and transparent elections in the future. To achieve this, the project provided support for the introduction of new technology, voter education, as well as strengthening the capacity of the electoral management bodies in Armenia.

The final evaluation of the project was designed to measure the project’s **relevance, efficiency and appropriateness, effectiveness, impact, sustainability**, and to inform decision making for future projects. To achieve the evaluation’s purpose, the Prisma team conducted a qualitative evaluation by applying a participatory approach to understanding the views of all parties, including the project staff, the main partners/stakeholders and the beneficiaries. This, combined with the document review, enabled the evaluation team to triangulate data from different sources and to conduct a comprehensive analysis. The key findings, conclusions, and recommendations per evaluation objective are presented below.

**RELEVANCE**

This evaluation assessed the relevance of the ESPA towards the needs of the beneficiaries and its consistency with the national and donor policies and priorities. As the evaluation **concluded,** **the** **ESPA was fully in line with the GoA’s and donors’ priorities and policies and was consistent with the beneficiaries’ needs and expectations.**

The Parliamentary elections of 2018 were the direct result of the Velvet Revolution. Consequently, it was a top priority for the GoA to ensure unprecedented levels of transparency and credibility in order for the elections to demonstrate the values advocated during the revolution and to establish a legitimate Parliament and government. Thus, the ESPA was not only in line with the GoA’s priorities but was actually initiated in response to the GoA’s request for support. Free, transparent and trustworthy elections were also consistent with the expectations and hopes of the Armenian people. The ESPA was designed to support the key actors in achieving this goal. The ESPA design also included capacity building and a technical assistance component, and as the evaluation revealed, **they were very targeted and relevant to the needs of the election management bodies at all levels.** Interviews with the key informants as well as the document review demonstrated that the **ESPA was also in line with the donor and the UNDP’s priorities**. The ESPA design reflected the recommendations of the UN Needs Assessment Mission which was carried out in June-July 2018. It also addressed the gaps highlighted in the assessment report conducted by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OCSE).

As for the ESPA’s design document itself, the evaluation found it clear and sound despite the time constraints, as well as several uncertainties present at the time of its development. The logic of the project was well defined and demonstrated how the activities would lead to the outputs and how the outputs would contribute to the outcome. The Theory of Change presented a big picture of the project’s longer-term impact and **clearly showed the link between the ESPA and the UNDAF/UNDP’s country project strategic outcomes and SDG targets.** The project indicators, although well defined and SMART, **showed certain mismatch between the “ambition level” of the outputs and their respective indicators. The indicators reflected more the tangible results of the key activities rather than the change anticipated at the output level**. The cross-cutting themes (gender equality, human rights, governance, etc) were mainstreamed into the design to a reasonable extent, however **the evaluation revealed a number of challenges related to the slow progress of the gender equality component.**

The main **recommendations** to consider in future projects include:

1. a stronger focus on the gender equality theme and its mainstreaming into **all components** of the future projects
2. inclusion of indicators **measuring actual change** vs the results of key activities

**EFFICIENCY AND APPROPRIATENESS**

The ESPA’s final evaluation examined the feasibility of the project’s delivery method and the efficiency of the resource conversion into the results. As the analysis of all data collected showed, the ESPA was a unique project in its efficiency. **Unique, because despite the fact that a number of preconditions necessary for ensuring any project’s efficiency and appropriateness were not in place, this project was a success**. The shared vision of priorities among the donors, commitment and flexibility at all levels, the UNDP’s high professionalism, the expertise of the staff, strong coordination mechanisms, and the “night and day” work of the ESPA and the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) staff all contributed to this efficiency.

The main challenge revealed by this evaluation, with regard to the project modality, was its “election event based” rather than “election cycle based” approach. The election cycle begins immediately following the elections and continues until the next elections. This approach enabled the ESPA to build on the results and to establish a roadmap of needed interventions for **more sustainable improvements** in the future.

The financial modality of the ESPA constituted a basket fund with contributions from five different donors. This was recognized by the evaluation as one of the strengths of the project for a few reasons: a) quick mobilization of resources around common priorities; b) the GoA being one of the funders; and c) the professional management of the basket fund by the UNDP and its responsiveness and flexibility when needed.

This evaluation showed that it would not be possible to ensure the ESPA’s high level of efficiency without coordinated efforts organized at different levels. Due to the “emergency response” nature of the project, all donors demonstrated flexibility and maximum coordination at high levels of leadership, which helped to solve challenges on time and prevent possible risks.

It is worth highlighting that the UNDP coordination efforts went beyond the group of direct donors and beneficiaries and included other key actors in the field such as International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), etc. This strongly contributed to the leveraging of resources and ensuring synergies between the projects implemented by different organizations in the same sector.

At the same time, the evaluation identified limited participation of the civil society organizations in the design and implementation processes.

Thus, the evaluation’s **main conclusions and recommendations** related to the project’s efficiency and appropriateness include:

1. The appropriateness of the project modality was ensured from the lens of pre-term elections. However, for future electoral support projects it is recommended to switch to an “election cycle” approach.
2. Despite the challenges, the project demonstrated a high level of implementation efficiency, however, it is recommended to allocate more time for preparation and implementation in the future to ensure a better work-life balance for the staff and partners engaged.
3. The ESPA managed to ensure high efficiency of the technological support component. However, for the better cost efficiency, it is recommended that future electoral support projects include a component aimed at supporting the GoA and the CEC in conducting a feasibility study of future technological solutions prior to the application. Specifically, the cost efficiency and the overall need of the live streaming component should be assessed further for more sustainable solutions.
4. There was limited participation of the civil society in the ESPA project design, implementation and monitoring. Thus, it is recommended to strengthen the civil society engagement in the future.

**IMPACT**

The project’s Theory of Change (ToC) stated that credible, inclusive, and participatory electoral processes lead to effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice, and effective government institutions. In the long run it also factors in the stability and economic development of Armenia.

Although there were no targets set in the project for anticipated impact level changes, there were encouraging achievements under each of the pillars mentioned. Sufficient evidence was collected **to conclude that the ESPA contributed to some of those changes.**

The 2018 Revolution in general, and pre-term parliamentary elections in particular, resulted in certain positive changes in the perceptions and mindset of the Armenian people. More people now believe in the power of their vote and recognize its significance. According to the IRI poll conducted in October 2019, 55% believe that they can influence decision making in the country.[[1]](#footnote-1) The Caucasus Barometer survey results from March 2020 suggest that the democracy level in Armenia increased three times and trust towards the government and the Prime Minister increased by 51% compared to 2017.[[2]](#footnote-2) Similar findings are reported in the recent survey initiated by the IRI in June 2020[[3]](#footnote-3) , showing an 84% trust level towards the PM (72% very favorable, 12% somewhat favorable) and 61% towards the Speaker of the National Assembly.

The primary and secondary data collected in this evaluation confirm that the transparent and credible elections of 2018, to which the ESPA’s contribution was evident, positively impacted the democratic government systems and increased trust towards government institutions among the public.

It is also worth highlighting that credible and transparent elections, which was one of the objectives of the ESPA, led to some unplanned outcomes, which were revealed through this evaluation: the Japanese government allocated funding for next stage of the ESPA and a bilateral development agreement was initiated by the Government of Sweden in which the fair elections were mentioned as one of the reasons for cooperation.

**EFFECTIVENESS**

In order to assess the ESPA’s effectiveness, the evaluation team examined the progress made towards the achievement of the following results: a) increased credibility of electoral processes; b) improved participation and inclusiveness; and c) strengthened capacity of the CEC.

**Increased credibility of electoral processes.** The main findings of this evaluation confirmed that the credibility and transparency of the electoral processes significantly improved and public trust towards election results increased. This echoes the opinion of the IOEM and local observers, considering the 2018 parliamentary elections as the most credible in the history of independent Armenia. The evaluation data showed that application of the VADs, live streaming, and publication of voter lists after the elections, strongly contributed to the trustworthiness of the process. No **major** issues were identified with regard to the functioning of the VADs, cameras and the CEC Help Desk services. Certain reservations were reported related to the feasibility and efficiency of the live streaming component, which is explored in more details in the Efficiency and Appropriateness and section of this report.

**Improved participation and inclusiveness.** The voter turnout of 1,261,660 comprised 48.6% of voters which was 12% less compared to the 2017 parliamentary elections (participation was 60.86% in 2017). However, as the evaluation showed, there is a strong belief that the decrease was more connected with external factors (vote buying, bribing and other falsifications) which occurred in the past and that the real participation rate actually increased in 2018. The evaluation also revealed no issues with women or youth participation in the election: out of all voters, 52% were female and approximately 28% of voters were youth 18-35 years of age. As for inclusiveness, there is still room for improvement, specifically related to the accessibility of polling stations (which was beyond the scope of the project) and the availability of more inclusive and targeted voter education materials for people with disabilities.

As this evaluation identified, one of the challenges for the ESPA was ensuring the availability of legislation and procedures for increased participation of women in politics. Although the project engaged a gender expert, introduced gender policy, and gender mainstreaming in the electoral processes, there is still a long way to go. The gender component was considered the weakest in effectiveness since it did not manage to meet the planned targets. The main reasons mentioned were connected with the political and social sensitivity of the topic in Armenia in general and among the government and CEC representatives in particular.

**Strengthened capacity of the CEC.** With regard to the CEC’s capacity, both primary and secondary data showed that the CEC is competent and capable to organize elections and there is noticeable improvement in their capacities. It is also worth mentioning that the evaluation identified sufficient evidence to partially attribute those improvements to the SEPA and the ESPA projects. In addition to a number of tailored capacity building activities organized for the CEC, the project supported the CEC in establishing a training center and in developing an e-Learning platform and an online web-based system for application and certification of the Precinct Electoral Commission (PEC) members. As per the CEC, the training center will serve as a foundation for the establishment of a fully functional Training Department at the CEC in the future. At the same time, the evaluation found that capacity building of the CEC without clarity on the overall electoral reform framework was one of the challenges of this component which affected the sustainability of the results.

In contrast to the CEC, the evaluation suggests that the Territorial Electoral Commissions (TEC) and the PEC capacities are still quite weak and in need of further institutional changes and capacity building.

Based on the aforementioned, the **evaluation concluded** that the ESPA achieved the planned results. It contributed to greater credibility of the electoral processes, enhanced the capacity of the CEC as well as increased the participation and inclusiveness of the process. The challenges and lessons learned through this evaluation include partial achievement of the project targets related to the gender component as well as limitations related to the accessibility of polling stations and educational materials for people with disabilities. The **evaluation** **recommendations** for consideration in future projects by the UNDP, the government and international partners are presented below:

To further improve the **credibility of** the elections the following are recommended:

1. Conduct a feasibility study to explore possibilities for further upgrade of digital solutions for voting system;
2. Ensure one unified database for Voter Authentication Devices (VADs);
3. Increase the level of accountability of the PEC and the TEC for the violations identified, as part of the structural and institutional changes;
4. Revisit the formation principle for the PEC to enhance their professional capacity and reduce political affiliations.
5. Ensure that at least 6 months are allocated for proper preparation to any election and/or referendum.

To further improve **participation and** **inclusiveness**, it is recommended to consider:

1. Ensuring better protection of voters’ personal information while making them publicly available;
2. Making the polling stations more accessible and educational materials more inclusive;
3. Analyzing voter participation statistics to better understand the trends and make future election campaigns more targeted;
4. Enhancing participation of women through economic and political empowerment initiatives, specifically in rural and remote areas;
5. Developing a mechanism for streamlining voter lists to ensure that it includes RA citizens residing in the country in order to have a more realistic picture of voter turnout.
6. Consider strengthening the “future voter’s education” component of the school curriculum within the scope of the education sector reforms in Armenia.

For further **strengthening election management bodies** the following are recommended:

1. Work with the GoA and the National Assembly to promote the finalization of the electoral reform agenda. This will define the country’s vision for the future of the Electoral Management Bodies and lay a foundation for a long term and more strategic approach towards the institutional capacity building.
2. Continue supporting the CEC by finalizing the Commission’s Strategic Plan and further developing the educational and e-management platforms.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

This evaluation examined the progress made and challenges surrounding the project’s sustainability. The project’s sustainability strategy included 2 main directions:

1. a capacity building approach – transfer of capacities, skills, and knowledge over a long-term period;
2. sustainability of new technologies integrated into the election process – new procedures and rules applied by the Election Management Body (EMB) to regularly track the status of software and hardware and to ensure adequate service and contingency

Considering the lessons learned from the previous election support projects implemented by the UNDP in Armenia, the ESPA was intentional in targeting the issue of hardware and software maintenance after the elections. Policies were developed and technical support was provided to set a system through which the CEC conducts the whole inventory and technical check of the equipment twice a year and initiates actions needed to ensure that the equipment is maintained in the best possible way for future utilization.

Part of the hardware procured within the scope of the ESPA, not subject to storing, was transferred to the government and the National Assembly for use with the condition that the GoA will ensure their availability when needed. Preparation for the Referendum planned for April 2020, when all necessary equipment was mobilized quickly and ready to be used, demonstrated that there is a commitment and clear mechanisms in place to ensure that the ESPA’s support for the technological components of the 2018 Parliamentary elections will be sustained after the project is completed.

 The evaluation was not able to track any policy and/or MoU between the UNDP and the CEC/GoA ensuring that previous agreements were part of a written commitment or embedded in organizational policies.

When exploring the overall sustainability of technological novelties applied during the 2017 and 2018 elections, this evaluation showed that the cost efficiency of certain elements, for example, the use of cameras and live streaming, should be studied further for more sustainable solutions.

With regard to the institutional and human capacities, this evaluation assessed the ability of the EMB and the GoA to organize credible and technologically sound elections in the future as well as the ability to maintain the positive outcomes achieved within the scope of the ESPA. From this perspective, the data received by the evaluation suggests that the CEC does have sufficient human and institutional capacity to organize proper elections in the Republic of Armenia when needed. The CEC training center, e-Learning platform, inventory of equipment, unified database of the members of TECs, were mentioned as elements supported by the ESPA that highly impacted the institutional capacity of the CEC with a long-term perspective.

**The evaluation concluded that as far as ensuring the sustainability of the technological component of the ESPA, the strategy set in the design was achieved and sound mechanisms were put in place and embedded in the local structures. The evaluation also revealed a high level of ownership towards project achievements among the state actors. It also showed a commitment to build on those achievements and to allocate the required budget for future services.** **The only recommendation in this area is:**

1. **To make sure that these commitments and procedures are documented and integrated into the operational regulations of state bodies**.

With regard to the institutional and human capacities of the EMB, there is common consensus that at the central level, there is sufficient capacity to organize and manage election processes in the future. However, precinct and territorial structures and their capacities require further enhancement. **Thus, this evaluation recommends that:**

1. **All institutional and human capacity building should be within the framework of a vision-based legislative reforms that will set an agenda and roadmap for multi-year strategic actions.**

# Description of the Intervention

In response to a request for electoral assistance from the newly elected Prime Minister of Armenia, the United Nations (UN) deployed a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) in June-July 2018. The NAM concluded that the UN should reply positively and deliver electoral assistance via a dedicated UNDP. The request came following the Government’s declared intention to call for pre-term parliamentary elections in the wake of the former Prime Minister’s resignation. This came after massive peaceful anti-government demonstrations in April 2018. In his letter to the UN, the Prime Minister requested that the UN, and the wider international community, provide coherent and coordinated electoral assistance with the purpose of assisting the Government of Armenia in creating an environment conducive to “free, fair and credible elections.”

Based on the NAM report and recommendations, the UNDP, supported by interested donors, designed the Electoral Support Project in Armenia (ESPA). The contract for the ESPA’s implementation was signed by all parties on 23 October 2018 and the implementation started on July 25th.

The central assumption underpinning the UNDP’s Country Project Document’s [Theory of Change](#3q5sasy) is that credible, inclusive, and participatory electoral processes lead to effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice, and effective government institutions. It also factors in the long term stability and economic development of the country.

The ESPA 2018-2019 benefited from the experiences and lessons learned from its predecessor, “Support to the Electoral Process in Armenia” (SEPA) project, which was implemented during the 2017 electoral cycle.

The ESPA was structured in a manner to provide targeted, coordinated assistance in four key areas: a) ensuring the continued use of the new technology introduced during the 2017 elections; b) assisting authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures specifically to improve voter registration; c) improving voter education, particularly the novelties in the electoral procedures and laws; and d) increasing participation of women and young voters.

The European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Kingdom of Sweden and the Government of Armenia were the project donors. The budget of the project amounted to $4,201,281.80 USD.

# Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

**Evaluation purpose:** The final evaluation of the project was designed to measure impact, to assess project achievements and sustainability, to gain information from its implementation, and to inform decision making for future projects.

**Evaluation objectives:** In accordance with the UNDP evaluation guidelines (pages 168-170 http://www.undp.org/Evaluation/handbook), the evaluation objectives include assessment of the project’s effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness, relevance, impact, and sustainability.

* **Relevance** - To evaluate the relevance of the project’s design, its contribution towards the needs of beneficiaries and its consistency with national policies and priorities.
* **Efficiency and Appropriateness** - To assess the feasibility of the project’s delivery method. To assess how economic resources (e.g., funds, expertise and time) were converted into results.
* **Effectiveness** - To assess the progress made towards achieving results and if opportunities created by the project were equally accessible for women and men.
* **Impact** - To assess the impact of the project on the lives of people. To understand changes in human development and well-being brought about directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally by the project.
* **Sustainability** - To explore and learn the extent of the project’s sustainability.

# Methodology

To achieve the previously mentioned purpose and objectives the Prisma team conducted a qualitative evaluation by using a participatory approach to understand the views of all parties. This included the project’s staff, main partners and beneficiaries. This enabled the evaluation team to triangulate data from different sources and present a comprehensive analysis according to the evaluation objectives. The following data collection methods were applied:

* desk review
* key informant interviews (KII) with project partners/stakeholders, including the GoA, donor organizations, the CEC, TEC, PEC, RA Police Passport and Visa Department, the National Assembly IFES, and the CSOs
* focus group discussions (FGD) with beneficiaries (citizens), as well as the VAD operators.
* group interviews with the UNDP and the ESPA staff

***Taking into account the current pandemic situation, the FGDs and KIIs were conducted through online platforms. This avoided face-to-face interaction and its associated risks.***

The evaluation matrix attached in Annex 1 presents the key questions explored under each evaluation objective as well as the methods used for data collection.

**Desk review:** In order to evaluate relevance, efficiency and appropriateness, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability the evaluation team conducted a comprehensive desk review and a secondary data analysis of initially mapped reference materials, documents and reports. Those documents include:

* project documents/ToC, results framework, program progress reports, and the final draft report
* voter participation statistics
* international Election Observation Mission’s reports on election results
* independent Observer Public Alliance Observation Report, Akanates Observation Mission Final Report
* survey reports and presentations, databases: the UNDP Post-Election Survey presentation; the CRRC Caucasus Barometer Survey Online Database; and the IRI public opinion survey presentations

**Key informant interviews were conducted with the key partners/stakeholders.** To assess all evaluation objectives 20 KIIs were conducted with key stakeholders. These included representatives of donor organizations, the IFES, CEC, TEC, PEC, GoA, National Assembly, and Civil Society Organizations that participated in election observations.

The list of the interviewed stakeholders and partners is presented in Annex 2.

For each target group a specific guide was developed taking into account the involvement and knowledge level of the key informants. (See Annex 3).

**Focus group discussions with voters and the VAD operators:** In total nine FGDs were conducted within the scope of this evaluation. One FGD was conducted with the VAD operators to understand their opinion of the project’s relevance, effectiveness, and impact.

In order to capture the voice of citizens as direct beneficiaries of the project, 8 FGDs were conducted using online platforms with participants from 4 locations (two FGD in each location): Yerevan, Vanadzor, Goris, and Armavir. Yerevan was selected as it is RA’s capital with the largest number of voters, Vanadzor, as the third largest city, and Armavir and Goris representing smaller cities located in different provinces (marzes). Six to eight people participated in each FGD, representative of different variables: sex, age, employment, and location. Gender balance was also ensured for the FGD participants. Local CSOs, like the “Partnership and Teaching” NGO from Goris, the “NGO Center” from Vanadzor, and the “Armavir Development Center” NGO helped Prisma in recruiting the FGD participants following the criteria developed by the evaluation team. The data saturation principle was applied during data collection.

For each FGD target group a separate guide was developed (presented in Annex 4).

**Group interviews were conducted by the ESPA staff** to discuss all evaluation objectives and questions (See Annex 3).

**Quality assurance for qualitative data collection:** All qualitative interviews were audio recorded after obtaining formal consents. Transcripts were made available for all qualitative interviews conducted. The research team members transcribed the notes from the interview recordings verbatim. In addition, 25% of all transcripts were reviewed along with the recordings by members of the evaluation team and no discrepancies were identified.

**Ethical aspects of evaluation:** UN ethical standards of evaluation were followed. In particular, all four core ethical issues (Harms and Benefits, Informed Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality, and Compensation and Payment) were taken into account and relevant measures were followed.

**Harms and benefits**: Since the evaluation addressed topics related to elections, the evaluation team undertook the following steps to ensure the interviewees’ best interests:

* Prisma engaged professionals having experience working on a similar topic.
* Prior to the field stage, basic ethical principles were discussed.

**Informed consent:** Informed consents were obtained from all respondents and participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their engagement. The decision whether to participate or not, was strictly respected. Participants were appropriately informed that consent was negotiable and that they could withdraw at any point.

**Privacy and confidentiality.** Confidential participant information from all conducted qualitative interviews were securely stored. This included limiting access of raw data to only evaluation team members.

**Compensation and payment:** Given the fact that the FGD participants used their own devices and internet connection, monetary compensation was given in the form of data credits to their phones. No compensation was given to the KIIs.

**Limitations:**

* As the evaluation was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period, online platforms were used for all interviews. Prisma engaged experienced facilitators to make sure that this doesn’t have any negative effect on the quality of the data gathered. There was a minor issue related to the recruitment of the FGD participants from different locations and organizing a discussion time that would suit all participants. In light of this challenge some FGDs were organized after 6pm in order to accommodate the needs of the participants.
* Topics surrounding the 2018 elections were somewhat outdated given today’s priorities related to the pandemic and recent political developments. Thus, the evaluation team ensured that a proper introduction acknowledging this fact was presented prior to interviews. At the same time the importance of the interview and purpose of the evaluation was made clear.
* Since the project was implemented a year prior, some respondents may have had difficulty remembering the project’s details. This risk was mitigated by adding a brief project description to the interview guides and informing participants of the project’s main objectives.

# Data Analysis and Reporting

**Data analysis:** Data analysis was constructed around the evaluation objectives. The qualitative data was synthesized based on the interviews, which was then analyzed for trends and associations between outcomes, factors, processes, and pathways related to each evaluation objective.

**Report development:** Theevaluation report triangulated findings for each objective based on the information collected from different stakeholders and sources described above. The evaluation report followed objectivity standards during the synthesis and analysis of data from various sources. Concerning contradictory information, the evaluation team sought to identify the underlying reasons for such information.

# Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

The final evaluation findings were organized and analyzed according to each objective. These included the *relevance, efficiency and appropriateness, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability* of the ESPA. The analysis per each objective is presented below.

#  Relevance

This evaluation assessed the relevance of the project’s design and contribution towards the needs of the beneficiaries and the project’s consistency with national policies and priorities. For this purpose, data was collected through KIIs, FGDs, and document review. The findings of this evaluation are presented below per key evaluation objective.

**Project relevance to the GoA priorities and consistency with beneficiary needs.** After the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, one of the top priorities of the Government was to ensure an unprecedented high level of credibility and transparency during the 2018 Parliamentary elections. Thus, the ESPA was initiated in response to the government’s request and was fully aligned with the short term and longer-term policies of the GoA. The ESPA included the following main components: support with IT and technological solutions during the elections, support with voter education as well as capacity building of the CEC, PEC, TEC and VAD operators. This evaluation showed that, not only was the project in line with the GoA policies and priorities in general, but its components were also very well designed to address the needs and expectations of key beneficiaries. **The vast majority of** respondents mentioned that VADs, as well as live transmissions, were needed to ensure the transparency of the process and to increase the level of trust in the election results. At the same time, a **small number of respondents** indicated that the most important issue for credible elections is the political will of the government rather than the technological solutions. As for voter education, the triangulation of data showed that the need for this component was there in 2018 and was organized at an efficient level. With regard to the capacity building component of the project, the need was widely acknowledged and the support provided was highly appreciated.

“*With regard to 2018 elections, the GoA had set two priorities: a) the elections needed to be credible and trustworthy for our people to ensure the legitimacy of the Parliament and the government; and b) despite the short preparation time, there had to be no regression in relation to the technological components of elections compared to previous ones. So, this project tremendously supported the achievement of those priorities.”*

*Government Representative*

*“We all needed trustworthy elections and yes, technological novelties contributed to it. Double voting was eliminated, we could observe not only the process of elections, but also the counting process. We appreciated it.”*

*FGD with citizens, Yerevan*

*“After 1992, we never had fair elections. I think that no equipment or device was needed for the 2018 elections. If the government and ruling party wanted to organize fair elections, they would have done so. If the government wanted to intervene, ways would have been found and I don’t believe that any modern technology could have stopped it. If the previous governments had the same political will, they could have also organized free and credible elections without any devices.”*

*FGD with citizens, Goris*

*“The need for capacity building was there for sure. Financial assistance is important but it is not enough. In other words, it is a necessary condition but not sufficient. Through the ESPA we have received both capacity building and financial assistance at a very high quality.” CEC Member*

**Project Relevance to UNDP and Donor Priorities.** Both the KIIs and the document review conducted within the scope of this evaluation confirm that the ESPA was in line with the UNDP and donor priorities in Armenia. The ESPA design document clearly demonstrates the link between the 2016-2020 UNDP Country Project and the UNDAF outcomes as well as the contribution to the SDG target 16.6 (*Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels)*. Moreover, as the evaluation revealed, prior to initiating any election support project to be implemented by the UNDP, the electoral assistance division from New York should have conducted a needs assessment. The projects should have been designed based on the assessment recommendations. Thus, NAM was organized in the summer of 2018 and the ESPA design was informed by the findings and recommendations of this assessment. As the secondary data review revealed, the ESPA design was also consistent with recommendations of another assessment conducted by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OCSE) in October 2018[[4]](#footnote-4), following the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RA. The report highlights, “*concerns related to the limited period of time for the organisation of the early elections, which may impact on the performance of the election administration” and that* “*many anticipate possible delays in the appointment of PEC members and their subsequent training”.* As previously mentioned, both areas were within the scope of the ESPA and addressed the priority needs identified by various key stakeholders and assessment missions.

All the donor representatives, who provided their inputs to this evaluation also confirmed that ESPA was consistent with the organizational strategic priorities and policies in Armenia.

*“Support for the elections is embedded in our current theory of change and is consistent with our strategic vision.”*

*Donor representative*

*“The UNDP is one of our strategic partners and we have projects with them. They are well aware of our priorities and always ensure that projects are in line with them. Of course, you have to consider that this project was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and yes, you can say that it is in line with policies and priorities for this region.”*

 *Donor representative*

*“Promotion of consolidation of democratic governance is one of our strategic priorities and the decision to support ESPA project was made in the scope of our Initial Action Document: Deepening Democracy in Armenia”*

*Donor representative*

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**Project design and cross-cutting themes.** The review of the project design document showed that despite a number of uncertainties present at the time of the design, the scope of the intervention was very clear. The logic of the project is well defined and demonstrates how the activities lead to outputs and how the outputs contribute to the outcome. At the same time formulation of the ToC makes the connection between the ESPA and the UNDAF/UNDP Country Project strategic outcomes very clear. With regard to the indicators, although they are also well defined and SMART, there is a certain disconnect between the “ambition level” of the outputs and their respective indicators. While the outputs describe a change, the output indicators mainly reflect the measurable and tangible results of the key activities. Interestingly, a similar observation was shared by one of the respondents.

“*There were some limitations with the project design: the UNDP is at times very activity-focused, and does not consider the outcome level quite seriously. There are also limitations on the development of the results framework so they have to be more focused on change and how they are going to deliver that change rather than the set of activities.”*

*Donor representative*

With regard to the cross-cutting themes (environment, gender equality, human rights and governance, donor coordination), the review of the project design showed that they were mainstreamed to a reasonable extent. The project scope directly addresses the topics of human rights and governance with an intentional focus on gender integration. In particular, the design reflects the project’s intention to deploy a gender expert to work with the authorities and to ensure that elements of gender equality are incorporated into the new legislation and procedures. The effectiveness of this component will be explored further in the report, however, concerning integration, this cross-cutting theme has been mainstreamed into the project design. The ESPA design stated its commitment to ensure compliance with the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards and to conduct annual project quality assurance reflections to track the progress/challenges of this commitment. As for the donor coordination, it is described in the design document in detail and progress towards this is explored further in the following section.

**Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Based on the aforementioned, the evaluation findings regarding project relevance are:

1. The ESPA was designed in line with the government and donor priorities and policies.
2. The ESPA scope and its main components were consistent with the beneficiaries’ needs and expectations.
3. The cross-cutting themes were mainstreamed into the project design to a reasonable extent.
4. The project design was clear and sound, however, the indicators set mainly reflected tangible results of the key activities instead of measuring the level of change expected from the outputs.

Recommendations to consider in future projects include:

* a stronger focus on the gender equality theme and its mainstreaming into all components of the project
* inclusion of indicators measuring actual change

# Efficiency and Appropriateness

The ESPA final evaluation examined the feasibility of the project’s delivery method and the efficiency of the resource conversion into the results. The findings are presented below per key evaluation objectives.

**Project modality, coordination and stakeholder participation in the design.** As the evaluation showed, the ESPA was a unique project in its efficiency. Unique, because despite the fact that a number of preconditions necessary for ensuring any project’s efficiency and appropriateness were not in place, this project was a success. On the other hand, even though it was a success and an “efficiency record” it is not recommended for replication. Despite the successful delivery of the planned activities relatively on time and with a high degree of quality, there is a list of “do’s and don’ts” coming out of this experience. First of all, when it comes to **the project design and modality, most** of the respondents indicated that the election support projects should end with the elections while this one began with it. In order to ensure enough time for a participatory design, preparation, a strategic approach and thus better efficiency of such projects, they need to be “election cycle based” not “event based”. The election cycle starts right after the elections end and continues until the next elections. An “election cycle based” approach enables building on the findings and establishing a roadmap of needed interventions for sustainable improvements in the future. In case of the ESPA, the high-level ambassadorial discussions led by the 1st Deputy Prime Minister began in May 2018, the UN Needs Assessment Mission took place in July, the ESPA contract was signed in October and the Parliamentary Elections were held on 9 December 2018.

While studying the efficiency of any project, the focus is usually around the project’s modality, management and the efficient use of resources. The shortage of time combined with the quite critical importance of the project put the staff and partners under tremendous stress and pressure. Despite the overall success of the project, all efforts need to be made to avoid such situations in the future.

**The financial modality** of the ESPA constituted a basket fund with contributions from five different donors. This was recognized as one of the strengths of the project for the following reasons: a) quick mobilization of resources around common priorities; b) the GoA being one of the funders; and c) the professional management of the basket fund by the UNDP and its demonstration of responsiveness and flexibility. In addition, all the respondents confirmed that the financial aspects and arrangements were clearly defined from the beginning of the project and were accurately managed by the UNDP throughout.

*“In UN history, this was the shortest technical assistance. The UN in general does not consider such projects if the preparation period is less than 6 months, due to technical factors, procurement etc. This was an exception.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA Staff*

“*I can confidently state that the ESPA was one of the best projects implemented in Armenia. I think it will not be an exaggeration if I say that this was unprecedented if you consider its scale and the short time frame allocated for its implementation.”*

 *CEC Representative*

*“The guys worked day and night to make this project a success.”*

 *Donor representative*

*“Once the elections are over, the authorities often lose interest. This is quite natural, due to the long list of priorities on the political agenda. Here we missed the opportunity to sit with the government and to have a proper 2-3 year plan after the elections. This is not a criticism of the government, it happens everywhere, once the “fever” is over it is very difficult to mobilize the government and donor communities to prepare for the next elections. However, it is needed.”*

*Donor Representative*

*“I think we should give credit to the UNDP: working with different donor funding cycles, different donor reporting requirements, and approval processes, they delivered an excellent project, which needs to be acknowledged. They administered the basket fund perfectly.”*

*Donor representative*

As the evaluation revealed the **stakeholders’ engagement in the design and overall coordination and partnership** significantly contributed to the efficiency of the project. The government, the CEC, donor and partner organization representatives all mentioned that they did participate in the design and had opportunities to provide input at different levels. At the same time, this evaluation showed limited participation of the civil society organizations in the design process of the ESPA project. With the exception of the Union of Informed Citizens, none of the interviewed CSOs could recall any participation in or contribution to the ESPA. Moreover, the UIC’s participation was mainly conditioned by the fact that the head of the Union was at the time the Secretary of the Commission on Electoral Reforms formed by the Prime Minister’s office and was participating in meetings in that role.

**The coordination mechanism** worked out perfectly and all the data collected throughout this evaluation showed that it would not be possible to ensure this high level of efficiency without the tremendous coordination efforts organized at different levels. Due to the “emergency response” nature of the project all donors demonstrated flexibility and maximum coordination at high levels of leadership. This greatly helped to solve the challenges faced on time and even prevent possible risks. In addition, weekly coordination meetings were organized by the UNDP in order to inform the stakeholders of progress and challenges, and to make joint decisions concerning ongoing critical issues. It is worth highlighting that the UNDP coordination efforts extended outside the group of direct donors and beneficiaries and included other key actors in the field such as the IFES, NDI, IRI, etc. This strongly contributed to the leveraging of resources and ensuring synergy between the projects implemented by different organizations in the same sector.

*“I was actively engaged in both the design and implementation stages of the project and have provided comments on behalf of the government on a regular basis.” GoA Representative*

*“With the support of our leadership we signaled to… [HQ] that this is an emergency response and we need to simplify the processes because there is no way to postpone the deadline for the elections. If it’s set, it’s set in stone and we have to deliver. So, I think it was a mutual consensus from both parts, first from our colleagues from London and second from the UNDP who proved to be very flexible.”*

*Donor representative*

*“A couple of things played a crucial role, the UN senior management started thinking about procurement and financial processes way before the actual contract was signed. Preparations were made for the financial adjustments in advance before the donor contributions would arrive. Thus, some procurement was already in process when the contract was concluded.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA staff*

*“There was no CEC and UN, there was one team working for a common goal.”*

*CEC representative*

*“Coordination in general worked perfectly. We received briefs and notes of the coordination meetings even if for some reason we were not able to participate in the meeting. We dealt with everything as they came and it worked very well.”*

*Donor representative*

*“The solid partnership surrounding this project was one of its strengths. This project somehow created a platform, a hub that helps to move purely technical aspects and to elevate them to a higher vision in consultation and brainstorming with others.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA staff*

**Resource and activity management: The KIIs, FGDs and document review conducted within the scope of this evaluation showed that all financial and coordination arrangements, including the project management structure, were clearly defined from the very beginning and agreed upon with the donors**. During the course of the project implementation no major issues were faced with regard to availability of financial contributions. The UNDP managed the project and the basket fund in a highly professional and transparent manner. As a result, some of the respondents noted that this was not the first time they had worked with the UNDP through this modality and each time they received the highest possible quality of project implementation and budget administration. Moreover, this project had 5 donors and the UNDP managed to organize the visibility and branding in such a way that it was appreciated by all key stakeholders. **Among the factors contributing to the successful implementation of the ESPA were the professionalism of the staff and the rich experience with electoral support projects and management of basket budgets.**

*“I think another strength is a high cadre of professional experts, which the UNDP managed to bring on board, because it’s people who deliver the project. Yes, and the UNDP, they have a very strong base of electoral cadres and they bring the best in the field.”*

*Donor representative*

*“Not only was the budget managed in a transparent way, but every expenditure was made in consultation with us. We had the opportunity to make our suggestions and to make needed adjustments to the spending.”*

*GoA Representative*

With regard to the cost efficiency of the results delivered, it should be noted that some of the respondents questioned the feasibility of the cameras and live streaming. At the same time, it should be made clear that this issue was not directly connected to the ESPA, since the cameras were procured before the project and the ESPA had to provide the required support for live streaming.

*“There has never been a proper study examining the feasibility of introducing the VADS and how they will be maintained and replaced.”*

*Donor Representative*

*“I don’t think this is the most cost-efficient solution. I don’t have sufficient information on how the decision to procure the cameras was made, but spending a couple of hundred thousand USD for a license update every time, is not a sustainable approach.”*

*Member of the Parliament*

**Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Based on the triangulation and analysis of the data collected, it can be **concluded that despite the time constraints, the ESPA managed to deliver all the results in an extremely efficient way.** Theshared vision of priorities among the donors, commitment and flexibility demonstrated at all levels, the UNDP’s high professionalism, the expertise of the staff, strong coordination mechanisms, and the “day and night” work of the ESPA and the CEC staff were the main contributing factors. The **key findings** that led to this conclusion are:

1. the ensured participation of the key stakeholders in the design process
2. the set and agreed upon financial management and coordination mechanisms
3. the consistent and diligent coordination and partnership throughout the project’s implementation
4. the professional project management, compliance with diverse requirements from 5 donors, transparent basket fund administration and equal visibility for donors ensured by the UNDP
5. the ensured appropriateness of the project’s modality given the need for rapid response
6. the questionable cost efficiency of the cameras and live streaming (however it should be noted that the decision to proceed with this component was made by the GoA and not by the ESPA project)
7. the limited participation and engagement of the civil society in the ESPA design and implementation

 The **recommendations** for consideration for future projects by the UNDP and other donors, including the government, are:

* switch from an “election event support” to the “election cycle support” approach;
* ensure stronger engagement of the civil society;
* include a feasibility study on technological solutions in future election support projects to support the government and to find the most efficient and sustainable solutions (with a specific focus on camera and live streaming component); and
* allocate proper time for project design, preparation and implementation for a better work-life balance for the staff and partners engaged in project implementation.

# Effectiveness

In order to assess the project’s effectiveness and to reveal the extent to which the intended results have been achieved, the evaluation analyzed the data for all outputs defined in the ESPA results framework. Analysis was based on synthesizing qualitative data gathered during the evaluation from all respondents, as well as through a review of project documents and reports produced by local and international organizations.

Overall, the evaluation showed that the ESPA has been effective in achieving its results. All the results were in line with the project’s ToC. All output level indicators were achieved and only one, on political participation of women, was partially achieved.

Many of the evaluation respondents described this project and its results as “**unprecedented”** in a positive way, considering the results were achieved in such a short time frame. To capture a snapshot of participant’s general opinion of the 2018 pre-term elections, all of them were asked to describe the top three positive aspects of the 2018 elections as well as to identify the top 3 areas requiring further improvements. The most frequent word used to describe positive aspects was **“fair”** (19 times)**,** the second one was **“transparent”** (15 times), and the third one was **“free”** (11 times). As for challenges, the majority of respondents mentioned the work of the **electoral commissions, especially TEC and PEC**; the **hastiness of the elections, and “unconscious voting**”, meaning that it was not value and concept-based.



***Challenges******of 2018 pre-term elections***

***Positive sides of 2018 Pre-term elections***

The evaluation findings, per the ESPA outputs and key project components, are presented below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Output 1: Credibility of the electoral process improved** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Output Indicators  | Achievement status  |
| *1 Availability of stronger* CEC capacity to deliver technically sound elections through: |  |
| *1.1 VADs in place for efficient operation in polling stations; updated Central Verification Information System (CVIS) to upload voter lists to the VADs; generated user-friendly reports to enhance transparency; formatted voter lists database in police stations.* | Achieved  |
| *1.2 CEC and TEC developed operational, logistics, internal communication, risk management, and contingency plans.* | Achieved  |
| *1.3 Servers and software and broadband connection procured and customized, web cameras installed and configured.*  | Achieved |
| *1.4 Training plan and e-learning platform developed; existing training materials updated.* | Achieved |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

As per the evaluation findings, the UNDP and ESPA provided substantial technical assistance to national stakeholders. It effectively applied the electoral technology in line with the government’s commitment to ensure the credibility and transparency of the pre-term parliamentary elections on 09 December 2018.

Both the document review results and the findings from all conducted qualitative interviews confirmed that the credibility and transparency of the electoral processes improved. The election results were evaluated, by the international and national organizations involved in the monitoring of the electoral processes, as the most credible in the history of independent Armenia. The OSCE / ODIHR International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) stated in its Final Report that the pre-term parliamentary elections, “were held with respect for fundamental freedoms and enjoyed broad public trust that needs to be preserved through further electoral reforms and elections to come. The general absence of electoral malfeasance, including vote-buying and pressure on voters, allowed for genuine competition. Despite the shortened time frame, the elections were well administered. Election Day proceeded calmly and peacefully with all stages assessed positively by almost all IEOM observers, indicating general adherence to the procedures.” [[5]](#footnote-5)

Independent observations of local CSO alliances were in line with the OSCE IOEM Observations in terms of the absence of election bribes and credible voting processes. The Akanates Observation Mission Final report mentioned, “The voting process was generally calm and was conducted in accordance with the law throughout Armenia.”

It should be noted that different surveys conducted after pre-term parliamentary elections confirmed increased fairness and credibility of the 2018 pre-term elections. The Caucasus Barometer survey (annual household survey of social economic issues and political attitudes in the country) conducted by the CRRC showed that nearly twice as many citizens found the 2018 pre-term elections fair compared to the 2017 parliamentary elections.[[6]](#footnote-6)

***Figure 1. Fairness of elections as per Caucasus Barometer surveys***

***Figure 1. Fairness of elections as per Caucasus Barometer surveys***

Moreover, as per the UNDP Post-Election Survey, 75% of Armenian citizens believe that the votes were counted fairly during the 2018 pre-term elections. Notably, a majority of respondents (62%) found that the application of VADs improved the transparency of the elections.

***Figure 2. How has the adoption of VADs affected the integrity/transparency of elections?[[7]](#footnote-7)***

The qualitative data were in line with the quantitative survey results. A significant increase in the credibility and transparency of elections was the red line present in all the KIIs and FGDs conducted. It should be noted though that a majority of the FGD participants mentioned the revolution as the primary source of trust in the electoral process, however, many of them also highlighted the role of the technologies (VAD’s and cameras) as well.

*“It reduced the number of fraudulent votes and helped to control the work of the electoral commission.”*

 *FGD with voters from Vanadzor*

*“Definitely, the use of technical innovations has strengthened the credibility of the electoral process and its results not only with the public, but also with international observers. All this was the result of the tremendous efforts on behalf of the GoA, our UN partners and the other technical teams.”*

*GoA representative*

CSO representatives also mentioned the increased credibility of elections, however, opinions differed when it came to the contribution of technological solutions to the overall transparency. The CSOs particularly raised the issue of a lack of a unified database for VADs. Currently, VADs prevent double voting only within the same polling station.

*“There was definitely confidence in the 2018 elections. The VADs partially contributed to the credibility of the elections. However, since the data outside the area are not in the general database, it only provides credibility in the polling station.”*

*CSO representative*

As for the application of cameras, 62% of Armenian citizens believe that the cameras improved electoral integrity and transparency according to the UNDP Post-Election Survey.



***Figure 3. How has the adoption of Cameras affected the integrity/transparency of elections?[[8]](#footnote-8)***

The evaluation findings from the qualitative interviews and FGDs present quite a diverse picture. While nearly half of the evaluation participants acknowledged the contribution of cameras and livestreaming to the overall credibility of the election process the other half had certain reservations. According to the FGD participants, people, especially in rural areas, are not that interested and very few were actually watching the process live. At the same time, according to the CSOs, live streaming represents more of a moral dimension, rather than serving as a real preventive measure to avoid fraud. Some of the TEC and PEC members also did not fully welcome the use of cameras and explained that it sometimes caused additional tension in polling stations.

*“The presence of cameras allowed both political forces and the public to follow the process in all polling stations during voting. It is impossible to imagine a greater opportunity for transparency, undisputable confidence in the electoral process, and confidence in the outcome of the process. Last year, we even hosted representatives of Macedonia in Armenia who came for a week to get acquainted with the work we have done.”*

*CEC representative*

*“I have to be honest, the presence of the cameras often caused bigger problems, caused more tension. When the camera process was first launched, the observers would come and make pointless remarks.”*

 *TEC representative*

*“It seems to me that people were more alert, because of the feeling that they were being filmed. It didn't help much. It didn't show well. It seems to me that it was more connected with the chairman of the PEC, how he/she is willing to organize the elections in the district.” PEC representative*

*“If you don't have a ballot paper filling process, the camera fixes very little.”*

*CSO representative*

***VAD functionality.*** With the aim of combating potential impersonation and double voting, all voters in polling stations were identified through the use of Voter Authentication Devices (VADs). These VADs contained an electronic copy of the relevant district voter list. In preparation for the 09 December 2018 pre-term elections the ESPA increased the pool of VADs in accordance with the needs of the CEC and increased voter turnout. As per project documents, 4,313 VADs were prepared, configured and deployed: 4000 VADs were distributed to the polling stations while 313 VADs remained in the TECs as a backup pool.

The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) final report statement reads: “The VAD identification process in polling stations observed by the IEOM, worked as intended, without any significant problems despite the tight deadline for the authorities to set, test and distribute the VADs”[[9]](#footnote-9); “On Election Day, the VADs were operational and functioned properly in all but three polling stations observed[[10]](#footnote-10)”.

Similar to the international observers, local CSOs also did not find major issues related to VAD functionality.

As the evaluation showed, the high functionality of the VADs was due to a number of factors. One factor being that the VADs were also used in the 2017 elections which helped to optimize some of the process. Other contributing factors were, a) the functionality of all the VADs were checked before the elections, b) the VAD operators were well trained in the framework of the project, and c) 70-80% of VAD operators were from the 2017 operators pool.

As both quantitative and qualitative data showed, the citizens did not notice major difficulties with the use of the VADs. The UNDP Post-Election Survey mentions, “92% did not face any difficulty during 2018 pre-term parliamentary elections and only 3% mentioned having some difficulties with VADs.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Additionally, 92% of surveyed citizens were very satisfied (63%) or somewhat satisfied (31%) with the registration process during Election Day[[12]](#footnote-12). The same was confirmed through the FGDs with citizens where the vast majority agreed that the VADs were effective. The VADs also helped to optimize the election process during election day and to reduce overcrowding in the polling stations. As mentioned by the CEC, TEC and PEC members, it enhanced their work and expedited the voting process.

*“It fosters a more responsible attitude, almost impossible to vote more than once. Trust is increased.”*

*FGD participant, Armavir*

*“These devices might be useful after the elections as well, as the data of fingerprints can be used by police to reduce crime.”*

*FGD participant, Goris*

*“In terms of facilitating the electoral process itself, the introduction of the VADs was a great step forward. Devices made the PEC's job easier, both in terms of organizing and facilitating the election process, and for voters. In addition, it eliminated overcrowding.”*

*KII with TEC representative*

***Automated help desk.*** A simple automated help desk was developed for use by the hotline/support center team on Election Day. This created a centralized system to address any issues that could occur. The accuracy of the voter database was checked together with the Police Passport and Visa Department. The ESPA IT expert, jointly with the CEC technical support team, completed data preparation at the CEC by using the Central Voter Information System (CVIS). The CVIS database was linked with the Helpdesk system allowing the CEC personnel to check issues regarding the outdated and archived passports/IDs revealed by the polling station’s operators during the registration process. This was then communicated to the central help desk personnel through phone calls.

 As this evaluation showed, the system operated smoothly and increased the speed and quality of the CEC helpdesk services by reducing troubleshooting time from 30 minutes to 3 mins.

*“The troubleshooting help desk mechanism, introduced with the support of the UNDP experts, allowed us to solve the issues raised in a timely manner and minor issues identified did not impact the election results.”*

 *CEC representative*

*“In the past we used to get 200 calls on Election Day, but now that number has dropped dramatically. This was the result of our cooperation with the UNDP.”*

*Police representative*

*“We had a hotline, and when there was a problem, we quickly called and solved all the problems.”*

*FGD participant, VAD operators*

***Functionality of cameras and live streaming.*** The Electoral Code requires the use of web cameras in all polling stations. During the 2017 election cameras were used for the first time. For the 2018 election an additional 375 units were procured according to the ESPA. Additionally, the ESPA supported the CEC to procure 13 servers, customize software/licenses, install and configure cameras in 1501 polling stations out of 2010, and to procure broadband connections. The UNDP also signed a contract with UCOM to install cameras and provide live streaming from polling stations all across Armenia.

Moreover, the public website for live streaming was developed and installed by 07 December 2018 and was open to the public (www.electionsonline.am) starting on the 8th of December.

As this evaluation showed, the live streaming and recording ran smoothly on Election Day. On average 98%-99% of the cameras were online. The main reason for the offline status of a few cameras was a power outage in the regions. Such issues were addressed and fixed by UCOM in a timely manner either by using UPS’s or alternative solutions like solar panels.

According to Akanates Observation Mission the live broadcast of voting showed that the cameras generally worked efficiently. The registered problems were mainly of a technical nature.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The qualitative interview data collected during the scope of this evaluation confirmed that the cameras worked without major issues. Some respondents also highlighted that the installment of cameras in polling stations not only increased transparency, but also served as evidence following any complaints. The live streaming also allowed the CEC to oversee the work of the TECs and PECs online during the election.

***Training component and operators work.*** The ESPA team worked in close collaboration with the CEC and supported them in developing and planning a 3 level cascade training, a 2 level training of trainers and testing of the VAD operators. Moreover, the ESPA supported the CEC in updating the manual for the VAD operators and other training materials. The project monitored the training throughout the country and provided consultations to the CEC for organizing Election Day. As a result, 4003 VAD operators were certified through a 3 level cascade training, and 4000 VAD operators worked in 1998 polling stations during election day.

A review of project reports showed that 4052 VAD operators attended the training and 4003 successfully passed the test. Failure rate was only 1.2% (49 people out of 4052) amongst the candidates compared to 8% in 2017. This is not surprising considering that 65%-70% of the VAD operators had previous experience working on the VADs.

 As stated by the IEOM “VAD operators and the technical support teams functioned competently and efficiently, no major issues were recorded.” The IEOM preliminary statement highlights, “The CEC, with international assistance, trained all VAD operators through interactive training assessed positively by the ODIHR EOM.”[[14]](#footnote-14).

The competence of the VAD operators was highly valued by surveyed citizens after the elections. As per the UNDP Post-Election Survey, 91% of surveyed citizens were very or somewhat satisfied with the competence of the VAD operators[[15]](#footnote-15).

The evaluation data collected through interviews and FGDs are in agreement with the previous statements. Participants positively evaluated the effectiveness and practical component of the training. As a result, the operators’ work was also positively evaluated by all stakeholders and citizens.

*“The courses were important, it would have been impossible using a manual only; as we hadn't seen the device, we couldn't do anything on our own, explanation and practice helped a lot.”*

*FGD participant, VAD operators*

*“The process is much faster now, no need to waste time looking for the names in the voter lists. Operators were guiding.” FGD participant, Armavir*

***Training center, E-Լearning and Web-based application and certification․*** In the post-electoral period, the project supported the CEC in developing an e-learning platform, which includes several online courses for stakeholders engaged in different levels of the electoral cycle. The platform is already available to the public at https://elearning.elections.am. An online, web-based application and certification system for PEC members was also developed as per f the ESPA. This system helps to automate the application and certification of citizens applying to work as PEC members, and will significantly ease the workflow in the future. The ESPA also supported the CEC by equipping the CEC Training and Resource Center with necessary equipment and space.

Based on the document review and qualitative data collected the evaluation found that the previously mentioned support and developments significantly contributed to the institutional enhancement of the CEC. However, all the platforms and the center require further efforts to become fully functional and efficient.

*“I must say that we still have a lot of work to do with the e-learning system. Currently, the materials are only for operators of PEC, VAD, and some for voters. In the future there will be materials for observers, proxies, candidates, parties, media and other groups.”*

CEC Representative

**Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The **key findings** of output 1 include:

1. The credibility of the electoral processes in Armenia has increased and the evaluation has revealed sufficient evidence of the ESPA’s contribution;
2. The VADs functioned smoothly during elections, contributed to the efficiency of the registration process and reliability of election results;
3. The cameras and live streaming ran with no major problems. The problems were mainly technical in nature and were quickly fixed.
4. The evaluation revealed that there is no consensus or prevailing trend of opinions with regard to the effectiveness of the live streaming and cameras in increasing the credibility of the election process. Some believe it is necessary, others think it is artificial and not cost-efficient, whereas others state that it creates unnecessary tension.
5. The training for the operators was very timely and targeted, resulting in a high level of satisfaction from the operators. Citizens were also satisfied with the quality of the operators’ work.
6. Training centers, e-learning platforms and web-based systems offer major potential and further efforts are required to ensure that those serve their purpose in the most efficient possible way.

**The main recommendations for future projects are:**

* Continue efforts to further develop the VADs and create a unified database. Support the government to further upgrade the digital solutions for the voting system.
* Engage in dialogue with the government, donors, and civil society to find the best solutions with regard to cameras and live streaming.
* Continue efforts to further support the CEC to realize the full potential of training centers, e-learning platforms and web-based systems.

**Output 2: Inclusiveness and participation in the elections enhanced**



According to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) voter turnout was 1,261,660. This corresponded to 48.6% of voters, which is 12% less compared to the 2017 parliamentary elections (turnout was 60.86% in 2017). As per the Independent Observer Alliance Report, the negative difference in participation in elections during 2018 compared to 2017 can be due to artificial interferences in election results in 2017[[16]](#footnote-16).

This opinion was widely shared by the majority of interviewed voters and stakeholders who believe that the 2018 election showed the real number of citizens who generally vote. Almost all respondents mentioned that after the revolution people realized the power and significance of their vote. This changed the attitude of the public towards the future and motivated them to vote. Accordingly, it is believed that real participation has actually increased. Data from the UNDP Post-Election Survey supports this belief demonstrating that the underlying reasons for participation in the election has changed compared to the 2017 elections. Reasons to vote such as, “my vote will make a difference” and “my participation is connected with freedom, rights, democracy” were mentioned twice more during the 2018 pre-term elections than for the 2017 parliamentary elections[[17]](#footnote-17).

*Figure 4 Most important reasons for voting during 2017 and 2018 elections*

*“I think these final numbers are low because previously there were names of many “dead people” in the voting lists.”*

*FGD participant, Yerevan*

*“Before the revolution people would not go to the polling stations knowing that their voice does not mean anything. Now, there is a completely different situation.” FGD Participant, Vanadzor*

*“The 2018 elections came on the wake of this dramatic political change, and of course naturally the turnout was pretty high. People were full of inspiration, trusted the new system, and were willing to contribute to the change by casting their votes.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA Staff*

**With regard to enhancing inclusiveness in elections,** it should be mentioned that gender sensitive voter education materials and motivational materials were developed by the project to encourage women to participate. To encourage first-time voters the project came up with pin badges. Overall, 80,000 pin badges with a message “I have voted for the first time” were designed and prepared with the ESPA support. The badges enjoyed huge popularity among first time voters on election day and were broadly publicized by the mass media.

The evaluation showed that according to voter statistics both women and youth actively participated: 52% of voters were female and approximately 28% of voters were youth 18-35 years of age. In all age groups the female participation was slightly higher compared to men, with exception of youth (31,21% of young voters were male and 26,57% were female). Therefore, engagement of youth female voters in the elections could be further enhanced.

**As for the inclusiveness** and the accessibility of polling stations, both the IEOM and local observation groups mentioned that, “Almost three quarters of polling stations observed were not accessible for persons with reduced mobility.”[[18]](#footnote-18) “Observers found out that 47.33% of polling stations did not ensure accessibility for voters with disabilities.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

 The TEC and CSO members also mentioned issues of accessibility in polling stations and the lack of mobile voting booths. The lack of accessibility of the polling stations for people with disabilities is known to the CEC as well. According to the KII data, the commission has started a detailed assessment and exploration of possible solutions.

*“As for the inclusiveness: they were trying to do things, there were ramps in some places, but logistically it was still impossible. For example, my polling station was on the second floor, and no one with physical disabilities came to vote. So, in theory they were trying to do something, but to say that they provided 100% inclusiveness, would not be true.”*

 *TEC representative*

*“The electoral code that we have at the moment does not ensure mobile voting. For example, if I were a voter, I would rather not go to the polls in such a state. If I can't vote with dignity, I'd better not go to the elections.”*

 *CSO representative*

*“Now, for example, a study of the availability of polling stations is being conducted with one of the CSOs, AGAT NGO. It is very important because we think we can have a picture that in the future will give an opportunity If a person has a disability and wants to go to another polling station that is more accessible to him. It can be a wonderful solution… In connection with this there were discussions, for example, about videos for deaf-mute voters during the election campaign, or for developing new opportunities for blind voters.”*

 *CEC representative*

***Voter Education Campaign and Voter Awareness on Voting Procedures.*** The ESPA experts assisted the CEC in identifying several targeted campaigns that included issues such as voting procedures, vote buying, bribery, voting secrecy, women’s participation, and first-time voters. As a result, voter and civic education activities and materials were designed, developed, and disseminated by the CEC: two leaflets on voting procedure, a public service announcement on the importance of voter participation, anti-corruption video clips, 3,000 motivational stickers, 84 billboards with a “don’t’ sell your future” message, and 80,000 pin badges for first-time voters.

As stated in the IEOM report, “Voters generally understood the voting procedures, with some exceptions among first-time voters and the elderly. Many IEOM observers noted that elderly people were facing some problems due to complex procedures.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

Results from the UNDP Post-Election Survey were in support of the IEOM report statement. This demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of surveyed citizens reported having enough information on voting procedures.[[21]](#footnote-21) It can be stated that voter education campaigns had a significant contribution to the overall awareness of voters on election procedures.



***Figure 5. Respondents awareness on voting procedures***

The evaluation findings from qualitative interviews and discussions support the quantitative data presented above. The evaluation also revealed that there is a general understanding that citizen education should not be focused on upcoming elections but should be a continuous effort.

*“During the electoral campaign there was no lack of information. I do not watch TV much, but every time I did , I saw the ads, especially on social media.”*

*FGD participant, Armavir*

*“There were many ads on TV. I also liked how they were made: clear, and to the point. We all knew what to do.”*

*FGD participant, Yerevan*

*“In general, it takes a lot of time and system and knowledge to embed a culture of active citizenship, it is also connected with the economic standing of people. No standalone project can achieve the goals of citizenship education. It should be a continuous process, but definitely what happened recently in Armenia was a step forward.”*

*Donor representative*

***Participation of women in politics.*** The ESPA’s gender expert worked during the post electoral period to assist the CEC with the development of a comprehensive gender strategy. A gender assessment related to the CEC’s internal policies and practices was conducted and a database summarizing all electoral statistics, disaggregated by sex, was developed. This was done in close cooperation with the CEC Information Analysis & Information Technology Department. The database is posted on the CEC website. It is the first one with gender-disaggregated data on electoral processes: <https://res.elections.am/images/doc/Statistics2018_EN.pdf>

Additionally, a gender policy for the CEC was drafted and submitted to the CEC, to the newly established parliamentary commission on the electoral reforms, as well as to the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia. The ESPA also focused on strengthening the capacity of the CEC staff to develop procedures that would increase the participation of women. The project helped to inform the CEC on the importance of mainstreaming gender in all its activities. It also deepened the understanding of a need for a systematic and long-term approach within the organization for gender responsive electoral planning processes. **Despite these efforts, the evaluation found a number of limitations in this area and concluded that the intended result under this component of the project was only partially achieved.** The project faced challenges in implementing gender related activities in a comprehensive manner. The government and the CEC were and very sensitive to the topic, even to the word “gender”. The project team had to switch to “equal participation of men and women” terminology instead.

As a result, the ESPA did not have full-scale support for gender issues throughout the project and only partially achieved the planned indicator 2.3., “Availability of legislation and procedures for increased political participation of women.” Additionally, the project did not develop the desired behavioral changes among government and CEC staff.

*“For example, we would love to see much more openness from the CEC when it comes to gender integration. There is still a long way to go to ensure that strategic planning is fully inclusive of all groups. This is an area that could be improved.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA staff*

*“I think we definitely had some limitations and one of them was gender. I’m not sure whether this component brought out the best. It’s very complicated and a very difficult area to be tackled. Thus, our leadership and our CEC was not very gender sensitive. To be honest I don’t think we managed to achieve everything we planned. I think in terms of its immediate output, development of gender strategy, all of that yes, we delivered. However, in terms of a changed mindset and tackling behavioral change in the stakeholders, I don’t think we achieved that goal.”*

*Donor representative*

According to the IEOM, women remain underrepresented in politics. “Altogether 32 percent of candidates registered by political parties were female, and 24 percent of MPs in the new parliament were women. Parties rarely featured women candidates as central figures in their campaigns.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Gender mainstreaming and participation of women in politics are areas in which the GoA, the CEC and the donor community should continue to improve. These issues require a comprehensive and holistic approach in addressing cultural issues and promoting political and economic empowerment of women, especially in rural and remote areas. As for participation of women in politics, the evaluation again found diverse opinions. They varied from strong believers in further increasing the quota for female candidates to advocates for a more gradual approach based on natural development and evolution in this sphere.

*“The other problem is women in politics, meaning that there are few of them. The solution to this lies in the legislature. We found its solution back in 2018. I mean the quota and other legislation that allow the quota to be implemented.”*

 *CSO representative*

*“It's a matter of time. I'm not in favor of doing artificial things at all, but the thing is the majoritarian system should be abolished for a variety of reasons. i It will increase women's involvement. Now, for example, the quota is set on the proportional representation list, there is no such quota on the majoritarian system.”*

 *CSO representative*

*“We should not look at gender in elections as a separate issue. It’s part of the culture, so we have to change the culture. If we feel more flexible and natural talking about the role of women, I think it will be integrated into all processes organically, including electoral processes. I think the government is moving in the right direction and the donor community needs to focus on women’s economic and political empowerment.”*

 *Donor representative*

***External relations***

The ESPA engaged an international external relations advisor who assisted the CEC in their communication and external relations efforts during the electoral processes. They also gave recommendations, organized external relations training for the CEC in the post-electoral period, and supported the CEC in reviewing their external relations policy and communication strategy.

The evaluation showed that the communication of election results to the public was organised in a highly effective manner. The sex-disaggregated data collection and dissemination proved to be a useful approach. Such actions not only raise public awareness, but also contribute to a positive CEC image. Moreover, the disaggregated data could be further analysed according to electoral behaviours and trends, and later used for more targeted voter education campaigns.

The ESPA also supported the CEC in organizing and holding the mandate allocation ceremony for newly elected members of the Armenian National Assembly of the 7th Convocation. For the first time, the mandates were handed over not by the CEC Chairman or members, but by ordinary citizens randomly selected from the voter database. This ceremony was highly acknowledged by stakeholders, which not only increased the CEC’s visibility, but also had a very ideological meaning - Members of the Parliament are responsible to citizens and committed to presenting their voice in the parliament.

*“The technical equipment allowed us to analyse the information according to male-female participation. This means that the data we had was of high quality which can be used for statistical analysis in the future.”*

 *CEC representative*

*“As for the ceremony of handing over the mandates, I think it was very important, especially for National Assembly members, as it obliges them to remember from whom they get their mandates.” Member of the Parliament*

**Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The **main findings of the evaluation** of the output 2 are:

1. Although the turnout rate in the 2018 parliamentary elections was 12% less compared to 2017, the secondary quantitative and qualitative data collected within the scope of this evaluation suggest that it could be connected with external factors occurred in the past. There is a strong belief that the participation has actually increased and represents a more realistic picture of voter turnout.
2. The evaluation did not find any challenges concerning the participation of women and young people in the elections.
3. The inclusiveness of the elections suffered due to the lack of polling station accessibility for people with disabilities, as well as from the absence of targeted educational materials.
4. In general, voter education materials and campaigns were of high quality and served their purpose.
5. Women’s political participation was discovered to be the weakest component of the project and the target set was only partially achieved.
6. External relations and communication of the CEC was supported by the ESPA. It was organized at a high level, contributed to a positive image and increased visibility of the CEC. The presentation of gender disaggregated data, distribution of first-time voter pins, as well as delivery of the mandates to the newly elected MPs by ordinary citizens, were highlights of the external communication of the CEC.

The **recommendations** to consider in the future include:

* Support the CEC through finding better solutions ensuring higher inclusivity in the election processes.
* Given the large number of diaspora Armenians holding Armenian citizenship, support the CEC and government in streamlining voter lists and separating those citizens who reside or mainly reside in the RA. This will give a more realistic picture on turnout rate and overall election results.
* Continuously work with donors and the government to implement projects promoting gender equality and female economic and political empowerment, especially in rural and remote areas.

**Output 3: Capacity of the election management bodies augmented**



While the immediate priority of the project was providing support for the preparation and facilitation of early elections, the ESPA also dedicated a component to sustainability covering the post-electoral period. The ESPA assisted the CEC in identifying specific areas of capacity building for permanent election officials and staff, and the Police Passport and Visa Department. The post-election period was a key year in strengthening the national EMB and deepening trust in Armenia’s electoral system.

**CEC, TEC and PEC capacity for organising and holding elections.** The **CEC** is responsible for organizing and holding elections with the help of its Territorial and Precinct Election Commissions. t The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) mission’s statement in the final report reads, “The CEC and the Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) enjoyed confidence among electoral stakeholders.[[23]](#footnote-23) According to the UNDP Post-Election Survey, nearly three quarters of surveyed citizens completely or somewhat agreed that the CEC was professional in organizing elections (74%), and that the CEC was transparent and informed the public and media about its activities (73%).



***Figure 6. Armenian Citizens opinions about the CEC[[24]](#footnote-24)***

The qualitative data collected through interviews and discussions were in agreement with the above data. The data analysis suggests that the CEC is seen as competent in organizing elections and there is noticeable improvement in their capabilities. The evaluation also concluded that those improvements can be partially attributed to the ESPA. With regard to trust towards the CEC as an independent organization, there were contradicting data between qualitative interviews and quantitative findings. According to the UNDP PostEelection Survey 62% of citizens agreed (out of which 31% completely agreed) that the CEC is an independent institution not influenced by political considerations. In contrast to that qualitative data argue the full independence of the CEC. Many of the interviewees and FGD participants still attribute the organization of fair elections to the political will of the government rather than the full independence of the CEC.

*“For sure there is a major difference in terms of CEC capabilities, in comparison to previous elections. I attribute it to the results of this and previous projects.”*

 *GoA representative*

*“It is Important that this institution be strong and fully independent from political and financial pressures, able to have a long-term plan and vision, and develop a clear structure and definition between the voting members of the commission and the secretariat. Currently, the Law doesn’t provide for a clear definition of roles and responsibilities within the secretariat and its members.”*

*FGD with UNIDP/ESPA Staff*

*“There is no trust towards the CEC, which means that it is not viewed as the guarantor of fair elections. The CEC is just a performer of someone else’s political will. This means that they will follow any order received whenever."*

 *CSO representative*

**The TECs** are permanent professional bodies composed of seven members appointed by the CEC for a six-year term based on public elections. The TECs supervise the activities of the PECs, handle complaints against decisions or inactivity of the PECs, organize recounts, tabulate and transfer election results to the CEC.

According to the IOEM final report, “All the TECs met by the ODIHR EOM appeared experienced and enjoyed the confidence of the electoral contestants. Most of the TEC members had previous election experience, and TECs generally conducted their work in an efficient and timely manner.”[[25]](#footnote-25) “Tabulation procedures were assessed positively in almost all observed TECs.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

However, as per the IEOM, some ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the lack of expertise and capacity of the TECs to respond professionally to the complaints. According to the CEC, the TECs were not always clear on how to proceed and made most of their decisions in active consultation with the legal department of the CEC.[[27]](#footnote-27)

As in the IEOM statement concerning the TEC’s capacities in working with complaints, both the CSO and government representatives reported concerns about the PEC and the TEC capacities. They considered those to be the weakest elements of the current election management system. Evaluation respondents also mentioned a number of suggestions for improvements in this area, which can be done through significant structural and institutional changes.

*“In terms of the TECs, I can say that we have a significant need for institutional development here. The more we go down, the less capacities we have there.”*

*GoA representative*

*“The composition of the PECs/TECs has remained largely the same, and these structures need radical changes. In other words, the weakest are the capacities of the territorial and in-poll electoral commissions that need to be strengthened.”*

 *Member of the Parliament*

*“In reality, the TECs are very controversial structures and require fundamental reorganization.”*

 *CSO representative*

The **PECs** are formed by political party nominees with the chairpersons and secretaries assigned to political parties proportionally to their representation in the parliament.

As stated by the IEOM, “The training of some 16,000 PEC members organized by the CEC with the support from the international community was overall positively evaluated by the ODIHR EOM. However, the number of errors identified in the PEC result protocols during the tabulation indicate the need to place a particular focus in future training sessions on accurate completing of results protocols, and dedicating more time to practical exercise.”[[28]](#footnote-28) A similar observation was reported in the Independent Observer Public Alliance report: “Observers who observed the TECs noted that there were many inaccuracies and shortcomings in PEC results protocols, which testify about their incompetence in summarizing the voting results.”[[29]](#footnote-29) As stated by local observers, in 8.7% of the polling stations observed, authorities did not take appropriate action to correct violations, however, there was a positive tendency compared to 53% during the 2017 elections.[[30]](#footnote-30) As for vote counting, both the IOEM and local observers did not notice major issues.

Consistent with local and international observation findings, all interviewed evaluation stakeholders mentioned the need for increasing the PEC capacities and competencies. In addition, almost all the citizen focus groups identified issues in the work of precinct electoral commissions within polling stations. There was only one focus group out of 8 whose members assessed the work of the PEC as positive. According to the majority of respondents, the selection procedure for commission members should be changed. Members often take over their positions without knowing their responsibilities. In most cases, members of the commission occupy their position for several terms and the composition of the commission does not change for many years. The majority of the FGD participants claim that current members of the commissions occupied the same positions in the past, when various electoral violations took place. This creates certain mistrust towards the electoral processes. Respondents call for urgent reform of the selection process and change of current members of electoral commissions. The CSO representatives also raised the issue of the PEC members’ nomination by political parties and lack of the commission’s responsibility for quality work.

*“There are still significant problems with the capacity of precinct electoral commissions, regarding their knowledge of the regulations and the electoral code in general.”*

 *CSO representative*

*“I think the problem is in the selection process. The observers usually know the responsibilities of the commission members better than the actual members.”*

 *FGD Participant, Yerevan*

“*These were the same commissions who were responsible for fraud in previous elections.”*

*FGD participants,* Goris

*“I think that the PEC membership should not be connected with political parties. If it is objective and legal, what does it matter which political party you represent?” PEC representative*

*“The overall problems of the commissions come from the existing model which is politicized and biased. Frankly speaking, we need a more radical solution. Commissions should be held responsible for the quality of their work, which they are not. The responsibility rests on the person.”*

 *CSO representative*

*“Some kind of a balance is formed when the commission members are from political parties. They supervise each other. Imagine they are not party members, what complaints will they send to the CEC?”*

*CEC representative*

***Lessons learned and strategic planning exercises***

As part of the post-election activities and long-term planning, the ESPA, in cooperation with IFES, supported the CEC in conducting comprehensive lesson learned exercises. The focus was reflecting on the successes and gaps of the 2018 pre-term elections. This in turn enabled the CEC to identify its strengths and plan solutions on how to work towards improving its weaknesses.

The lesson learned exercises included a comprehensive “Lessons Learned” Conference with the engagement of the CEC, TEC and PEC representatives. They also conducted a series of post-election “lesson learned” exercises and round tables with the electoral stakeholders, TEC, PEC, Police Passport and Visa department, CSOs, Political parties, and the media.

According to the CEC representatives, these lessons learned exercises were very important and allowed them to draw lessons from the entire process of organizing and managing the 2018 pre-term parliamentary elections. They also discussed solutions for further improvement and all the recommendations and observations were used in drafting the CEC’s long-term strategic plan.

With the help of the ESPA an international advisor was hired who helped develop a tentative roadmap and timeline for the CEC strategic planning activities, as well as discuss strengths and weaknesses. The CEC members highly acknowledged the competency of -the ESPA consultant and appreciated the experience-sharing event with the Georgia counterparts organized in the scope of the project. Though the strategic plan was not yet finalized at the conclusion of the evaluation, the CEC and ESPA teams stated that the development of strategic planning will continue during the ESPA-2 project in 2020 to ensure full sustainability and national ownership.

*“One of the most important components of this project is the lesson learned exercises: constantly looking back, looking at the work done, identifying all the problems that existed, and trying to find solutions. We would find it difficult to organize conferences on these political lessons with the state budget, because it would be difficult to persuade the government. However, it is very important for the next elections and the CEC strategic planning.”*

 *CEC representative*

**Summary of Findings, conclusions and recommendations:**

The evaluation’s **key findings** of output 3 are:

1. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that the CEC is quite competent and capable to organize sound elections in the future. The capacity of the CEC has been strengthened and part of these improvements can be attributed to the ESPA project.
2. The level of trust towards the electoral management bodies has room for improvement.
3. The TEC and PEC are comparatively weaker elements of the EMB in terms of capacity and require further technical support.

The **recommendation**s for consideration in future projects and initiatives include:

* Support for the government and the CEC in undertaking comprehensive structural and institutional reforms.
* Support the capacity building of the TEC and PEC based on the long-term vision of future election management bodies and overall electoral reforms.
* Strengthen the accountability level of the TEC and PEC commissions.

# Impact

The ToC of the project stated that credible, inclusive and participatory electoral processes lead to effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice, and effective government institutions; also factoring in the stability and economic development of Armenia. The project’s direct and indirect impact has been measured taking into account the ESPA ToC logic. The analysis is based on synthesizing both qualitative data gathered during the evaluation field stage, and through a desk review of project documents and related reports.

The evaluation showed that the project indirectly contributed to positive changes in citizen engagement, freedom of voice, effective and democratic government institutions that will contribute to political and economic improvements in Armenia over time.

***More effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice***

According to the majority of interviewed stakeholders and quantitative surveys, as a result of the 2018 Revolution in general, and Parliamentary elections in particular, there are positive changes in the perceptions of people in Armenia. People started to believe that they can influence decision making in the country, they believe in the power of their vote and recognize its significance. Citizens have become more demanding of the government and parliament, since they perceive that those institutions represent their voice. Some respondents think that those changes in people’s attitudes are not sustainable, and in the future, there might be setbacks, but the vast majority feel that there will be no return to the pre-revolution situation.

*“The more citizens perceive that they are co-creators of change the more active they’re going to be… Citizen engagement can take different forms and I believe that it has increased.”*

 *Donor representative*

*“There is no way back, we already know the power of our voice.”*

 *FGD participant, Armavir*

*“People's demands and expectations of government transparency have changed significantly. In the past, people did not realize that the government was theirs, it was authorized by them because the quality of the elections was very low. Now they perceive the officials of the government and parliament as their representative, and naturally they have some expectations from their representatives, including accountability.”*

 *CSO Representative*

In line with the results of the qualitative interviews, the Caucasus Barometer Survey Report conducted in February 2020 shows that 73% of Armenians believe their expectations of [the Velvet Revolution](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/velvetrevolution?__eep__=6&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZW1ZcuF99OYU4BS1e9dSX5ixAvpbZgADt3beqfbdTyCpigbVEDevn5sGempjEP4uhrKxiYTcKhYbMOaRo0KQxsQyWZOPg-cDkrvg_M-AUREsPkdSzqLGS4fkqZ2_5pFGDZZ5M2jvSFWRtsrkuwA5Vxb&__tn__=*NK-y-R) were somewhat or completely met.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Moreover, according to the IRI poll conducted in 2019, every other surveyed citizen believes that they can influence decision making in the country.[[32]](#footnote-32) The Caucasus Barometer survey also shows that citizens are more motivated and engaged now compared to before the 2018 election and revolution. Notably, 89% of citizens now believe that they have the right to openly say what they think; they are motivated to raise issues. This increased by 15% compared to 2017. This shows very high levels of freedom of speech.

Moreover, nearly three times more citizens (67%) now think that people are treated fairly by the government compared to 2017 (17%).



***Figure 7. Citizen engagement and voice as per Caucasus Barometer surveys***

**New Partnership Opportunities based on the ESPA Success**

ESPA’s success and overall credible and transparent elections created new partnership opportunities in Armenia.

One example is the ESPA’s continuation funded by the Japanese government to build on the success of the ESPA’s implementation and results. This is the first project supported by the Japanese government in Armenia in the field of democratic governance. Another example is the bilateral development cooperation agreement initiated by the government of Sweden, for which the successful organization of elections and their results were among the factors considered.

*“The Japanese had never supported any democratic or good government work in Armenia. This modest funding, opened up opportunities for others focusing on sustainability.”*

*Donor representative*

*“Transparency and democracy were recognized and generated momentum: half a year after that the Government of Sweden decided to initiate a bilateral development cooperation agreement and there were a lot of references to the election. It did attract a lot of new resources, new ideas and projects that we are currently implementing which would probably not be possible without the elections”.*

 *Donor representative*

**More effective democratic government systems and institutions**

According to the ESPA ToC, democratic principles and institutions will be reinforced through credible, inclusive and participatory elections, and stronger electoral management.

The election process and the formation of the government and parliament is one of the cornerstones of the democratic process. As previously mentioned, it is internationally and locally recognized that the 2018 pre-term elections were well managed by the CEC. The process was transparent and the results were credible. According to all interviewed stakeholders and survey results, those processes and results positively impacted the democratic government systems and increased trust towards government institutions.

*“The work carried out within the framework of this project contributed to the transparency of the electoral process and increased public confidence in it. Consequently, the public's trust in the government and related structures increased as well." CEC representative*

*“It has a direct impact on democratic governments, because the elected National Assembly is much more representative of the will of the people and the diversity of groups. As a result, we have a more democratic parliament and government and hopefully they will implement public policy in line with the intentions of the people.” Donor representative*

When triangulating qualitative findings with quantitative survey results, data from different quantitative surveys resemble findings from qualitative interviews. Results from the IRI poll,[[33]](#footnote-33) in line with Caucasus Barometer survey data, show that 63%-64% of citizens believe in democracy as a preferable form of government. Notably, according to the 2020 Caucasus Barometer survey, the percentage of people who think that democracy is preferable to any form of government increased by 15% point compared to 2017.

As per the same survey, democracy levels in Armenia have increased three times compared to 2017, when only 16% of Armenians thought Armenia is a democracy (full or with minor problems) which reached 48% according to the 2020 Barometer Survey. [[34]](#footnote-34)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Figure 8. Preferable kind of government*** | ***Figure 9. Democracy level in Armenia*** |

**Political stability and economic development of the country**

The ESPA ToC suggests that in the long run good governance should contribute to stability and the economic development of the country. 

The Caucasus Barometer survey data show a drastic change in the percentage of people who think that Armenia is going in the right direction for its national politics. The latter reached 67% among surveyed citizens in 2020 compared to 8% registered in 2017[[35]](#footnote-35). The Caucasus Barometer survey results are in line with the IRI poll results conducted in October 2019, which states that 62% of Armenians think Armenia is going in the right direction[[36]](#footnote-36).

According to the IRI poll conducted in October 2019, nearly one third (30%) of citizens thought that the biggest success of the government was decreased corruption in the country[[37]](#footnote-37).

***Figure 10.* *Citizens opinion related to economic situation in the Armenia***

Related to the people’s opinion about the economic situation in the country, as per the IRI poll conducted in October 2019, every second respondent believed that the economic situation of the country improved over the last six months and a slight improvement was noticed compared to the August 2018 data, where 43% of citizens responded positively to the same question. Also noted, 28% of surveyed citizens reported an improved financial situation in their household as of October 2019[[38]](#footnote-38).

 The **main findings** related to the impact of the ESPA are:

1. stronger engagement of citizens;
2. improved trust towards the government; and
3. acknowledgment of positive dynamics in political and economic developments in the country among the majority of the population.

# Sustainability

This evaluation studied the progress made and challenges surrounding the project’s sustainability and the key findings are presented below. As the review of the ESPA design document showed, the sustainability strategy included 2 main directions:

* Capacity building approach – transfer of capacities, skills and knowledge for the long-term period;
* Sustainability of the new technology – procedures and rules that will be applied by the EMB to regularly track the status of software and hardware and ensure adequate service and contingency.

**Sustainability of the new technology.** Considering the lessons learned from the previous election support projects implemented by the UNDP in Armenia, the ESPA was intentional in targeting the issue of hardware and software maintenance after the elections. Policies were developed and technical support provided to establish a system of full inventory and technical equipment checks twice a year by the CEC. Protocols are needed to ensure that the equipment is maintained in the best possible way for future utilization.

*“We needed to ensure that the equipment is kept in proper conditions and is ready to be used for future elections. This is why, within the scope of the ESPA, we put together a comprehensive monitoring procedure. We are also developing another important tool, an e-library of the equipment, where each item is tracked separately. We will have information regarding each item: who is it being used by, what kind of problems does it have, and such. This tool will enable us to quickly mobilize our equipment for the next elections.”*

*CEC representative*

*“We follow the requirements received from them: twice a year we charge the devices and check them. However, we have 4516 devices in stock and technology is technology, you can never have a guarantee on how long they can be used.”*

*CEC Representative*

*“In addition to that, within the scope of ESPA we assessed needs and developed a ToR for the software package which will be used to record the number, the status, and the assets available with the VAD’s. We also formed a pool of operators who are working with the VAD’s. In the second project that is running right now, we are implementing a system based on the ToR developed during the previous project.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA Staff*

As for other types of hardware, such as servers and UPSs, all the respondents agreed that there was no rationale for storing them from election to election, since they need to be used constantly to remain usable. Thus, part of the hardware procured during the ESPA was transferred to the government and the National Assembly for use under the condition that in case of a need the GoA will ensure their availability. As the evaluation confirmed, the provisions of this agreement were met by the GoA, as part of the preparation of the Referendum planned for April 2020, when the necessary equipment was mobilized and was ready to be used. The aforementioned evidence shows the political will and mechanisms in place to ensure that the ESPA’s support for the technological components of the 2018 Parliamentary elections will be sustained after the project. At the same time, the evaluation was not able to track any policy and/or MoU between the UNDP and CEC/GoA that would ensure that the above-mentioned agreements are part of a mutually written commitment or are embedded into organizational policies. Therefore, it is recommended that: a) within the scope of the UNDP’s current project, implemented jointly with the CEC, parties sign an MoU where the CEC can confirm its commitment to continual maintenance of the e-library; and b) work jointly with the CEC to integrate policies on equipment maintenance into the organizational and operational regulations of the CEC to ensure that it is followed by future CEC members. Concerning future projects, it is also recommended that a MoU is signed by all state bodies who receive software/hardware procured for election purposes. The MoUs should obtain the government’s agreement to ensure the availability of similar equipment for the next elections. Such an MoU will institutionalize the aforementioned verbal agreements, reduce the risk of confusion during the turnover of decision makers, and most importantly become a reference point for the CEC when including such costs into their future budgets.

“*If we only look at what happened 2-3 months ago, everything will be clear. We had a Referendum planned. The full mechanism that was put in place within the scope of ESPA was ready to be reused. We didn’t need to run from here to there and look for equipment. The ESPA worked with the CEC and the mechanism was there to track everything. This experience shows that if the GoA decides to organize an election in 1 month, it will be possible to deliver it.”*

*GoA Representative*

The above statements describe to what extent the ESPA was successful in delivering sustainability plans regarding the new technology described in its design. When exploring the overall sustainability of technological novelties applied during the 2017 and 2018 elections, respondents also shared their views and recommendations for the future. Specifically, almost all participants in this evaluation, agreed that the voter authentication devices and live streaming contributed to the transparency and credibility of the elections. The evaluation also revealed that most of the citizens participating in the FGDs would like this practice to continue in the future. At the same time the vast majority of the other respondents, including representatives from donor organizations, the CEC, PEC, GoA, Parliament as well as civil society organizations shared their reservations, specifically relating to cameras and live streaming.

*“Live streaming was important for people because they could observe and see what was going on. However, from the cost-efficiency point of view, paying a couple of hundred thousand dollars for a license every time is not a justifiable and sustainable approach. This needs to be studied further for better solutions.”*

*Member of the Parliament*

*“To me those cameras play some artificial and surface level role. But the issue is that once applied it will be very difficult to change this practice. It will be seen by the people as an attempt to hide something, as it was during the preparation for the Referendum. I know there were some discussions, but later the government decided to go with cameras, and even replaced a few, just to avoid this topic. If you ask me, it is much better to direct those funds towards institutional development”.*

*CSO representative*

*“The technology has 5-7 years of life and then needs to be replaced. If trust in elections continuously increases among the population and if one day the opposition parties announce that they don’t see the need for spending that much of the state budget for live streaming. Then it would help.”*

*GoA Representative*

As mentioned above, in contrast to the key stakeholders closely engaged in election preparation, management, and observation processes, ordinary citizens did appreciate the technological novelties of the last 2 elections. However, even among the citizens, there were some who questioned the feasibility and future need of live streaming.

*“Of course, cameras help a lot. Just the fact that there are cameras in the room contributes to everything being in order. The members of the commission know that everything is live streamed and they are always more alert. No waiting lines of people in the room.”*

*FGD participant, Goris*

*“From the other side, our village mayor, or others with authority tell people who to vote for. People say yes, but they vote for whoever they want. Now that there are cameras they are afraid. They think that somehow their actual voting is also recorded.”*

*FGD participant, Armavir*

With regard to the VADs, the vast majority appreciated them and mentioned that this practice should be continued. The government and the CEC representatives stated that this practice will continue to develop on a new level to full automatization of the whole voting process.

*“We plan to develop and improve the process further. We see future partnerships with the international organizations in the development of new tools and the application of electronic voting devices”.*

*CEC Representative*

**Institutional Capacity of the Election Management Body (EMB).** As mentioned above, capacity building was an integral part of the ESPA project both during the preparation of the 2018 elections and during the post-election phase. The effectiveness and outcomes of this component will be explored in the respective section of the evaluation report. From a sustainability point of view, the main study question was the ability of the EMB and the GoA to organize credible and technologically sound elections in the future as well as the ability to maintain the positive outcomes achieved during the ESPA. From this perspective, the opinions of respondents were quite diverse. The common trend however, suggests that most of the participants trust that the Central Elections Commission does have sufficient human and institutional capacity to organize proper elections in the Republic of Armenia when needed. This includes, well established cooperation with the Police Department, mobilization, selection and training of precinct and territorial electoral commissions, public outreach and voter education. It also includes organization of logistics and risk management for the day of elections. The CEC training center, e-learning platform, e-library of the equipment, unified database of territorial election commissions members, were elements that highly impacted the institutional capacity of the CEC with a long-term perspective supported by the ESPA. Another common trend revealed by the evaluation is that many respondents think the precinct and territorial levels still require significant changes, reforms, and strengthening.

“T*he e-learning platform, which I think is a crucial element will also save a lot of financial resources for the government and for the state budget in the future. You know, electoral management bodies have to go through mandatory training in accordance with the legislation. Now, with the e-learning platform that has become much easier and much more cost efficient. That was one element of sustainability of the ESPA.”*

*Donor representative*

*“Overall, there is still need for capacity building. A lot has changed last 10 years and it will continue to change, but there is still a need to rely on international expertise and support in preparations to the next elections”*

*Donor Representative*

“*There is still a lot to do at the regional and territorial levels. Oftentimes, people in the commissions do not catch up with the changes. They still wait for someone to tell them what to do and they are a bit confused with the fact that no one is going to tell them what to do. They need to have more knowledge on their functions and procedures in general.”*

*GoA Representative*

*“I believe that the principle for formation of precinct and territorial electoral commissions needs to be changed. Completely new structures and composition should be formed that has nothing to do with the past.”*

*CSO representative*

*“I would suggest that precinct and territorial electoral commission heads work in areas where no one knows them and they know no one. For example, in our case commission members were from our village and they were easily directing people during the elections. For example, people were asking which number stands for Nikol Pashinyan, and the members were immediately answering. “*

*FGD participant, Armavir*

*“Commissions were the same people, and in the past with the same people we had a lot of cases of violations registered. They need to change and the procedure for how they are selected also needs to change.”*

*FGD participant, Goris*

The above section describes the current status regarding the sustainability of the institutional capacity of the election management bodies of Armenia at different levels. However, when talking about the big picture of this issue this evaluation revealed that there is a crucial need for defining the long-term vision of the future of the CEC and development of a multi-year roadmap of activities leading to this vision. This, in turn, is connected with the electoral legislative reforms, which should be a priority agenda for the GoA and the National Assembly. The guiding principle for the reforms and further strengthening of the CEC should be the independence of the EMB: financial, structural, and legislative.

*“Sustainability is another important factor. Institutions need to function in a self-sustained way: they need to have enough resources, departments and structure to operate independently and in an effective manner.”*

*“Political players, including the government need to understand the importance of strengthening the election committee. It is Important for this institution to be strong and fully independent from political and financial pressures and able to have a long term plan and vision with clear structure and definition between the voting members of the commission and the secretariat.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA staff*

“*Legal reforms are needed to set the basis for structural changes to the CEC. The CEC doesn’t have a training department and other structural elements. Here the CEC has commissioners in charge of operations and there is the risk of losing the institutional memory every time the commissioners are being replaced, so we are lacking an intermediary management level of* the *body.”*

*Donor Representative*

 Respondents also mentioned that although the donor community and international expertise could be of support, it is dependent upon the GoA to make those decisions, define the vision, and outline the future model of the CEC. This needs to be done in a participatory manner, with the inclusion of the civil society. However, it is that vision that needs to drive the reforms. Whichever model is decided it needs to ensure independence, capacity, and a sufficient budget for the CEC. As for the recommendations for the future model, the respondents mentioned:

“The *CEC needs to be capable and sustainable: in charge of a number of processes: a) election administration; b) voter education, c) civic education, proactively engaging with citizens, d) serve as a research and training center for observers, members, students, and others. This is the best-case scenario, but it is up to the government to design the model for the country. In any case the institution needs to be professional and independent, not dependent on donor assistance. Eventually this has to be fully taken by the government, which is a long way to go, but this is the direction. We laid some foundation with the CEPA, the ESPA continued and in 2019 after the elections we started to inject these main components into the strategic planning of CEC.”*

*FGD with UNDP/ESPA staff*

 Based on the aforementioned information, it can be summarized that the main findings of the evaluation are:

1. Sustainability of the technological component of the ESPA's strategy was achieved and there are sound mechanisms in place and embedded into the local structures. The only recommendation for this area is to make sure that these commitments and procedures are documented and integrated into the operational regulations of state bodies.
2. There is a high level of ownership toward project achievements among the state actors and a commitment to build on those and to allocate the required budget for these services in the future.
3. The capacity of the EMB at a central level is sufficient to ensure the continuity of project achievements. However, the precinct and territorial levels require further support. The evaluation also showed that there is a crucial need for vision based legislative reforms that will set an agenda and roadmap for multi year strategic actions.

# Report Annexes

# 9.1 Annex 1. ESPA Project Evaluation Design Document



**Electoral Support Project in Armenia (ESPA)**

**Project Final Evaluation**

**Design Document**

# Background

“Electoral Support Project in Armenia” project was initiated in response to a formal request from the Government of the Republic of Armenia to provide electoral assistance and based on the recommendations of the UN Needs Assessment Mission deployed in July 2018. The project lasted for 18 months and consisted of three components aiming to increase the credibility, inclusiveness and participation in the electoral process. The project’s overall strategy was to assist the Armenian authorities in, first of all, holding credible and inclusive early elections, and secondly, sustaining those achievements and building solid foundations for credible, inclusive and transparent elections in the future.

The Project was structured in a manner to provide targeted, coordinated assistance broadly around four key areas: ensuring the continued use of the new technology introduced during the 2017 elections; assisting authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures, specifically improving voter registration; improving voter education, particularly regarding the novelties in the electoral procedures and laws; and increasing political participation of women and young voters.

These four areas were grouped in two outputs aiming to improve the credibility and inclusiveness of the electoral process overall, with a third output focusing on the post-electoral period and capacity-building of the electoral authorities.

The European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Kingdom of Sweden and the Government of Armenia are the donors of the project. The budget of the project amounts to $4,201,281.80 USD.

# Evaluation purpose and objectives

**Evaluation purpose:** This final evaluation of the Project has been designed to measure impact, if already available at this early stage, and to assess project achievements, their sustainability, yield learning from implementation and inform decision making for future similar projects.

**Evaluation objectives:** In accordance with the UNDP evaluation guidelines (pages 168-170 http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook), the evaluation objectives include assessment the project’s effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness, relevance, impact and sustainability.

* **Relevance** - To evaluate the relevance of project design and project contribution towards the needs of beneficiaries and project consistency with national and local policies and priorities
* **Appropriateness**- To assess feasibility of project delivery method
* **Effectiveness** - To assess the progress made towards achieving project results and assess whether opportunities created by the project were equally accessible for women and men.
* **Impact**- To assess the impact of the project on the lives of people if already available. Understand changes in human development and people’s wellbeing that are brought about by project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
* **Efficiency** - To assess how economically resources or inputs (e.g., funds, expertise and time) were converted to results.
* **Sustainability** - To explore and learn about the extent to which the project build towards sustainability.

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will inform the future similar initiatives of UNDP Armenia, and the main stakeholders (CEC of Armenia, EU, Governments of Armenia, Germany, Sweden and UK).

# Methodology

To achieve above mentioned evaluation purpose and evaluation objectives Prisma team will conduct qualitative evaluation with the application of participatory approach to understand views of all parties, including the project staff, main partners/stakeholders and beneficiaries. This will enable the evaluation team to triangulate data from different sources and present a comprehensive analysis per Evaluation Objective. Hence, the following data collection methods will be applied:

* Desk review
* Key informant interviews (KII) with project team members, project partners/stakeholders including GoA, donor organizations, CEC, TEC, PEC, RA Police Passport and Visa Department, IFES, NDI, IRI, CSOs), as well as with service providers including UCOM, Smartmatic.
* Focus group discussions (FGD) with project beneficiaries (active citizens), as well as VAD operators.

***Taking into account current situation connected with the pandemic, the FGDs and KIIs will be conducted through online platforms. This will allow to avoid face-to-face interaction and associated risks.***

The evaluation matrix below presents the evaluation objectives, key questions to be explored as well as methods to be used for data collection.

**Evaluation matrix**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation objectives**  | **Key questions per objective**  | **Method and target groups** |
| **Relevance:** the extent to which intended outputs and outcomes of the project are consistent with national and local policies and priorities and the needs of intended beneficiaries.  | 1. Were the project overall objectives consistent with, and supportive of RA policies and priorities?
2. Was the project aligned with UNDP priorities?
3. Were the project objectives and results clear and logical, and do they address clearly identified needs?
4. Were there suitable and informative targets, e.g. Were they Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART)?
5. Were the activities planned appropriately to achieve output(s) and whether the output(s) led to the expected project outcome? Have the relevant cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights and governance, donor coordination) been mainstreamed in the project design?
6. Was the project consistent with the needs of intended beneficiaries?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders FGDs with voters/ active citizens, VAD operators  |
| **Appropriateness** feasibility of the delivery method. | 1. Was the project design sufficiently supported by all stakeholders?
2. Have key stakeholders been involved in the design process?
3. Were coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined and did they support institutional strengthening and local ownership?
4. Was the project modality and organisational structure supportive for project implementation?

  | Desk review KIIs with project staff and key stakeholders  |
| **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the intended results have been achieved and whether opportunities created by the project were equally accessible for women and men.  | 1. How well the project achieved its planned results?
2. Have all planned outputs been delivered to date? And in a logical sequence?
3. Were the outputs achieved likely to contribute to the intended results?
4. Were they correctly reflected through the targets?
5. Were the targets for the project appropriate and were they being reported against?
6. What is the quality of the results/services available?
7. Were there any factors which prevent target groups accessing the results/services?
8. To what extent has the project adapted or was able to adapt to changing external conditions (risks and assumptions) in order to ensure benefits for the target groups?
9. Were the risks and assumptions holding true? Were risk management arrangements in place?
10. To what extent were unplanned positive effects contributing to results produced/ services provided?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders FGDs with voters/ active citizens, VAD operators  |
| **Efficiency:** how economically resources or inputs (e.g., funds, expertise and time) were converted to results. | 1. Have all partners been able to provide their financial and/or other contributions?
2. To what degree were inputs provided/ available on time to implement activities from all parties involved?
3. To what degree were inputs provided/ available at planned cost (or lower than planned), from all parties involved?
4. Were project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner?
5. How well was the implementation of activities managed?
6. Have resources been optimally used during project implementation?
7. Could the project achieve the same results with the lower cost? Has the project achieved satisfactory level of cost effectiveness?
8. How well were activities monitored by the project and were corrective measures taken if required?
9. How the project co-ordinated with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?
10. Did the inter-institutional structures e.g. steering committees, technical team meeting and monitoring systems, allow efficient project implementation?
 | Desk review KII with project staff and CEC representatives |
| **Sustainability:** the extent to which benefits of the project continue after external development assistance has withdrawn.  | 1. Was sustainability an integral part of the design i.e. was there a phase out/hand over strategy?
2. Was the sustainability strategy fully understood by the partners?
3. Were funds available after the project? If so, by whom?
4. Were material, services and equipment support continued after the project has finished?
5. What is the level of ownership of the project by key partners and will it continue after the end of external support?
6. How far the project is embedded in local structures?
7. To what extent were relevant key partners actively involved in decision-making concerning project orientation and implementation?
8. Do the key partners have any plans to continue delivering the stream of benefits and if so, are they likely to materialise?
9. Is the institutional and management capacity of project partners and beneficiaries sufficient to ensure sustainability of project achievements?
10. What lessons can be drawn from the coordination efforts and working arrangements between the project team, its counterparts/beneficiaries, and partner organizations?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders  |
| **Impact:** changes in democratic governance systems that are brought about by ESPA, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.  | 1. What are the direct impact prospects of the project on GoA and RA citizens related to effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice, and effective governance institutions?
2. Are any external factors likely to jeopardize the project’s direct impact?
3. To what extent does/will the project have any indirect positive and/or negative impacts? (e.g., social, cultural, gender, economic)
4. Did the project take timely measures for mitigating the unplanned negative impacts? What was the result?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders FGDs with voters/ active citizens, VAD operators  |

**Desk review:** In order to evaluate relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (to extent possible) the evaluation team will conduct comprehensive desk review and secondary data analysis of initially mapped reference materials, documents and reports. Those documents include but are not limited to: a) project documents /ToC, logical frameworks, M&E plan, results, corresponding indicators on output and outcome levels, programmatic progress reports, monitoring reports, budgetary information, minutes and conclusions of steering committee meetings; etc./; b) International Election Observation Mission’s statement on preliminary findings and conclusions, OSCE reports on election results, CSO election observation reports; c) Project and IRI public opinion survey reports, World Bank WGI indexes; and other sources providing secondary data on the evaluation topic.

**Key informant interviews with project team members and key stakeholders:** To assess all evaluation objectives about 15 KIIs will be conducted with the project team and key stakeholders, including representatives from UNDP, donor organizations, partner and beneficiary organizations, such as Central Elections Committee, Government of Armenia and Civil Society Organizations. The initial list of these stakeholders and partners is developed in consultation with UNDP ESPA projectand is presented in the Annex 1. The evaluation team will appreciate the project’s support in facilitating the arrangement of respective interviews.

Overall, selection of the key informants is done following unbiased approach and, to the extent possible, avoiding informants with strong political affiliations.

For each target group separate guide is developed taking into account the level of key informants’ involvement and knowledge of the ESPA project (See Annex 2).

**Focus group discussion with voters (active citizens) and VAD Operators:** In total 9 FGDs will be conducted in the scope of this evaluation. One FGD will be conducted with VAD operators to understand their opinion related to the project relevance, effeteness and impact. Eight to ten operators representing different marzes of Armenia will participate in the discussion. If, due to technology related constraints, the organization of the FGD will not be possible, this will be replaced with at least 5 KIIs with VAD operators from different marzes randomly selected from the list.

In order to ensure that this evaluation captures the voice of citizens as direct beneficiaries of the project, 8 FGDs will be conducted using online platforms inviting participants from 4 locations (two FGD in each location): Yerevan, Vanadzor, Goris and Armavir. Yerevan is selected as RA capital with the biggest number of voters in Armenia, Vanadzor - as the third biggest city and Armavir and Goris representing small cities located in different marzes. Citizens, who participated in elections and are active in their community, are involved in formal and informal civic and community organisations will be invited to participate in FGDs with the application of snowball approach. From 6 to 8 participants will be selected for participation in each FGD representing different characteristics: sex, age, employment and location. Gender balance will be ensured for FGD participants. Local CSOs, like “Partnership and Teaching” NGO from Goris, “NGO Center” from Vanadzor, “Armavir Development Center” NGO actively working in the field expressed their readiness to support the organization of FGDs and recruit the participants following the guidance given by the evaluation team. During the data collection data saturation principle will be applied.

For each FGD target group (VAD and citizens) a separate guide is developed and presented in the **Annex 3.**

**Quality assurance for qualitative data collection:** All the qualitative interviews will be recorded by audio recording based on obtained consent. Transcripts will be developed for all conducted qualitative interviews. The research team members will transcribe the notes from the interview recording as verbatim as possible. In addition, overall, 25% of all transcripts will be checked by peer evaluation team member against the recording. In case of quality issues with the transcripts are identified, 100% compliance with the recording will be ensured for the whole transcript.

Interview guides will be pilot tested and at least one interview will be conducted per target group during the pilot stage.

**Ethical aspects of evaluation:** UN ethical standards in evaluation will be followed. Particularly, all four core ethical issues (Harms and benefits, Informed Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality, and Compensation and Payment) will be taken into account and relevant measures will be assured.

**Harms and Benefits**: Since the evaluation will tackle topics related to election, the evaluation team will conduct the following steps to make sure interviewees best interest is considered:

* Prisma engages professionals having experience in working with similar topic.
* Before the field stage basic ethics principles will be again discussed and risk assessment will be conducted to make sure that all the risks are identified and strategies are in place to mitigate those.

**Informed consent:** Informed consents will be obtained for all respondents of the evaluation; participants will made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation. The decision whether to participate, including unwillingness to participate will be respected. Participants will be appropriately informed that consent is negotiable and that they can withdraw at any point without any negative consequences.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** Confidential participant information from all conducted qualitative interviews will be securely stored, protected and disposed. This will include limiting access to only evaluation team members to raw identifying data through password protection of electronic data, and restricting staff who can access the identified data.

**Compensation and Payment:** Given the fact that FGD participants will be using their own devices and internet connection, some incentives might be suggested for them, for example in a form transferring some credits to the phones of participants. No incentives will be applied for KIIs.

**Limitations:**

* As the evaluation will be conducted during the COVID19 pandemic period online platforms will be used for all interviews. The latter can somehow impact on the quality of data gathered, however, Prisma will engage experienced facilitators in order to maximize response rate during the interviews.
* Topics around 2018 elections are somehow outdated given today’s priorities related to pandemic, recent political and criminal developments, etc. Thus, the evaluation team will make sure that a proper introduction acknowledging this fact is presented prior to interviews, at the same time describing the importance of the interview and purpose of the evaluation.
* Since the project was implemented a year ago, some respondents might have difficulties to remember the project details. This risk will be mitigated by adding a brief project description to the interview guides and reminding participants the main objectives of the project.
1. **Data Analysis and reporting**

**Data analysis:** Data analysis will be constructed around the evaluation objectives. The qualitative data will be synthesized based on the conducted interviews and will be analyzed thematically for trends and associations between outcomes and factors, processes and pathways related to each evaluation objective.

Data analysis will follow sufficient processes to meet industry standards around building evidence around evaluation objectives and presenting the voice and inclusion, appropriateness, triangulation, contribution and transparency.

**Report development:** Evaluation report will triangulate findings for each evaluation objective, based on the information collected from different stakeholders through different methods described above. Evaluation report will follow objectivity standard during the synthesizing and analyzing data from various sources. In case of contradictory information, evaluators will try to unpack the reasons for such information, even if needed by conducting more interviews. In situations, when the analysis will lack to bring enough evidence, the evaluation will be based on stakeholders’ perceptions, which will be clearly noted in the evaluation report.

Before the report finalization, the evaluation initial results will be validated with the national partners and key stakeholders. The preliminary findings of the evaluation will be presented by Prisma to UNDP, CEC, Government of Armenia and the main stakeholders for their review and inputs. Inputs will be incorporated and final evaluation report will be submitted to UNDP for approval.

The Evaluation Report will follow the UNDP suggested structure, outlining the methodology pursued and main findings of the evaluation, including lessons learned and recommendations.

1. **Timeframe and logistic plan**

Different tools are developed for KIIs and FGDs depending on the target group to be interviewed. After the UNDP approval of the tools, the whole evaluation team will undergo an orientation on following topics: project background, evaluation objectives, explanation and in detail discussion of data collection tools, ethical issues including the privacy of collected data.

Prior to the fieldwork, UNDP engagement is envisaged for making contacts with the project key stakeholders or sending official letters to the selected representatives describing the purpose of evaluation and asking for their contribution as interviewees.

**Timeframe and deliverables**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Timeframe** | **Number of days to work** | **Task** |
| 04-11 June | 4 days  | Submission of proposed methodology to UNDP  |
| 12-15 June | 2 days | Review of the methodology by UNDPDocument Review by Prisma |
| 16-17 June | 2 days | Finalization the evaluation design, methods and tools and submission to UNDP |
| 18-30 June | 9 days  | Field stage – Interview arrangements, FGD participant recruitment, online interviews and discussions, transcript development |
| 01 -03 July | 3 days | Data analysis |
| 04-10 July | 6 days | Preparation of evaluation draft report and shared with UNDP for comments  |
| 13-16 July  |  | Report review by UNDP  |
| 13-16 July  |  | PPT development in Armenian by Prisma  |
| 17 July  |  | Validation of evaluation results with stakeholders |
| 17-20 July  | 2 day | Finalisation of evaluation report based on comments and inputs  |

# 9.2 Annex 2. ESPA Project Evaluation Matrix

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation objectives**  | **Key questions per objective**  | **Method and target groups** |
| **Relevance:** the extent to which intended outputs and outcomes of the project are consistent with national and local policies and priorities and the needs of intended beneficiaries.  | 1. Were the project overall objectives consistent with, and supportive of RA policies and priorities?
2. Was the project aligned with UNDP priorities?
3. Were the project objectives and results clear and logical, and do they address clearly identified needs?
4. Were there suitable and informative targets, e.g. Were they Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART)?
5. Were the activities planned appropriately to achieve output(s) and whether the output(s) led to the expected project outcome? Have the relevant cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights and governance, donor coordination) been mainstreamed in the project design?
6. Was the project consistent with the needs of intended beneficiaries?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders FGDs with voters/ active citizens, VAD operators  |
| **Appropriateness** feasibility of the delivery method. | 1. Was the project design sufficiently supported by all stakeholders?
2. Have key stakeholders been involved in the design process?
3. Were coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined and did they support institutional strengthening and local ownership?
4. Was the project modality and organisational structure supportive for project implementation?

  | Desk review KIIs with project staff and key stakeholders  |
| **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the intended results have been achieved and whether opportunities created by the project were equally accessible for women and men.  | 1. How well the project achieved its planned results?
2. Have all planned outputs been delivered to date? And in a logical sequence?
3. Were the outputs achieved likely to contribute to the intended results?
4. Were they correctly reflected through the targets?
5. Were the targets for the project appropriate and were they being reported against?
6. What is the quality of the results/services available?
7. Were there any factors which prevent target groups accessing the results/services?
8. To what extent has the project adapted or was able to adapt to changing external conditions (risks and assumptions) in order to ensure benefits for the target groups?
9. Were the risks and assumptions holding true? Were risk management arrangements in place?
10. To what extent were unplanned positive effects contributing to results produced/ services provided?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders FGDs with voters/ active citizens, VAD operators  |
| **Efficiency:** how economically resources or inputs (e.g., funds, expertise and time) were converted to results. | 1. Have all partners been able to provide their financial and/or other contributions?
2. To what degree were inputs provided/ available on time to implement activities from all parties involved?
3. To what degree were inputs provided/ available at planned cost (or lower than planned), from all parties involved?
4. Were project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner?
5. How well was the implementation of activities managed?
6. Have resources been optimally used during project implementation?
7. Could the project achieve the same results with the lower cost? Has the project achieved satisfactory level of cost effectiveness?
8. How well were activities monitored by the project and were corrective measures taken if required?
9. How the project co-ordinated with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?
10. Did the inter-institutional structures e.g. steering committees, technical team meeting and monitoring systems, allow efficient project implementation?
 | Desk review KII with project staff and CEC representatives |
| **Sustainability:** the extent to which benefits of the project continue after external development assistance has withdrawn.  | 1. Was sustainability an integral part of the design i.e. was there a phase out/hand over strategy?
2. Was the sustainability strategy fully understood by the partners?
3. Were funds available after the project? If so, by whom?
4. Were material, services and equipment support continued after the project has finished?
5. What is the level of ownership of the project by key partners and will it continue after the end of external support?
6. How far the project is embedded in local structures?
7. To what extent were relevant key partners actively involved in decision-making concerning project orientation and implementation?
8. Do the key partners have any plans to continue delivering the stream of benefits and if so, are they likely to materialise?
9. Is the institutional and management capacity of project partners and beneficiaries sufficient to ensure sustainability of project achievements?
10. What lessons can be drawn from the coordination efforts and working arrangements between the project team, its counterparts/beneficiaries, and partner organizations?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders  |
| **Impact:** changes in democratic governance systems that are brought about by ESPA, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.  | 1. What are the direct impact prospects of the project on GoA and RA citizens related to effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice, and effective governance institutions?
2. Are any external factors likely to jeopardize the project’s direct impact?
3. To what extent does/will the project have any indirect positive and/or negative impacts? (e.g., social, cultural, gender, economic)
4. Did the project take timely measures for mitigating the unplanned negative impacts? What was the result?
 | Desk review KIIs with Project staff and key stakeholders FGDs with voters/ active citizens, VAD operators  |

# 9.3 Annex 3. List of key informants interviewed for ESPA project final evaluation

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **Organization**  | **Position**  | **Representatives** |
| 1 | UNDP  | ESPA project Chief technical advisor | Shalva Kipshidze  |
| UNDP Democratic Governance Portfolio Analyst | Alla Bakunts |
| ESPA project  | Davit Khachatryan |
| 2 | CEC | CEC Chair  | Tigran Mukuchyan |
| 3 | CEC Member  | Nune Hovhannisyan |
| 4 | CEC Secretary  | Armen Smbatyan |
| 5 | TEC  | TEC Member  | Arman Hakobyan |
| 6 | Certified PEC Representative | PEC Chair at Central district  | Tatev Avagyan  |
| 7 | RA Government  | Adviser to the President of the[National Assembly of Armenia](https://www.facebook.com/parliament.am/) (Former Adviser to the First Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia) | David Karapetyan |
| 8 | RA Government | Deputy Minister of Justice (Former Adviser to the First Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia) | [Kristinne Grigoryan](http://www.moj.am/en/staff/view/staff/3) |
| 9 | Police of RA:Passport and Visa Department | Head of data and information department | Argam Sanasaryan |
| 10 | OSCE/ODHIR Observation Mission, Armenia | Deputy Head of Mission (former) | Goran Petrov |
| 11 | IFES  | Country Director | Jerome Leyraud |
| 15 | The British Embassy in Yerevan | Head of Programmes | Oksanna Abrahamyan  |
| 16 | Embassy of Sweden  | Program Coordinator | Razmik Sargsyan  |
| 17 | Union of Informed Citizens | Programs director | Daniel Ioannisyan |
| 18 | Helsinki Citizens Assembly | Project coordinator | Vardine Grigoryan |
| 19 | Asparez Journalists Club | President | Levon Barseghyan |
| 20 | Transparency International | Executive director | Sona Ayvazyan |
| 21 | Hamazasp Danielyan | Member of National Assembly  |  |

# 9.4 Annex 4. Key informants interview guides

**KII with CSO representatives**

**Interview guide**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

“Electoral Support Project in Armenia” project was funded by EU, Germany, UK, Sweden, RA and implemented by UNDP with close cooperation with CEC to

* assist the Armenian stakeholders (CEC, RA, Police) in holding of early elections and strengthening their capacity in post-Election period.
* ensure the continued use of the new technology introduced in 2017 elections; VADs
* assist the authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures, including improving voter registration; improving voter education.
* support increasing political participation of women and young voters.

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when we had parliamentary elections.

**Relevance**

1. Were you or anyone else from your organization involved in the design of this project? Are you aware of the extent to which other CSOs have been involved in and/or consulted about the design phase of the project? Can you remember any meeting that CSOs have participated in?

**Effectiveness**

1. In your opinion, how effective was the application of Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why?
2. How would you evaluate the quality of devices? Were there any problems related to those? For example, they could not read the passport data, or the fingerprint, etc. If yes, what steps have been taken? Please bring examples?
3. How would you evaluate voters’ awareness related to use of Voter Authentication Devices?
4. How effective were the video-recordings in the election cites? Why?
5. How would you evaluate voter education materials and how they have impacted people participation?
6. How would you evaluate CEC, TEC and PEC capacities in organising 2018 parliamentary elections? Did you notice any improvement compared with the previous parliamentary elections? What are their strengths and weaknesses and needs for improvement?
7. How would you evaluate CEC communication and outreach strategy during the elections? How well election processes and results were communicated to the public? How it has impacted perceptions of public related to election credibility?
8. How effective was the cooperation between CEC, CSOs and Media? Why?
9. How would you evaluate CSOs support and engagement during the elections? Why?

**Impact:** Let’s talk about the project impact

1. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
2. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
3. How the project (those technical innovations and voter education materials, CEC capacity enhancement) impacted on Parliamentary election processes and results overall? Why?
* Has the credibility of the electoral process improved? What were the signs of that?
* What were the changes in inclusiveness and participation in the elections? How women participation in elections changed? What about youth and 1st time voters’ participation? What could be done to even further improve the inclusiveness and participation?
* What was the project impact on democratic governance systems in the RA overall?
* How those changes impacted people’s/CSOs expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights?

**Efficiency:**

1. If you are aware, how would you evaluate donor coordination activities around the elections? Can you bring examples?
2. How would you evaluate cooperation of donor community with the Government of Armenia for the last elections?

**Sustainability:** Let’s talk about project sustainability

1. Do you think that application of voter Authentication devices and video-recordings at polling stations will be continued during the next elections? Why?
2. What do you think, do the RA Government and CEC, PEC, TEC, etc have sufficient institutional and human capacity to organize credible elections in the future without significant external support? Please explain.
3. Are you aware that CEC has a long-term strategy? Were you or other CSOs somehow engaged or consulted during the CEC strategy development? Please bring examples.

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What would you recommend for future projects aimed at supporting the election processes and capacities for having better results and sustainability?
2. What are your key recommendations related to further improving credibility of election processes and inclusiveness?

**KII with Donors**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

“Electoral Support Project in Armenia” project was funded by EU, Germany, UK, Sweden, RA and implemented by UNDP with close cooperation with CEC to

* assist the Armenian stakeholders (CEC, RA, Police) in holding of early elections and strengthening their capacity in post-Election period.
* ensure the continued use of the new technology introduced in 2017 elections; VADs
* assist the authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures, including improving voter registration; improving voter education.
* support increasing political participation of women and young voters.

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when RoA had parliamentary elections.

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

1. In your opinion, to what extent was the project consistent with donor/your policies and priorities?
2. How and to what extent were donors involved in the design phase of the project? (Steer meetings, discussions, etc.)
3. Were coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined between the key partners from the beginning?

**Effectiveness**

1. In your opinion, how effective was the application of Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why?
2. How would you evaluate voters’ awareness related to use of Voter Authentication Devices?
3. How effective were the video-recordings in the election cites? Why?
4. How would you evaluate voter education materials and how did they impact people participation?
5. How effective was the ESPA project support to strengthen CEC, TEC and PEC, Police Passport and Visa Department human and institutional capacities? Why? Did you notice any improvement compared with the previous parliamentary elections? What are their strengths and weaknesses and needs for improvement?
6. How would you evaluate CEC communication and outreach strategy during the elections? How well election processes and results were communicated to the public? How it has impacted perceptions of public related to election credibility?
7. What were the project strengths and weaknesses? Why?
8. How effective was the cooperation between project team and partners: Donors, RA Government, CEC, CSOs, Media?
9. In your opinion what is the level of donor/your satisfaction with the project?

**Impact:** Let’s talk about the project impact

1. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
2. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
3. How the project implementation effected the Parliamentary election process and the results? Why?
* What was the project impact on democratic governance systems in the RA?
* Has the credibility of the electoral process improved? What were the signs of that?
* How would you evaluate the CEC and GoA institutional and technical capacity to undertake credible and effective elections in the future without significant external support?
* Would you say that citizens are more engaged today and if yes, is it anyhow connected with the parliamentarian election supported by the project?
* How did the changes brought by project impact people’s expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights?
1. Were there any external factors that jeopardized the project’s direct impact or will jeopardize?
2. To what extent does/will the project have any **indirect and unplanned positive and/or negative impacts**? (e.g., social, cultural, gender, economic)

**Efficiency:**

1. Were project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner?
2. How well was the implementation of activities managed by UNDP?
3. How would you evaluate donor coordination activities by project around the elections? Can you bring examples?
4. How would you evaluate cooperation of donor community with the Government of Armenia for the last elections?

**Sustainability:** Let’s talk about project sustainability

1. To what extent donors were involved in decision-making concerning project implementation?
2. What was the sustainability strategy of the project and how was it ensured?
3. Which components of the project can be/were sustained and implemented by key partners RA Government and CEC after the completion of the project? How? Why?
4. What is the level of ownership of the project by key partners and will it continue after the end of external support?
5. How far the project is embedded in local structures? Do the key partners have any plans to continue delivering the stream of benefits and if so, are they likely to materialise?
6. If the services/results have to be supported institutionally, are sufficient funds likely to be made available? If so, by whom?
7. What kind of changes the project brought in citizens/voters’ mentality and behaviour? E.g. Do they trust election process and results more, are they more engaged? Are those changes sustainable?
8. What lessons can be drawn from the coordination efforts and working arrangements between the project team, donor organisations and GOA from the project sustainability perspectives?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What are the key lessons learnt and recommendations related to the project design; project implementation and management.
2. What could be done differently or what shall be done in the future to ensure even better results and sustainability.

**KII with representatives of RA Government**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

“Electoral Support Project in Armenia” project was funded by EU, Germany, UK, Sweden, RA and implemented by UNDP with close cooperation with CEC to

* assist the Armenian stakeholders (CEC, RA, Police) in holding of early elections and strengthening their capacity in post-Election period.
* ensure the continued use of the new technology introduced in 2017 elections; VADs
* assist the authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures, including improving voter registration; improving voter education.
* support increasing political participation of women and young voters.

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when we had parliamentary elections.

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

1. In your opinion, to what extent was the project consistent with RA policies and priorities?
2. How and to what extent was the GoA involved in the design phase of the project? (Steer meetings, discussions, etc.)
3. Were coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined between the key partners from the beginning?

**Effectiveness**

1. In your opinion, how effective was the application of Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why?
2. How would you evaluate voters’ awareness related to use of Voter Authentication Devices?
3. How effective were the video-recordings in the election cites? Why?
4. How would you evaluate voter education materials and how did they impact people participation?
5. How effective was the ESPA project support to strengthen CEC, TEC and PEC human and institutional capacities? Why? Did you notice any improvement compared with the previous parliamentary elections? What are their strengths and weaknesses and needs for improvement?
6. How effective was the ESPA project support to strengthen RA police Passport and Visa Department human and institutional capacities? Why?
7. How would you evaluate CEC communication and outreach strategy during the elections? How well election processes and results were communicated to the public? How it has impacted perceptions of public related to election credibility?
8. What were the project strengths and weaknesses? Why?
9. Were there any factors/risks which effected or could affect on the project results/services and how they were mitigated and managed?
10. How effective was the cooperation between project team and partners: Donors, RA Government, CEC, CSOs, Media?
11. In your opinion what is the level of GoA satisfaction with the project?

**Impact:** Let’s talk about the project impact

1. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
2. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
3. How the project implementation effected the Parliamentary election process and the results? Why?
* What was the project impact on democratic governance systems in the RA?
* Has the credibility of the electoral process improved? What were the signs of that?
* What were the changes in inclusiveness and participation in the elections? How women participation in elections changed? What about youth and 1st time voters’ participation? What could be done to even further improve the inclusiveness and participation?
* How those changes impacted people’s/CSOs expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights?
1. Were there any external factors that jeopardized the project’s direct impact or will jeopardize?
2. To what extent does/will the project have any **indirect and unplanned positive and/or negative impacts**? (e.g., social, cultural, gender, economic)

**Efficiency:**

1. Were project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner?
2. How well was the implementation of activities managed by UNDP?
3. How the project co-ordinated with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps? How would you evaluate donor coordination activities around the elections? Can you bring examples?
4. How would you evaluate cooperation of donor community with the Government of Armenia for the last elections?

**Sustainability:** Let’s talk about project sustainability

1. To what extent RA Government was involved in decision-making concerning project implementation?
2. What was the sustainability strategy of the project and how was it ensured?
3. Which components of the project can be/were sustained and implemented by key partners RA Government and CEC after the completion of the project? How? Why?
4. To what extent CEC and RA government are ready to continue this kind of project and what are their major needs? How far the project is embedded in local structures?
5. Do the CEC and GoA have any plans to continue delivering the stream of benefits and if so, are they likely to materialise?
6. If the services/results have to be supported institutionally, are sufficient funds likely to be made available? If so, by whom?
7. What kind of changes the project brought in citizens/voters’ mentality and behaviour? E.g. Do they trust election process and results more, are they more engaged? Are those changes sustainable?
8. What lessons can be drawn from the coordination efforts and working arrangements between the project team donor organisations and GOA from the project sustainability perspectives?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What are the key lessons learnt and recommendations related to the project design; project implementation and management.
2. What could be done differently or what shall be done in the future to ensure even better results and sustainability.

**KII with the staff**

**Interview guide**

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

1. In your opinion, to what extent was the project relevant to the needs of RA citizens and other project beneficiaries? Please explain why so.
2. Were the project objectives consistent with and supportive of RA policies and priorities? (Ask only if the answer on 1st Q is not giving the answer to this one)
3. Was the project aligned with UNDP priorities?
4. The project was designed in response to urgent request and during the design a lot of uncertainties existed. Given that, was the overall project design clear and were the targets appropriate?
5. Were the project activities implemented as planned, were there significant changes compared to design, how were those managed?
6. How and to what extent the relevant parties have been engaged in the design phase of the project? (Steer meetings, discussions, etc.) Please bring examples.
7. Were coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined between key partners?
8. Was the project modality and organisational structure appropriate and efficient for project implementation? Please explain why so?

**Effectiveness**

**Output 1: Credibility of the electoral process improved**

1. Has the credibility of the electoral process improved due to the project implementation? What are the signs of that?
2. How effective was the application of VADs and the work of VAD operators during the election and how did it contribute to credibility of elections? Why do you think so? Did they operate smoothly?
3. A significant number of VADs procured though the last project required replacement. What was done in the scope of this project to ensure functionality of VADs during the next elections?
4. Will the trained VAD operators also work during the next election? What are the plans?
5. How effective was the Helpdesk automation linked with Central Verification Information System (CVIS) database?
6. How effective were the operational and logistics plans, and risk management and contingency plan that UNDP helped CEC and TEC to develop?
7. How would you evaluate project component related to installing the cameras and livestreaming from polling stations? How did it contribute to credibility of elections?
8. UNDP procured 13 servers for these purposes, 4 provided to CEC and 9 to government? Are there any MOUs how those servers will be used in the future? Can those be used in the next elections, during the referendum?
9. What are the major lessons learnt for project related to increasing Credibility of the electoral process and activities conducted? What could be done differently to have even better results?

**Output 2: Inclusiveness and participation in the elections enhanced**

1. What about inclusiveness and participation during the parliamentarian elections? How would you evaluate it? Please explain.
2. Were these elections different from that perspective? How did the women’s and youngsters’ participation change? How was the 1st time voters’ participation?
3. In your opinion, what can be done in the future to have higher participation rates and improved inclusiveness, particularly for women and youth?
4. How did activities implemented in the scope of this project contribute to enhancing inclusiveness and participation in the elections? Please bring examples.
5. How would you evaluate voters’ awareness on elections process in general and on use of Voter Authentication Devices specifically? How did the project activities contribute to it? How gender equality elements were perceived by the public in voter education materials?
6. How effective were the external outreach and communication strategies of CEC in the frame of the project? Was there any change in this regard compared to 2017 elections?
7. How project used the results of gender assessment report developed in the frame of the project? Were the recommendations used during the CEC strategic planning or not?
8. What were the major lessons learned for the project related to voter education, enhancement of inclusiveness and participation?

**Output 3: Capacity of the CEC strengthened**

1. To what extent the CEC human and institutional capacities were strengthened? How would you evaluate the results? Can you bring concrete examples?
2. How the implemented activities contributed to strengthening of CEC human and institutional capacities? Can they organise trainings for VAD operators, TEC and PEC members, Livestreaming of polling stations without external support? How? Why?
3. How would you evaluate the CEC and GoA institutional and technical capacity to undertake credible and effective elections in the future without significant external support?
4. How lessons from all election processes were documented and how they were used during the CEC strategic plan development? Was it finalised by the end of project implementation? If no, why? How will it help CEC in its future development?
5. How would you evaluate the e-learning platform established during the project? Is it possible to organise online trainings now or only the exams are going to be online? How will this platform be used in the future elections?
6. How would you evaluate the online web-based system for application and certification for precinct electoral commission (PEC) members? How will this platform be used in future?
7. What were the major lessons learned for the project related to CEC capacity strengthening?

 **General**

1. What were the ESPA project strengths and weaknesses? Why?
2. How the project implementation effected the election process and the results? Why?
3. Were there any factors/risks which effected or could effect the project results/services and how they were mitigated and managed?
4. Were there any unplanned positive or negative effects observed as a result of project implementation?
5. In your opinion what is the level of client satisfaction with the project? The clients include community and local government beneficiaries; national government partners and donors.

**Impact:** evaluate the project impact, if available at this early stage.

1. The ToC of the project stated that credible, inclusive and participatory electoral processes lead to effective citizen engagement, equitable and representative voice, and effective governance institutions; in a long run also factoring in stability and economic development of the country. In your opinion what is the project’s direct impact on this ToC. Could you also bring examples?
* What was the project impact on democratic governance systems in RA?
* Would you say that citizens are more engaged today and if yes, is it anyhow connected with the parliamentarian election supported by the project?
* How did the changes brought by project impact people’s expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights? Voice and accountability indicator on the World Bank Governance Index improved but the target was not reached (target was 64, not it is 40). How would you explain this?
1. Were there any external factors that jeopardized the project’s direct impact or will jeopardize?
2. Did/will the project have any **indirect and unplanned positive and/or negative impacts**? (e.g., social, cultural, gender, economic)

**Efficiency:**

1. To what degree were inputs provided/ available on time to implement activities from all parties involved?
2. Were the project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner? Were the financial reports public? If no, why?
3. Have the resources been optimally used during the project implementation?
4. Would that be possible to reach the same results with lower costs? Has the project achieved satisfactory level of cost effectiveness?
5. How was the project monitoring organised? Are there monitoring reports available? Were corrective measures taken if required?
6. How the project co-ordinated with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps? How would you evaluate donor coordination activities?
7. How would you evaluate the project implementation coordination with the GoA?
8. What could be done to more efficiently use the project resources? What are the main learnings?

**Sustainability:** evaluate the contribution to sustainability of benefit streams (to what extent benefits will continue after the life of the project).

1. To what extent were the relevant key partners involved in decision-making concerning project orientation and implementation?
2. What was the sustainability strategy of the project and how was it ensured?
3. Was the sustainability strategy fully understood by the partners?
4. Which components of the project will be sustained by RA Government and CEC or other partners after the completion of the project?
5. What is the level of ownership of the project by key partners and will it continue after the end of external support?
6. How far the project is embedded in local structures?
7. How well the project contributed to institutional and management capacity of partners? Please bring examples and explain how the key actors can capitalize on that in the future?
8. Do the key partners have any plans to continue delivering the stream of benefits and if so, are they likely to materialise?
9. If the services/results have to be supported institutionally, are sufficient funds likely to be made available? If so, by whom?
10. What kind of changes the project brought in citizens/voters’ mentality and behaviour? E.g. Do they trust election process and results more, are they more engaged? Are those changes sustainable?
11. What lessons can be drawn from the coordination efforts and working arrangements between the project team, its counterparts/beneficiaries, and partner organizations from the project sustainability perspectives?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What are the key lessons learnt and recommendations related to the project design; project implementation and management.
2. What could be done differently or what shall be done in the future to ensure even better results and sustainability.

**KII with Donors**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

“Electoral Support Project in Armenia” project was funded by EU, Germany, UK, Sweden, RA and implemented by UNDP with close cooperation with CEC to

* assist the Armenian stakeholders (CEC, RA, Police) in holding of early elections and strengthening their capacity in post-Election period.
* ensure the continued use of the new technology introduced in 2017 elections; VADs
* assist the authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures, including improving voter registration; improving voter education.
* support increasing political participation of women and young voters.

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when RoA had parliamentary elections.

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

1. In your opinion, to what extent was the project consistent with donor/your policies and priorities?
2. How and to what extent were representatives of your organization involved in the design phase of the project? (Steer meetings, discussions, etc.)
3. Were coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined between the key partners from the beginning?

**Effectiveness and impact**

1. How effective was the cooperation between project team and partners: Donors, RA Government, CEC, CSOs, Media?
2. In your opinion what is the level of donor/your satisfaction with the project?
3. To your best knowledge what were the project strengths and weaknesses? Why?
4. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
5. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
6. To your best knowledge how the project implementation affected the Parliamentary election process and the results? Why?
* What was the project impact on democratic governance systems in the RA?
* Has the credibility of the electoral process improved? What were the signs of that?
* How would you evaluate the CEC and GoA institutional and technical capacity to undertake credible and effective elections in the future without significant external support?
* Would you say that citizens are more engaged today and if yes, is it anyhow connected with the parliamentarian election supported by the project?

**Efficiency:**

1. Were project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner?
2. How well was the implementation of activities managed by UNDP?
3. How would you evaluate donor coordination activities by project around the elections? Can you bring examples?
4. How would you evaluate cooperation of donor community with the Government of Armenia for the last elections?

**Sustainability:** Let’s talk about project sustainability

1. To what extent donors were involved in decision-making concerning project implementation?
2. What was the sustainability strategy of the project and how was it ensured?
3. Which components of the project can be/were sustained and implemented by key partners RA Government and CEC after the completion of the project? How? Why?
4. If the services/results have to be supported institutionally, are sufficient funds likely to be made available? If so, by whom?
5. What kind of changes the project brought in citizens/voters’ mentality and behaviour? E.g. Do they trust election process and results more, are they more engaged? Are those changes sustainable?
6. What lessons can be drawn from the coordination efforts and working arrangements between the project team, donor organisations and GOA from the project sustainability perspectives?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What are the key lessons learnt and recommendations related to the project design; project implementation and management.
2. What could be done differently or what shall be done in the future to ensure even better results and sustainability.

**KII guide with PEC and TEC representatives**

**Interview guide**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

**Please introduce yourself**

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when we had parliamentary elections.

1. In your opinion was there a need to use Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why? Please explain.
2. Do you remember that 2018 parliamentary elections were video-recorded and recordings were available online? In your opinion was there a need to video-record elections? Why?
3. How relevant was UNDP support to CEC, TEC and PEC in development of operational and logistics plans, and risk management and contingency plan during 2018 parliamentary election? Why?
4. Was the UNDP support to strengthen CEC, TEC and PEC human and institutional capacities in line with your needs? Please bring examples?
5. What kind of capacity gaps still exist today and in case of similar project in the future what would you recommend?

**Effectiveness**

1. How effective was the application of Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why?
2. How useful and effective were the trainings for VAD operators? Why?
3. How would you evaluate the materials used and provided during the trainings (Manual for VAD operators, printed flip-charts, operators task checklist)?
4. How would you evaluate the operators’ work? Did they know how to work with those devices? Did you notice any issue?
5. How would you evaluate the quality of devices? Were there any problems related to those? For example, they could not read the passport data, or the fingerprint and etc. If yes, what steps have been taken? Please bring examples?
6. How would you evaluate voters’ awareness related to use of Voter Authentication Devices? Did they know how to use those devices?
7. How effective was the Helpdesk automation linked with Central Verification Information System (CVIS) database?
8. How effective were the video-recordings in the election cites? Why?
9. How would you evaluate people participation in elections? Were they interested to participate? Why?
10. How would you evaluate voter education materials and how they impacted people participation?
11. How effective was the UNDP support to CEC, TEC and PEC in development of operational and logistics plans, and risk management and contingency plan during 2018 parliamentary election? Why?
12. How effective was the UNDP support to strengthen CEC, TEC and PEC human and institutional capacities? Why? How you would evaluate the trainings provided for TEC and PEC in the framework of the project? (e.g. external and internal communication for TEC, Certification for PEC, etc)
13. How would you evaluate the e-learning platform established during the project? How it was used?
14. How would you evaluate the online web-based system -for application and certification for precinct electoral commission (PEC) members?

**IMPACT**

1. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
2. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
3. How those technical innovations and voter education materials and the project overall impacted on Parliamentary election processes and results? Why?
4. Did they impact elections credibility? How would you evaluate that elections’ trustworthiness? Was it improved or not compared to previous election?
5. In your opinion is there a change related to people’s expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights as a result of last elections? How?

**Sustainability**

1. To what extent TEC and PEC were actively involved in decision-making concerning project implementation?
2. Which components of the project can be/were sustained and implemented by key partners RA Government and CEC after the completion of the project? Can CEC organise trainings for VAD operators, TEC and PEC members, Livestreaming of polling stations without external support? How? Why?
3. Do you think that application of voter Authentication devices and video-recordings at polling stations will continue during the next elections? Why?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What are your key recommendations related to the election organisation processes that could improve credibility of election processes, participation rate and inclusiveness?
2. What can be done to increase specifically women and youth participation in the elections?
3. What lessons can be learned from the project implementation in order to improve performance, result and effectiveness in the future.
4. What lessons can be learned from the point of sustainability of achieved results?

# 9.5 Annex 5. Focus group discussion guides

**FGD with Voters of 2018 parliamentary elections**

**Interview guide**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

“Electoral Support Project in Armenia” project was funded by EU, Germany, UK, Sweden, RA and implemented by UNDP with close cooperation with CEC to

* assist the Armenian stakeholders (CEC, RA, Police) in holding of early elections and strengthening their capacity in post-Election period.
* ensure the continued use of the new technology introduced in 2017 elections; VADs
* assist the authorities in implementing new aspects of the electoral laws and procedures, including improving voter registration; improving voter education.
* support increasing political participation of women and young voters.

**Please introduce yourself (Mention your name, age and main occupation)**

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when we had parliamentary elections.

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

1. Do you remember that during those elections Voter Authentication Devices were used? (***Show the picture***) In your opinion was there a need to use those devices during the elections? Why? Please explain.

2. Do you remember that 2018 parliamentary elections were video-recorded and recordings were available online? In your opinion was there a need to record elections? Why?

**Effectiveness**

1. How effective was the application of those Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why?
2. To what extent were you aware how to use electronic voting devices? When you saw the device in the polling station, did you know what is it for? Have you seen leaflets, PSAs, social videos on how to use those devices, what they are for? Please bring examples.
3. How you would evaluate the quality of those devices? Were there any problems related to those? For example, could they read the passport data, or the fingerprint and etc. If problems occurred, what steps have been taken? Please bring examples?
4. How you would evaluate the operators’ work? Did they know how to work with those devices? Did you notice any issue?
5. How effective were the video-recordings in the election cites? Why? Did you follow the election processes online? How did you know that stations are going to be video recorded?
6. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
7. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
8. How would you evaluate people participation in elections? Were they interested to participate? Why?
9. Have you seen any PSA on voter participation or “No Corruption, don’t sell my voice” posters on billboards? In your opinion how they impacted voter participation? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhRNKt5VvUU&fbclid=IwAR1XVqcK44CUssabIYNJsT9J-boorgMAuTn97BYA2s1-IEyoa2TAgHp9DSA>
10. How those technical innovations and voter education materials impacted on Parliamentary election processes and results overall? Why?
11. Did they impact elections credibility? How would you evaluate that elections’ trustworthiness? Was it improved or not?
12. In your opinion are people’s expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights changed after the last elections? How?
13. What was the project impact on democratic governance systems in the RA overall?
14. If you see change in voters’ mentality and behaviour, do you think it is sustainable change? Do you think that people will not accept less credible elections in the future?
15. How would you evaluate the work of CEC and PEC during the elections?
16. Would you want to see application of voter Authentication devices and video-recordings at polling stations continued during the next elections?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What would you like to see improved during the next elections? Please think of pre and post-election processes as well as the election day itself In your opinion what could be done to improve participation rate in the elections in the future?
2. In your opinion what could be done to even further improve voters’ awareness on election processes?

**FGD with VAD Operators**

**Interview guide**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent Prisma research and analysis organization. Our organization is contracted by UNDP Armenia to evaluate Electoral Support Project in Armenia implemented in 2018-2019. We would like to thank you for your participation and would appreciate an open and free discussion. Before we start the discussion, we would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, which will enable us to capture your answers more accurately and precisely. Thank you for cooperation and let’s start our discussion by introductions.

**Please introduce yourself (Mention your name, age and main occupation, how many times did you work as a VAD operator)**

**First, we will talk about project Relevance/Appropriateness**

We understand that today’s reality poses completely different priorities and that some time has passed already, but I would like to ask you to go back to December 2018 when we had parliamentary elections.

1. In your opinion was there a need to use Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why? Please explain.
2. In your opinion was there a need to vide-record elections? Why?
3. How relevant were VAD trainings to strengthen VAD operators’ capacities? Why?
4. What kind of capacity gaps still exist today and in case of similar project in the future what would you recommend?

**Effectiveness**

1. How useful and effective were the trainings for VAD operators? Why?
2. How would you evaluate the way how trainings were delivered? Were they practical?
3. How would you evaluate the materials used and provided during the trainings (Manual for VAD operators, printed flip-charts, operators task checklist)?
4. How effective was the application of Voter Authentication Devices during the elections? Why?
5. How would you evaluate the quality of devices? Were there any problems related to those? For example, they could not read the passport data, or the fingerprint and etc. If yes, what steps have been taken? Please bring examples?
6. How would you evaluate voters’ awareness related to use of Voter Authentication Devices? Did they know how to use those devices?
7. How effective was the Helpdesk automation linked with Central Verification Information System (CVIS) database?
8. How effective were the video-recordings in the election cites? Why?
9. How would you evaluate people participation in elections? Were they interested to participate? Why?
10. How would you evaluate voter education materials and how they impacted people participation?
11. How would you evaluate the work of CEC, PEC and TEC during the elections?

**IMPACT**

1. If you describe in 3 words the positive aspects of 2018 parliamentary elections, what would they be?
2. If you describe in 3 words challenges with 2018 elections that you would like to see improved in the future what those words would be?
3. How those technical innovations and voter education materials and the project overall impacted on Parliamentary election processes and results? Why?
4. Did they impact elections credibility? How would you evaluate that elections’ trustworthiness? Was it improved or not compared to previous election?
5. In your opinion is there a change related to people’s expectations for voice, accountability, transparency, and protection of human rights as a result of last elections? How?

**Sustainability**

1. How willing are you to work as VAD operator during the next elections? Why?
2. Do you think that application of voter Authentication devices and video-recordings at polling stations will continue during the next elections? Why?
3. Can CEC organise trainings for VAD operators, TEC and PEC members, Livestreaming of polling stations without external support? How? Why?

**Recommendations, lessons learned and best practices.**

1. What are your key recommendations related to the election organisation processes that could improve credibility of election processes, participation rate and inclusiveness?
2. What can be done to increase specifically women and youth participation in the elections?
3. What lessons can be learned from the project implementation in order to improve performance, result and effectiveness in the future.
1. IRI polls Coordinated by the Gallup organization on behalf of the IRI among 1200 permanent residents of Armenia older than the age of 18. Margin of error does not exceed +-3%. (N=1200 for all 4 polls). IRI 2019 poll conducted in October 2019, presentation, page 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC. Country: Armenia Fieldwork Dates for 2020 survey: February 21, 2020 to March 15, 2020, N=1491, Dates for 2017 Survey December, N=1648, https://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/7.14.2020_armenia_survey_on_covid_19_response.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report, 23-25 October, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true>, page 01. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC. Country: Armenia Fieldwork Dates: February 21, 2020 to March 15, 2020. Number of respondents 1491 during 2020, and in 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. UNDP Post-Election Survey conducted by CRRC in August 2019 among 1500 permanent residents of Armenia above 20 years old. Presentation, page 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. UNDP Post-Election Survey conducted by CRRC in August 2019 among 1500 permanent residents of Armenia above 20 years old. Presentation, page 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true>, page 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, page 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. UNDP Post-Election Survey conducted by CRRC in August 2019 among 1500 permanent residents of Armenia above 20 years old. Presentation, page 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid, page 58 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Akanates Observation Mission Final Report on December 9, 2018 Pre-Term Parliamentary elections, page 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/405890?download=true>, page 06. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. UNDP Post-Election Survey conducted by CRRC in August 2019 among 1500 permanent residents of Armenia above 20 years old. Presentation, page 58 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Independent Observer Public Alliance Observation Report on Pre-Term Parliamentary Elections December 9, 2018, page 116 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. UNDP Post-Election Survey conducted by CRRC in August 2019 among 1500 permanent residents of Armenia above 20 years of age. Presentation, page 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true, page 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Akanates Observation Mission Final Report on December 9, 2018 Pre-Term Parliamentary elections, page 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true, page 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid, page 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true, [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true, page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. UNDP Post-Election Survey conducted by CRRC in August 2019 among 1500 permanent residents of Armenia above 20 years old. Presentation, page 79 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413555?download=true, page 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. ibid, page 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. ibid, page 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. ibid, page 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Independent Observer Public Alliance Observation Report on Pre-Term Parliamentary Elections December 9, 2018, page 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid, page 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC. Country: Armenia Fieldwork Dates for 2020 survey: February 21, 2020 to March 15, 2020, N=1491, Dates for 2017 Survey December, N=1648, https://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. IRI polls Coordinated by the Gallup organization on behalf of the IRI among 1200 permanent residents of Armenia older than the age of 18. Margin of error does not exceed +-3%. (N=1200 for all 4 polls). IRI 2019 poll conducted in October 2019, presentation, page 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. IRI polls Coordinated by the Gallup organization on behalf of the IRI among 1200 permanent residents of Armenia older than the age of 18. Margin of error does not exceed +-3%. (N=1200 for all 4 polls). IRI 2019 poll conducted in October 2019, presentation, page 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC. Country: Armenia Fieldwork Dates for 2020 survey: February 21, 2020 to March 15, 2020, N=1491, Dates for 2017 Survey December, N=1648, https://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC. Country: Armenia Fieldwork Dates for 2020 survey: February 21, 2020 to March 15, 2020, N=1491, Dates for 2017 Survey December, N=1648, https://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. IRI polls Coordinated by the Gallup organization on behalf of the IRI among 1200 permanent residents of Armenia older than the age of 18. Margin of error does not exceed +-3%. (N=1200 for all 4 polls). IRI 2019 poll conducted in October 2019, presentation, page 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid, page 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid, page 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)