**Supporting Elections for Ethiopia’s**

**Democracy Strengthening (UNDP SEEDS)**

**2019-2021**

**FINAL EVALUATION**

**February 2022**

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Unless expressly stated otherwise, the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this Evaluation Report are those of the Evaluator, and do not necessarily represent the views of UNDP, the United Nations, or its member States or the UNDP SEEDS Project.

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## Acronyms

AU African Union

BVR Biometric Voter Registration

CE Civic Education

CECOE Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations for Elections

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CEPPS Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS)

CSO Civil Society Organisation

CTA Chief Technical Advisor

CVE Civic and voter education

EAD Electoral Assistance Division

ECES European Centre for Electoral Support

ECSJP Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice Party

EDR Electoral Dispute Resolution

EHRC Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

EMB Electoral Management Body

EU European Union

EVER Electoral Violence Early Response

EWLA Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association  
EWG Electoral Working Group

FCDO Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office

GEWE Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

GoE Government of Ethiopia

HoPR House of People’s Representatives

IDP Internally Displaced Person

IFES International Foundation for Electoral Systems

IOM International Office of Migration

IP Implementing Partner

IRI International Republican Institute

JTF Joint Task Force

KEQ Key Evaluation Question

KII Key Informant Interview

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

ME&L Monitoring evaluation and Learning

MoF Ministry of Finance

NAM Needs Assessment Mission

NAMA National Movement of Amhara

NDI National Democratic Institute

NEBE National Electoral Board of Ethiopia

NEWA Network of Ethiopian Women’s Associations

NGO Non-governmental organisation

OECD Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation

OHCHR Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

ONLF Ogaden National Liberation Front

PEV Prevention of Electoral Violence

PP Prosperity Party

PWD Persons with Disabilities

RC Regional Council

RMS Results Management System

TOC Theory of Change

TOR Terms of Reference

UK United Kingdom

UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNSDCF United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

UNV United Nations Volunteer

USAID United States Agency for Internal Development

VE Voter Education

VR Voter Registration

WFD Westminster Foundation for Democracy

## Executive Summary

#### The UNDP SEEDS Project

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Ethiopia has commissioned an independent evaluation of the *Supporting Elections for Ethiopia’s Democracy Strengthening Project (UNDP SEEDS).* The overall purpose of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project and, in a forward-looking way, recommend specific measures for further improvement of electoral assistance including solutions for overcoming identified challenges; demonstrate accountability for results, and inform broader programme assessments. A goal of the evaluation is to generate timely advice to provide decision-makers with information needed to determine the next steps for electoral assistance in Ethiopia and other contexts.

This report outlines the framework for the evaluation; the methodological approach; the scope and objectives of the project; the key audience and stakeholders; and provides an overall assessment against the evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions (KEQs) outlined in the terms of reference (TOR).[[1]](#footnote-2)

This evaluation follows the conduct of national elections in June 2021 and supplementary elections of September 2021, a process that experienced several delays necessitated by the impact of COVID-19.

The UNDP SEEDS project was elaborated following a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) conducted in October-November 2018. UNDP SEEDS commenced in 2019 and is the first UNDP electoral support project in Ethiopia since 2005. It is a USD$51m project with 16 international development partners (donors)[[2]](#footnote-3) as well as UNDP, with the single largest donor being the United Kingdom (UK) with a contribution of USD$19.150m, and is UNDP’s largest and most visible project in Ethiopia. In a rare gesture, UNDP SEEDS also received a USD$10m injection of funds direct from GoE to support ballot paper printing and related logistics.

The EU and USAID decided against joining the UNDP SEEDS donor basket. The EU (with Germany) supported the elections through the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) engaged the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) as its principal electoral implementation partner focusing on direct work with the EMB. The scope of electoral support work envisioned by the UNDP SEEDS ProDoc Project Document was the subject of negotiation between the three major implementing parties, expressed in a dashboard that delineated responsibility of inputs between UNDP SEEDS, IFES and ECES.[[3]](#footnote-4)

The UNDP SEEDS ProDoc was not amended at this point but retained all elements including those being delivered by other IPs. Nor was the ProDoc amended when the impact of COVID-19 forced a year-long delay of the elections and the re-focusing of the project.

The activities of IFES and ECES were not the subject of this evaluation.

The evaluation employed a mixed methodology approach that included extensive desk and report research, key informant interviews (KIIs) both in-person in Addis Ababa and remotely, and the application of an online questionnaire (to donors, UNDP, NEBE and UNDP SEEDS management) to provide insight into perceptions of achievement of the project. *(See Chapter 2 for details.)*

#### Key Findings: triangulated per Output, supplemented by discrete results from questionnaire

The project was delivered in the context of a rapidly liberalised legal framework that drove very high expectations for transformational change; in the context of a global pandemic that forced the delay of the elections themselves as well as the intended capacity development aspects of the programme yet to be implemented; and in the context of a brand new, nascent EMB that had less than a year to prepare. Despite these extreme limitations, UNDP SEEDS managed to deliver a level of support to the NEBE resulting in elections welcomed as setting new standards for Ethiopia in terms of quality and context.

The level of success per output and success overall as described in this Report was determined by triangulating data, reporting, interviews and survey findings. These achievements are summarised below, per output, and elaborated in Chapter 3 under the evaluation criteria findings of relevance coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

A discrete measure of success per output and activity, the result of the questionnaire applied to key stakeholders, is elaborated in Chapter 3 under the heading Effectiveness.

The evaluation report notes the almost identical results from the triangulated data as from the questionnaire.

#### Triangulated findings:

**Output 1: The transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of the electoral operations are enhanced through the support provided to NEBE**.

The delivery of technical, logistical and operational support to the NEBE for the conduct of the elections was the primary focus of the SEEDS project, reflected both in effort and investment. The interventions under this Output were also the most effectively and comprehensively delivered component of the programme and in which NEBE was most closely engaged. Key successes were reflected in the development of an election timetable (subject to repeated adjustment due to the continually changing context) and the close technical, policy and strategic support provided to NEBE by the UNDP SEEDS management team. A massive procurement effort delivered in collaboration with the UNDP CO and the UNDP Project Support Office (PSO) in Copenhagen ensured the timely delivery of high quality election materials (ballot boxes, voter screens and ballot papers, for example).

The focus of some activities was dramatically altered in the light of capacity and time. A study on biometric voter registration (BVR) was concluded but changes not implemented (there being no effective time was one limitation); errors in VR data necessitated the reprinting of ballot papers for some constituencies and the delay of voting in others, and proposed improvements to and training on a new results management system (RMS) were only able to be partly achieved. The slow recruitment of key staff was also a limitation in building capacity.

Observers noted challenges particularly with the conduct of voter registration and the tabulation and delivery of results, commenting on the implausibility of extremely high turnouts in a non-mandatory voting context, for instance, the slow announcement of results and the absence of disaggregated data. In a tight election these issues can have dramatic consequences but did not, fortunately, impact on the overall credibility of the results, pointing rather to the need to building on the skills developed to date.

**Significant components of Outputs 2 and 3 were undertaken by IFES and ECES.**

**Output 2: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia in conducting public outreach and external communication, including engagement with media and other key electoral stakeholders, is enhanced.**

This component was more challenged. Innovative technical support to NEBE in popularising voter education modalities was highly successful and well received and NEBE noted particularly the excellence of strategy support in external relations and communications. The preparedness of NEBE to engage with external stakeholders, particularly political parties, and civil society, was transformational from prior electoral experience in Ethiopia. However, it was NEBE’s decision, ultimately, to work more independently in the area of communications, suggesting that the entry point to this component was not nuanced enough to recognise the deep understanding and lived experience of the national body of the style and modality of public engagement with media and political parties, for example, and relationships between institutions and their constituents.

Ambition to ensure gender parity and social inclusion across most activities fell short. Chapter 3 explores this further and encourages a long-term approach to gender equity through continued work with political parties and civil society

**Output 3: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and other key stakeholders to identify, manage and respond to electoral violence enhanced.**

This output was not anticipated in the NAM, an issue explored in Chapter 3 under the criteria of Relevance. TA was delivered with skill and excellence but was not, in many cases, adopted. Ultimately it was the decision of NEBE to withdraw from the electoral violence management and response component (EVER) of this Output, citing doubt and concerns around the appropriateness of the EMB as an institution in handling and managing sensitive, security-related information.

#### Survey Findings

The survey applied to key stakeholders indicated a satisfaction level overall of 88 per cent, taking into account the results of activities achieved, together with those partly achieved and not yet implemented. The survey provided a ‘don’t know’ option and these responses per activity are set out in detail in the Chapter 3 graphs.

#### Key Recommendations

Based on the findings and lessons learned (*elaborated in Chapter 4*), the evaluation proposes eleven recommendations *(detailed in Chapter 5*). They include a recommendation to ensure the ability of UNDP SEEDS to deliver on the capacity development aspects of the programme yet to be implemented, an aspect critical to the capturing and institutionalising of skills and knowledge learned during the intense electoral process. Of particular importance is a recommendation that NEBE be supported to undertake a strategic planning process that determines organisational shape, focus, goals and resource needs over the coming five years to ensure a strong institution ready for the next election.

The recommendations reflect on the broad scope of the programme and suggest a more focused, less all-encompassing scope of ambition in future. They also recognise the preference for long-term engagement to encourage greater acceptance of gender equity and social inclusion and suggest that the local elections process may be a useful opportunity to re-energise work on the role and participation of women as representatives, using stronger relationships with women’s groups and with civil society to build relationships and skills to help achieve these aims.

Also of importance, and related to the strategic planning processes, are recommendations that encourage identification of key process needs critical to enhancing future electoral processes including BVR, RMS and responsibilities of the EMB around delimitation advice.

## Chapter 1: The UNDP SEEDS Project

#### Project Development and Scope

UNDP SEEDS commenced in 2019 and is the first UNDP electoral support project in Ethiopia since 2005. It is a USD$51m project with 16 international development partners (donors)[[4]](#footnote-5) as well as UNDP, with the single largest donor being the United Kingdom (UK) with a contribution of USD$19.150m, and is UNDP’s largest and most visible project in Ethiopia. In a rare gesture, UNDP SEEDS also received a USD$10m injection of funds direct from GoE to support ballot paper printing and related logistics.

The UNDP SEEDS project was elaborated following a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) conducted in October-November 2018. The NAM recommended integrated electoral assistance to Ethiopia that responded to the immediate needs of the next parliamentary elections and then to provide continued support for the consolidation of the capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). The NAM identified priority areas for intervention; proactive coordination between UN agencies; a careful mapping of the partner landscape and the premise of national ownership.

Following the NAM, UNDP Ethiopia moved quickly to set up an Inception Team in December 2018. The team developed a preliminary Initiation Plan and an initial Project Document and Workplan that was then further developed into the UNDP SEEDS Project Document by the UNDP CO with the support from UNDP JTF in Brussels.

In early 2019, it became clear that there would be three key donor electoral programmes supporting the NEBE: UNDP through UNDP SEEDS; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) as the principal electoral implementation partner focusing on direct work with the EMB, and the European Union (EU) with Germany, supporting the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES). Discussion on the scope of electoral interventions was followed by an agreement expressed in a dashboard that delineated responsibility of inputs between the major implementing partners (IPs): UNDP SEEDS, IFES and ECES.[[5]](#footnote-6)

The activities of IFES and ECES were not the subject of this evaluation.

The UNDP SEEDS project commenced formally in June 2019 and runs until February 2022[[6]](#footnote-7). It was intended to focus initially on the election then due in mid-2020, followed by approximately a year of capacity building to consolidate inputs. The Project Document (ProDoc) was signed jointly by the Chair of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), and UNDP Ethiopia and embeds ownership of the project in NEBE.

The intended schedule was turned on its head by the impact of COVID-19 which led to a decision to defer the elections which were finally held on 21 June 2021 with supplementary polls conducted in September 2021 in areas unable to hold elections in June due to security reasons.

The ProDoc envisaged the participation of other UN agencies including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women. and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UN Women was the only agency to formally partner with the project.

The ProDoc Results Framework relatively patchy baselines reflect the lack of data available at the commencement of UNDP SEEDS in terms of electoral material, disaggregated statistics, operations, capacity, and other contextual information.

The project has two main objectives:

1. Assist the EMB in becoming a more capable, transparent, and ultimately, trusted institution, and
2. Providing the required assistance necessary for undertaking inclusive, transparent, and credible elections.

The project, which was focused primarily on the provision of technical, operational, and logistical support to the NEBE for the conduct of the elections, was framed around three key outputs:

1. Output 1: The transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of the electoral operations are enhanced through the support provided to NEBE.
2. Output 2: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia in conducting public outreach and external communication, including engagement with media and other key electoral stakeholders, is enhanced.
3. Output 3: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and other key stakeholders to identify, manage and respond to electoral violence enhanced.

It also aimed to support NEBE in ensuring inclusive participation of all groups including women, youth, ethnic groups from all regions in the elections as a key feature for a credible and inclusive process.

The Budget allocation by Output reflects the priority given to Output 1, with proportional budgetary allocations being:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outputs** | **Project Budget** | **Approved Budget\*** | **Expenditures** | **Obligations^** | **Total Exp Obligations** | **% Delivery** |
| Output 1 | 29,409,450 | 46,742,828 | 40,031,870 | 1,365,773 | 41,397,643 | 89% |
| Output 2 | 5,217,000 | 4,912,450 | 2,543,060 | 236,032 | 2,779,092 | 57% |
| Output 3 | 3,157,950 | 1,204,757 | 561,524 | 149,700 | 711,224 | 59% |
| Output 4 | 2,220,000 | 1,651,328 | 1,922,504 | 2,591 | 1,925,095 | 117% |
| **Total** | **40,004,400** | **54,511,363** | **45,058,958** | **1,754,096** | **46,813,054** | **86%** |

\* Approved budget is based on budget approved by Project Board as part of Annual Work Plan approvals

^ Obligations include expected expenditures for POs and for months of Nov-Dec 2021 and Jan -Feb 2022

A principle of the UNDP SEEDS approach embedded leadership and direction of the Project in the NEBE, with the project providing advisory support alongside practical logistical support.

UNDP SEEDS had a relatively small international team of advisors led by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA). A team of 28 locally engaged UNVs based in regions throughout the country supplemented the core project team.

UNDP SEEDS was governed by a Project Board that met quarterly, co-chaired by the UNDP Resident Representative and the Chair of NEBE. A Technical Committee under the leadership of NEBE and including the leads of the three IPs was envisaged by the ProDoc but was not systematically utilised. The UNDP SEEDS management team also met weekly with the UNDP Resident Representative. A tripartite group comprised of three major donors (UNDP, the EU and USAID[[7]](#footnote-8)) met with the Chair of NEBE on matters relating to the collaborative technical advisory and support areas. Outside the project, a broader donor group inclusive of contributing and non-contributing donors, called the Electoral Working Group (EWG), met regularly to review the broader electoral context.

The ProDoc envisaged the participation of other UN agencies including IOM, OHCHR, UN Women and UNESCO.

UN Women was the only agency to formally partner with the project.[[8]](#footnote-9)

The ProDoc Results Framework’s relatively patchy baselines reflect the lack of data available at the commencement of UNDP SEEDS in terms of electoral material, disaggregated statistics, operations, capacity, and other areas.

#### The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia

From mid-2018 the electoral landscape of Ethiopia changed dramatically. The Chair of NEBE, Mme Birtukan Midekssa, was appointed in November 2018 before the consolidation of the new legal framework and some months before the appointment of the other four Board members as provided in the legislation. Proclamation 1133/2019 (June) established the National Electoral Board. This was followed by Proclamation 1162/2019 (October) which established the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct. The regulatory framework for elections evolved gradually through a series of Directives issued by NEBE – a process still incomplete. NEBE’s organisational structure includes a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a Deputy CEO, and several departments including Legal, ICT, Operations, Communications, Finance and Administration and General Services. The establishing legislation was concluded less than a year before the anticipated elections to be held mid-2020. NEBE commenced operations from a low base of experience and capacity.

#### Broader Context

In addition to the new electoral law, the landscape for civil society and other stakeholders also quickly changed from mid-2018. In 2009, the Charity and Societies Proclamation No.621, described as draconian and restrictive, crushed civil society. After years of repression from which very few CSO or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and networks emerged[[9]](#footnote-10), the CSO Organisations Proclamation 1121 of 2019 opened the political space for civil society with some hundreds of organisations quickly being created. One of the key coalitions to emerge was the Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations for Elections (CECOE) which now has 176 organisational members, and which led on domestic observation in 2021. In an important gesture, NEBE invited CECOE, as yet unregistered, to observe the Sidama Regional Referendum of November 2019 after which the first CSO observer report in Ethiopia was published. Likewise, other institutions also thrived in new-found independence including the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) whose reform process was consolidated in Revised Proclamation 1224/2020 establishing a new legal framework for the Commission.

#### Complementary Interventions

While the priority focus of UNDP SEEDS was on the technical and operational support to NEBE for the delivery of the election, the project was delivered in the context of many other complementary interventions that addressed the broader electoral landscape and stakeholders.

#### Impact of COVID-19

The impact on UNDP SEEDS of COVID-19 was profound. At a macro level, the arrival of the pandemic forced a decision to delay the elections – which were then subject to further periodic delays until June 2021 and September 2021. This involved multiple revisions to the Electoral Calendar that impacted on preparations both within NEBE, the Project and with broader stakeholder groups including CSOs. The political consequences, not the subject of this evaluation, were also complex and have overshadowed somewhat the impact of the electoral process. At a project level, COVID-19 meant international advisors had to return to home bases to work remotely and in some cases the appointments of technical advisors were deferred. Civil society strengthening, accreditation with NEBE and field-based engagement and voter and civic education was put on hold. The CTA and Project Manager remained in-country throughout. At the NEBE level, the electoral management body (EMB) was required to reassess its planning and operations approach. It continued to issue Directives (the regulatory framework) although this process was never completed. One the one hand, the impact of COVID-19 mitigated against the extremely tight timeframes in which the ProDoc envisaged the rollout of operational and technical support, and provided a window of opportunity – not fully leveraged - for consolidation, planning, and capacity strengthening.

## Chapter 2: Methodological Approach

### Purpose of the Evaluation

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of UNDP’s Supporting *Elections for Ethiopia’s Democracy Strengthening (UNDP SEEDS*) project.

### Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation has four key objectives:

* To identify the level of achievement and analysis of factors in cases where benchmarks were not achieved.
* To assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS contributed to gender equality, women’s empowerment, and other cross-cutting issues
* To assess the quality of partnerships, national ownership, and sustainability vis a vis the strategy in the UNDP SEEDS ProDoc, identify gaps and document lessons learned.
* To review the monitoring, oversight and reporting structures of UNDP SEEDS and their relevance.

With a forward-looking mindset, the evaluation will recommend specific measures for further improvement of electoral assistance including solutions for overcoming identified challenges; demonstrate accountability for results and inform broader programme assessments.

A goal of the evaluation is to generate timely advice to provide decision-makers with information needed to determine the next steps for electoral assistance in Ethiopia and other contexts.

### Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation uses the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability as defined and explained in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. The evaluation TORs include impact as an additional criterion and the evaluator also reviewed social inclusion and equity given the emphasis on this aspect on the ProDoc.

### Methodological Approach

The evaluation utilises a mixed methodological approach of documentation research, key direct and remote informant interviews[[10]](#footnote-11), and the application of a questionnaire[[11]](#footnote-12) to stakeholders who should have a comprehensive overview of achievement, i.e. UNDP, donors, NEBE and UNDP SEEDS staff. The questionnaire, attached at Annex 5, aims to provide some comparative quantitative reflections on perceptions of achievement, the inputs from which will be utilised in triangulating both the reporting and the oral perspectives. Key informant interviews will be complemented by in-depth document review. The evaluation provides for a combination of remote and in-country engagement.

Triangulated data streams (through key informant interviews, UNDP SEEDS Project Reports, desk reports, NEBE data, Observer Statements, FCDO Annual reviews, the questionnaire, and other sources) will be used to help confirm and collaborate evidence from different sources; explain and deepen understanding of evidence from different sources; and enable the evaluation consultant to interrogate diverging lines of evidence.

Approaches of contribution analysis and outcome harvesting were applied to this evaluation. Whereas Contribution Analysis is forward-looking – seeking to understand whether deployed resources, interventions, products, and services (as elaborated in the discussion on Efficiency) have created the desired change, Outcome Harvesting works retrospectively to identify any significant changes that may have occurred around particular outcome domains, how those changes occurred and the impact on delivery. In the context of the Ethiopian elections, for example, the most significant change that occurred was the entry of COVID-19 onto the global stage and the consequent decision to delay the elections. Secondary contextual influences were the pushback from NEBE on Outputs 2 and 3.

### Key Evaluation Questions

KEQs are framed around the evaluation criteria as follows:

1. Relevance: Assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS objectives and design responded to national development priorities, UNSDCF, UNDP Country Programme, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs.
   1. To what extent was the theory of change a relevant and appropriate vision for implementing recommendations of the NAM?
   2. To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the UNDP SEEDS design?
   3. To what extent does UNDP SEEDS contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights-based approach?
   4. To what extent has UNDP SEEDS been appropriately responsive to political, legal, institutional, and other changes in the country?
2. Coherence: Assess the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the sector
   1. How well does the UNDP SEEDS intervention fit? How compatible was UNDP SEEDS with other interventions in the country?
   2. What synergies or interlinkages benefitted from UNDP SEEDS, within UNDP and externally, like complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination with others, and avoiding duplication of effort.
3. Effectiveness: Assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.
   1. To what extent were UNDP SEEDS outputs achieved?
   2. What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outputs?
   3. To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?
   4. To what extent has UNDP SEEDS been appropriately responsive to the needs of national constituents and changing partner priorities?
   5. To what extent did UNDP SEEDS contribute to the participation of vulnerable groups identified in the UNDP SEEDS document: women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), youth and internally displaced persons (IDPs)?
4. Efficiency: Assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS delivered results in an economical and timely way
   1. Were resources (human, financial, material) allocated to UNDP SEEDS sufficient and appropriate for the delivery of UNDP SEEDS and achievement of established objectives?
   2. To what extent was UNDP SEEDS management structure outlined in the ProDoc efficient and in generating the expected results?
   3. To what extent were UNDS UNDP SEEDS funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?
   4. To what extent are the monitoring, oversight and reporting structures of UNDP SEEDS effective and consistent with UNDP’s monitoring and evaluation procedures?
5. Sustainability: Assess the extent to which the net benefits of UNDP SEEDS continue or are likely to continue
   1. Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardise the sustainability of UNDP SEEDS outputs and its contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes.
   2. To what extent does UNDP SEEDS have well designed and well-planned exit strategies?
6. Impact: Assess the extent to which the net benefits of UNDP SEEDS generated positive or negative, intended, or unintended effects on wider democratic governance?
   1. What contribution did UNDP SEEDS make towards the wider objectives outlined in the UNDP country strategies and in the ProDoc?

Additional considerations:

* 1. Quality of partnerships, national ownership, sustainability, gaps, and lessons learned
  2. Inclusivity (gender, women’s empowerment, PWD)
  3. Monitoring and oversight structure and relevance
  4. Best practices
  5. Programme delivery and the enabling & constraining factors to achieving results particularly COVID-19 and the political/economic context

An evaluation matrix was developed, attached at Annex 3, to map the KEQs on to the evaluation criteria and to map sources of information and data collection methods for each KEQ. The evaluation matrix was used as an interview guide and elaborated on the KEQs to interrogate in more detail the factors evidencing the findings and conclusions.

### Audience and Stakeholders

The evaluation has both internal and external audiences. The UNDP Ethiopia Country Office is the primary stakeholder of this evaluation and will benefit from the lessons learned and recommendations to inform decision-making around any follow-on programme. Other stakeholders with an interest in the evaluation outcomes are those parties responsible for the project formulation, delivery, oversight, and financial support. These parties are both internal to UN/UNDP Ethiopia; the project’s primary partner, the National Elections Board of Ethiopia (NEBE); the UNDP SEEDS project management team as well as the UN Electoral Assistance Division (UN EAD) and EC-UNDP Joint Task Force (JTF). The 16 international donor partners also have an interest in understanding the level of achievement of UNDP SEEDS and in the findings, lessons learned and recommendations. The evaluation report may service as a source document for the three-party lessons-learned process due to start around December 2021.

Key informants interviewed as part of the evaluation consultative process were identified from across a range of stakeholders including:

a. UNDP leadership and staff

* 1. UNDP SEEDS project personal and advisors
  2. Partner agency personnel
  3. NEBE staff (at national, regional, and district level)
  4. Citizens/voters/NGOs
  5. Domestic and international observers
  6. Donor community
  7. Government of Ethiopia (GoE), though the MoF
  8. Political parties

### Compliance with Evaluation Standards

The evaluation processes followed the UNEG Norms and Standards as well as the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. The evaluation is compliant with the Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the UN System and with UNHCR’s Data Protection Policy; Age, Gender and Diversity Policy and with the UNHCR Disability Inclusion Strategy. The evaluation consultant respected the principles of safeguarding and took appropriate measures to provide anonymity to respondents. The evaluation observes the principles of informed consent to participation in KIIs on the principles of anonymity and the non-identification and non- attribution of remarks. The evaluation process applied the OECD Development Assistance Committee criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability as defined in the UNDP Handbook of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. A list of persons that were consulted as part of the evaluation process is appended at Annex 1.

### 

### Limitations

The evaluation process was very smoothly organised with only one meeting failing to eventuate (but without any significant consequences) out of a tight schedule of consultations held in-country from 23 October to 5 November 2021. Interlocutors were readily available and prepared to talk either in person or remotely. The UNDP SEEDS Project provided an abundance of reporting and additional documentation which was supplemented by other research materials. Of particular value was the three-day reflection with UNDP SEEDS and UNDP CO that fortuitously coincided with the first three days of the in-country process which provided a thorough overview of interventions, challenges, achievements, and perceptions on lessons learned and recommendations. Thus, limitations on the evaluation process were minimal.

A State of Emergency declared on 2 November 2021 led to a revision of meetings to exclude those with political parties that had the potential to be misinterpreted.

The ProDoc and interventions the subject of this evaluation were designed in early 2019. The ProDoc however embeds all interventions initially projected but which were later the subject of a delineation of responsibility between the three donor groups - UNDP, USAID, and the EU - through the articulation of a dashboard. Embedded in the ProDoc are elements the sole responsibility of UNDP SEEDS; others discrete to ECES or IFES and some identified as collective between all three IPs. Neither of the other two IPs reported to UNDP SEEDS and this evaluation is concerned only with the delivery by UNDP SEEDS. The evaluation is not able to therefore provide a holistic, evidence-based overview of achievement of the entire project as articulated in the ProDoc as the data from EU and USAID is not available. There were two opportunities to revise the ProDoc: once after the division of labour identified in the dashboard, and the other, when activities were radically changed due to the impact of COVID-19. The ProDoc was not revised at any point.

## Chapter 3: Findings: Achievement of Results

#### Summary of Overall Achievements

The overall achievements of the programme are summarised in the Table below**. This table represents the triangulated findings** of Outputs 1, 2 and 3 and of the respective activities with the assessment reached after substantial documentation review, interviews with KIIs, the application of an online questionnaire to key stakeholders and the analysis of other available data.

The areas the responsibility of ECES and IFES are highlighted in blue and are **not** the subject of this evaluation. The assessments of the work of ECES and IFES are sourced solely from the online questionnaire and are included for interest and information only.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Output and Activities** | **Implementing**  **Partner (UNDP SEEDS, IFES, ECES)** | **Assessment of Achievements** |
| 1 | **Output 1: The transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of the electoral operations are enhanced through the support provided to NEBE** |  | **Significant progress** |
| 2 | Sub-Output 1.1: Capacity of the permanent electoral officials enhanced to professionally deliver planning and implementation of gender-sensitive electoral legal reform |  | Partly achieved |
| 3 | Activity 1.1.1: Professional development of the electoral officials | UNDP SEEDS/IFES/ECES | Partly achieved |
| 4 | Activity 1.1.2: Legal reform support | UNDP SEEDS/IFES | Achieved / Significant progress |
| 5 | Activity 1.1.3: Technical assistance to support gender-sensitivity of the legal reform process | UNDP SEEDS/IFES/ECES | Achieved / Significant progress |
| 6 | Sub-Output 1.2: Professional, transparent, and inclusive electoral operations supported |  | Achieved / Significant progress |
| 7 | Activity 1.2.1: Operational planning | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved / Significant progress |
| 8 | Activity 1.2.2: Development of a gender policy within the operational planning | UNDP SEEDS/IFES/ECES | Partly achieved |
| *9* | *Activity 1.2.3: Recruitment and training of elections officials* | *IFES/ECES* | *Achieved / Significant progress* |
| 10 | Sub-Output 1.3: Voter registration operations are enhanced promoting inclusive participation of youth, women, and disadvantaged groups |  | Significant progress |
| 11 | Activity 1.3.1: Conduct feasibility study on Biometric Voter Registration | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved. Study conducted. |
| 12 | Activity 1.3.2: Assistance in modernizing voter registration (VR) operations | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved. |
| 13 | Activity 1.3.3: Technical assistance to support disaggregated voters’ lists for women and young voters | UNDP SEEDS | Partly achieved. |
| 14 | Activity 1.3.4: Technical assistance to support special VR procedures | UNDP SEEDS/IFES | Partly achieved. |
| 15 | *Activity 1.3.5: Technical assistance and operational support to the training of NEBE elections officials for VR* | *IFES/ECES* | *Significant progress made* |
| 16 | Sub-Output 1.4: Inclusive and transparent RMS enhanced |  | Partly achieved  (significant differences of view from fully to not achieved)) |
| 17 | Activity 1.4.1: Feasibility Study on RMS | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved |
| 18 | Activity 1.4.2: Develop, procure, and implement procedures and materials for the new RMS | UNDP SEEDS | Not applicable |
| 19 | Activity 1.4.3: Support the integration of gender-desegregated tabulation lists within the RMS | UNDP SEEDS | Not applicable |
| 20 | Activity 1.4.4: Training and information on the new RMS | UNDP SEEDS | Not applicable |
| 21 | Sub-Output 1.5: Procurement services availed |  | Achieved |
| 22 | Activity 1.5.1: Development of procurement plan and support in training NEBE admin unit | UNDP SEEDS | Significant progress achieved |
| 23 | Activity 1.5.2: Procurement support (Electoral material) | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved |
| 24 | Sub-Output 1.6: Post-electoral support provided to assess transparency, credibility, and gender equality of the process |  | Not implemented yet due to delays |
| 25 | Activity 1.6.1: Lessons-learned conference and reporting | UNDP SEEDS/IFES/ECES | Yet to be implemented |
| 26 | Activity 1.6.2: Evaluation and lessons-learned on gender equality and inclusion | UNDP SEEDS/IFES/ECES? | Yet to be implemented |
| 27 | Activity 1.6.3: Post-electoral training and lessons-learnt | UNDP SEEDS/IFES/ECES | Yet to be implemented |
| 28 | Activity 1.6.4: Post-electoral legal and procedural reform | UNDP SEEDS | Yet to be implemented |
| 29 | **OUTPUT 2: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia in conducting public outreach and external communication, including engagement with media and other key electoral stakeholders, is enhanced** |  | **Achieved/Significant progress made** |
| 30 | Sub-Output 2.1: NEBE communication and external relations capacity improved with a specific attention to conflict and gender-specific messaging |  | Partly achieved |
| 31 | Activity 2.1.1: Assessment of NEBE’s public communication and development of a new strategy and procedures | UNDP SEEDS | Partly achieved |
| 32 | Activity 2.1.2: TA to NEBE external communications capacity | UNDP SEEDS | Partly achieved |
| 33 | Activity 2.1.3: Launch NEBE’s media campaign | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved |
| 34 | *Sub-Output 2.2: All electoral stakeholders informed and trained, and Media Centre established to encourage conflict and gender-sensitive messaging* | *IFES* | *Partly Achieved* |
| 35 | *Activity 2.2.1: Support the establishment of a Media Centre at the NEBE HQ* | *IFES* | *Achieved* |
| 36 | Activity 2.2.2: Establishing regular communication channels with all participants in the electoral process to ensure the consultation of a plurality of actors across the board of all gender, age, and political orientation | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved  (Difference of views from significant to not achieved) |
| 37 | *Activity 2.2.3: Assist NEBE in developing and delivering trainings to electoral stakeholders* | *ECES* | *Achieved* |
| 38 | Activity 2.2.4: Registration of relevant electoral stakeholders | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved |
| 39 | Sub-Output 2.3: Civic/Voter Education planned and well-coordinated ensuring inclusive participation of women and youth both as coordinators and beneficiaries. |  | Achieved |
| 40 | Activity 2.3.1: Facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive civic/voter education strategy | UNDP SEEDS/ECES | Achieved |
| 41 | Activity 2.3.2: Support NEBE in developing mechanisms to increase the participation of women and youth (first time voters) in the electoral process and analysis of the root causes of low participation | UNDP SEEDS | Achieved |
| 42 | Activity 2.3.3: Developing national campaigns to increase participation of women and youth in elections | UNDP SEEDS | Partly achieved |
| 43 | Activity 2.3.4: Assist NEBE in improving coordination on civic/voter education with other stakeholders | organized by NEBE with CSOs supported by ECES and UN Women. | Partly achieved |
| 44 | **OUTPUT 3: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and other key stakeholders to identify, manage and respond to electoral violence enhanced** |  | **Partly achieved**  **(see clarifying comments)** |
| 45 | Sub-Output 3.1: NEBE and its partners capacity to prevent electoral violence enhanced through a monitoring and early warning and response system |  | Partly achieved  (see clarifying comments) |
| 46 | Activity 3.1.1: Support the conduct of a conflict mapping and Electoral Violence Risks Analysis | UNDP SEEDS | TA achieved but output not taken up by NEBE |
| 47 | Activity 3.1.2: Support the development of an Electoral Violence Early Response system for the NEBE | UNDP SEEDS | TA Partly achieved but tool not taken up by NEBE |
| 48 | Sub-Output 3.2: Electoral Dispute Resolution system is more effective and rights-based | IFES/ECES | Partly achieved |
| 49 | Activity 3.2.1: Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) Framework Assessment | ECES/IFES | Partly achieved |
| 50 | Activity 3.2.2: EDR Modernization | ECES/IFES | Partly achieved |
| 51 | Sub-Output 3.3: Security Forces are trained and sensitized to election security good practices |  | Partly achieved |
| 52 | Activity 3.3.2: Legal pocket guides | ECES | Achieved |

Donors have reported[[12]](#footnote-13) a solid appreciation with the coordination and reporting arrangements of UNDP SEEDS and of the regularity, excellence, and comprehensives of its reporting.

The perception of the overall achievement of the programme is illustrated in the Table below which is sourced from the aggregated questionnaire responses.

While the questionnaire elicited a high level of ‘don’t knows’ in some areas, the three categories of achieved/significant progress achieved, partly achieved and yet to be implemented add up to a 68 per cent level of satisfaction overall.

Table 1: Summary of Project Effectiveness based on perception survey

When the ‘don’t knows’ are eliminated, the total ‘achieved,’ ‘partly achieved’,’ and ‘yet to be implemented’ score rises to 88 per cent:

Achievements of the programme by Output and Activity are based on a 4-tiered ranking:

1. Achieved / Significant progress achieved
2. Partly achieved
3. Not achieved
4. Yet to be Implemented

Conclusions in the table below have some variations from the questionnaire-based graphs. This is because the assessment below is an outcome of the triangulation of information sourced from desk research, KIIs, data provided by NEBE and other sources, project documentation including extensive reporting, and from the questionnaire applied to key stakeholders.[[13]](#footnote-14)

The ranking for activities that were the responsibility for ECES and IFES are sourced solely from the questionnaire and are inserted for the sake of completeness. The activities of these IPs were not the subject of this evaluation.

The specific objectives and activities of UNDP SEEDS the subject of this evaluation and the accompanying questionnaire, are articulated in the UNDP SEEDS Project Document. The achievements against outputs have been scaled according to the broad measures of:

* Fully Achieved
* Significant Progress Achieved
* Partly Achieved
* Not achieved
* Yet to be implemented
* Don’t Know

These results were cross-referenced to the questionnaire which provided an illustrative indication of perceptions of achievement.

Taking into account the methodological approach which includes input-driven contribution analysis and the more retrospective and context-informed outcome harvesting, it is important that bald assessments, particularly where an output has been partly or not achieved, is placed in the context of delivery, timeframe, capacity, priority and other challenges including the impact of COVID-19 on the electoral process and on the potential of the intervention’s contribution as a foundational building block for future programming.

#### Key Evaluation Criteria and Questions

### Relevance: Assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS objectives and design responded to national development priorities, UNSDCF, UNDP country program, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs.

The UNDP SEEDS Project was well-aligned with UN/UNDP Ethiopia strategy and approach and with the GoE’s reform strategies. For the most part, it also reflected the recommendations of the 2018 Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) although the final ProDoc did include key elements, particularly in Output 3, that were not embedded in the NAM. The component relating to the establishment of an Electoral Violence Early Response (EVER) system was not able to be successfully delivered for this election, although lessons learned from the process will contribute to this ongoing area of work with anticipated benefit more broadly to UNDP electoral processes generally.

##### Alignment with UN Ethiopia strategy

The evaluation recognises the alignment of the UNDP SEEDS Project Document and the inter-connectedness of the strategies of UNDP Ethiopia and the UN in Ethiopia as reflected in:

* UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2020: Pillar 4, Good Governance, Partnerships and Capacity Development, Outcome 12: *By 2020, key Government**institutions and**other stakeholders utilize**enhanced capacities to**ensure equitable,**efficient, accountable,**participatory and**gender-responsive development.*
* The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), 2020-2025: particularly reflected in Strategic Priority 2: Democracy, Justice and Peace Outcome 2: *GoE’s capacity to improve the performance of institutions and promote participation, transparency and accountability increased at national and subnational level;* and Output 2.1 *All people in Ethiopia live in a cohesive, just, inclusive, and democratic society.*
* The UNDP Country Programme ((2016-2020): *Democratic and oversight institutions (House of People’s representatives, NEBE, Office of the Federal Attorney General) enabled to perform core functions for improved accountability, participation, representation, democratic elections, and gender equality.*
* The UNDP Country Programme (2020-2025) particularly programme priority A: *To support a peaceful transition to a democratic polity, UNDP will contribute to an enabling framework, deepening of critical capacities, strengthening of norms and practices and greater voice and empowerment of those left behind, especially women.*
* the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021)
* the SDGs, particularly SDG 16: *Promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies*
* the alignment of UNDP’s strategy with the GoE’s New Horizon of Hope – essentially a rallying cry for reform and change articulated in 2018, and the 10-Year Perspectives Development Plan, Sections 3 and 4 referring to institutional transformation, and equitable participation of women and youth, respectively. Additionally the ProDoc is also aligned with the GoE 3-year Homegrown Economic Reform Plan.

The UNDP SEEDS project design was subject to a project quality assurance assessment.

##### Alignment with Needs Assessment Mission

The NAM was carried out in October/November 2018 before the appointment of the current NEBE Chair.

The NAM recommended five areas of expert advice around which support to the Ethiopian electoral process might be framed:

1. Operational support in VR, training and procedures, logistics, field coordination and support to building capacity of NEBE at the sub-national level – including the introduction of new technologies;
2. Support and advice with ICT, communications, database and results management;
3. Support and advice with external relations;
4. Support and advice with civic/voter education; and
5. Support and advice with EDR.

It also proposed a study on VR and results management systems (RMS) options; support to National Authorities in Coordination of international electoral assistance; support to reform of the legal frameworks and support for enhanced participation of youth, women, and minorities in the electoral processes.

All these recommendations were embedded in the UNDP SEEDS ProDoc.

The NAM did not advise on the prioritisation of any one aspect.

The NAM also provided in paragraph 68, that: “*Project revisions that fall outside the parameters of NAM should be notified to EAD. If the UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance considers these changes significant, then a further needs assessment may be undertaken.”*

The ProDoc was formulated by the UNDP Ethiopia Country Office with input and support from EC-UNDP JTF in Brussels.

However, the ProDoc included three core elements that were not assessed/included by the NAM: training of security forces on election/human rights issues (through NEBE), boundary delimitation (if and after a census was completed), and extension of the period of the ProDoc until 2022 (not 2020 as originally envisioned). As this was after the NAM had been approved by the Focal Point, EAD sent a note/request for further approval – and after some discussion (mainly on the merits of providing support to boundary delimitation) she approved.

Output 3 included the application of an early warning and response system (EVER)[[14]](#footnote-15); a focus on EDR[[15]](#footnote-16), and electoral training to security forces[[16]](#footnote-17). EVER was raised at the time with EAD management. No further EAD assessment was undertaken, and the focal point was never asked to specifically approve this element of the ProDoc.

UNDP Ethiopia, concerned about the threat of electoral violence at the time the ProDoc was being crafted, decided to embed an element related to electoral violence mitigation and engaged in conversation with EC-UNDP JTF on their work in this area with a view to including it in the ProDoc. The theme of electoral violence prediction and mitigation has been a focus of the work of the EC-UNDP JTF over some years with the development of EVER-focused tools and training that has been implemented in several countries. It is unclear however whether an appropriately robust assessment of the capacity to deliver this component and the vision for its overall management, including considerations of sovereignty over the handling of sensitive security-related information, was undertaken. The inclusion of this element was drawn to the attention of the UN Focal Point on Elections, but no decision was made to conduct any further assessment, and the component was approved by the NEBE Chair and ultimately signed off by the Ministry of Finance. Ultimately, despite the provision of in-country and remote technical assistance directly by the JTF, Output 3 was substantially unable to be comprehensively delivered in Ethiopia, although those aspects relating to EDR and the publication of pocket guides on political party and candidate registration, but not on training to security forces, was delivered through the IFES scope of work. ECES, through its scope of work, delivered some minimal training to security forces. These deliverables, however, were not part of the agreed UNDP SEEDS scope of work as agreed through the initial dashboard negotiations. Lessons learned from Ethiopia including the development of electoral violence warning tools will be taken up by the EC-UNDP JTF in its further development of this area of work and in training approaches, providing a degree of on-going if indirect sustainability to this intervention. An analysis of other aspects of Output 3 are elaborated in the Findings chapter.

To what extent was the theory of change a relevant and appropriate vision for implementing recommendations of the NAM?

The Theory of Change (ToC) Outcome for UNDP SEEDS is *a* *capacitated cross institutional platform that ensures a credible, inclusive, and transparent electoral process in 2020 and beyond.*

Most interlocutors were unfamiliar with the UNDP SEEDS ToC and, while the results and risk matrices have been comprehensively reviewed at every Board meeting, the ToC has not been regularly referred to during the life of the project.

To a large extent, compared with the starting point, the overall objective, which is focused particularly on the EMB, was reasonable, has been achieved. It is noted that credibility suffered due to significant doubt expressed about aspects of VR and about the improbably high turnout in some seats in a non-mandatory voting environment. Inclusiveness has a long way to go in terms of the participation of vulnerable cohorts including women, people with disabilities and IDPs. Anticipated biometric voter registration (BVR) and RMS work was unable to be fully developed. Future BVR and RMS systems will, it is hoped, contribute to more reliable data, and results able to be disaggregated by gender and age. *Prima facie*, NEBE is capacitated to continue to grow and embed skills acquired. The actual sustainability of this impact will be addressed in coming months.

The above factors did not, however, impact on the overall result, nor on the overall achievement of the ToC objective.

While the ToC as regards Outputs 1 and 2 was a relevant and appropriate vision for implementing the recommendations of the NAM, Output 3 was not reflected in the NAM recommendations. An initiative of the Country Office, mindful of the threats of electoral violence, the design of Output 3 was supported technically by the EC-UNDP JTF in Brussels which has been working in this area for some years.

UNDP SEEDS’ priority area of input both financially and technically was in support of the technical, operational, and logistical support to the electoral process. Outputs 2 and 3 were secondary and received proportionately modest funding - too modest, in the view of the evaluation - to be effective. The embedding of the prevention of electoral violence as an Output, while signed off initially by both NEBE and the MoF, became problematic when the implications of the interventions, involving as they did the handling of sensitive information not within the purview of the NEBE, and in the context of the political consequences of the delayed electoral timeline, rendered the Output undeliverable.

The ToC was not revised during the life of the project despite the significant changes to the electoral timeline which pushed elections to mid-2021 and after Output 3 became unviable.

To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the UNDP SEEDS design?

The ProDoc was developed through a collaborative effort between the UNDP Country Office and the UNDP JTF personnel in Brussels. Initial drafts were prepared by an early team and then elaborated and finalised by another cohort due to personnel changes in UNDP CO and the UNDP SEEDS early team. The prioritisation of logistical and operational support was a clear reflection of broader lessons learned of the need to build a strong core institution. The work of Output 3 reflected achievements in other countries but was less nuanced with regards to lessons learned.

To what extent does UNDP SEEDS contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights-based approach?

Although embedded across the project, contributions in this area had less impact and were somewhat disappointing in the light of initial ambition. As explained in the section below on Efficiency, the focus of the programme was Output 1 and the operational and logistical support to the EMB which are is an overall active, timebound task. Governance-oriented changes in attitude, behaviour, approach, legislation and levels and quality of participation are more longitudinal, changer more long-term and measures of success difficult to define after only a short implementation period. The model of UNDP SEEDS is a positive one: the embedding of gender and inclusion across the board as opposed to being an ‘add-on’ of after-thought; the identification of UN Women as a partner; the seconding of a UN Women staffer as a full time gender advisor; the strong and innovate focus of attention on women in voter education especially through the multi-performer song that was popularised and reached wide audiences, and the incentivations initiated by NEBE to encourage political parties to provide greater scope for women to participate as candidates are all solid approaches to be continued. The lead-time was, however, inadequate; the entire process interrupted by the lengthy delays imposed by COVID-19 and the ability to reach out to local levels constrained. A strong and more engaged focus by women’s CSOs and related networks, and longer-term, electoral cycle approach to inclusion and gender equity, beginning with the local elections, will add a lot of value to the work begun by the project.

Election data disaggregated by gender as provided by NEBE is as follows:

* The total number of **candidates** **registered to run** for the election are 8,890. Of these, the number of registered **female candidates** is 1,880. Candidates **who live with disability** number 96.
* The total number of **elected candidates** for House of People’s Representatives (HoPR) is 471, and Regional Council (RC) is 2,139. The total number of **elected winners** are 2,610. Of these, the total number of **elected female candidates** is 1,074. Elected winners of **people who live with disability** number 15.
* The total number of **voters registered** in both round of elections is 42,021,451 – the total number of voters who cast their votes in both rounds of election is 36,074,196.

NEBE does not currently have voter numbers disaggregated by gender or disability.

Note: there is election to be held in some constituencies in the regional state Benishangul Gumuz, which is currently suspended.

Please refer to Chapter 3, Findings, for detail.

To what extent has UNDP SEEDS been appropriately responsive to political, legal, institutional, and other changes in the country?

UNDP SEEDS has been commended by donors and others for its nimble, adaptive management approach that has been able to weave through multiple obstacles and delays particularly the impact of COVID-19 on the timeline, and the cascading consequences of that decision, to deliver extremely well-supported, timely and effective operational and logistical support in a hugely complex environment. The programme was focused on the EMB and was not distracted by evolving political events except to ensure the EMB has been able to conduct polling delayed by insecurity.

### Coherence: Assess the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the sector.

##### How well does the UNDP SEEDS intervention fit? How compatible was UNDP SEEDS with other interventions in the country?

While the priority focus of UNDP SEEDS was on the technical and operational support to NEBE for the delivery of the election, the project was delivered in the context of multiple complementary interventions that addressed the broader electoral landscape and stakeholders that UNDP SEEDS was not mandated to do. These included a large USAID-supported training program with journalists and the media; additional donor support to domestic observation, and the support by the UK of the Carter Centre’s work on hate speech and misinformation as a partner with Facebook’s Trusted Partner Programme. CECOE though NDI worked with People with Disabilities. NDI and IRI worked with civil society in civic education and NDI supported with ECES the training of observer groups including those from the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA). In addition to its partnership with UNDP SEEDS, UN Women also continued its own programming with NEBE, EHRC, and with many other women’s rights organisations all of whom had some interest in the electoral processes, and most IPs engaged in a direct relationship with the NEBE Chair. The EHRC also had a working relationship with Facebook on hate speech. The EU had a five-pronged election support approach of which logistics support and capacity strengthening with NEBE were two elements, the other three being support to CECOE on prevention of electoral violence: working through the Institute for Multiparty Democracy on political parties, and a focus on National Dialogue.

##### What synergies or interlinkages benefitted from UNDP SEEDS, within UNDP and externally, like complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination with others, and avoiding duplication of effort.

In the view of the evaluator, harmonisation and coordination were not sufficiently prioritised.

Every single IP whether related to UNDP SEEDS or not, had their own direct path of engagement with the NEBE Chair, placing an unfair burden on that role to coordinate a disparate set of donor-driven interventions on top of building NEBE’s skills from the ground up.

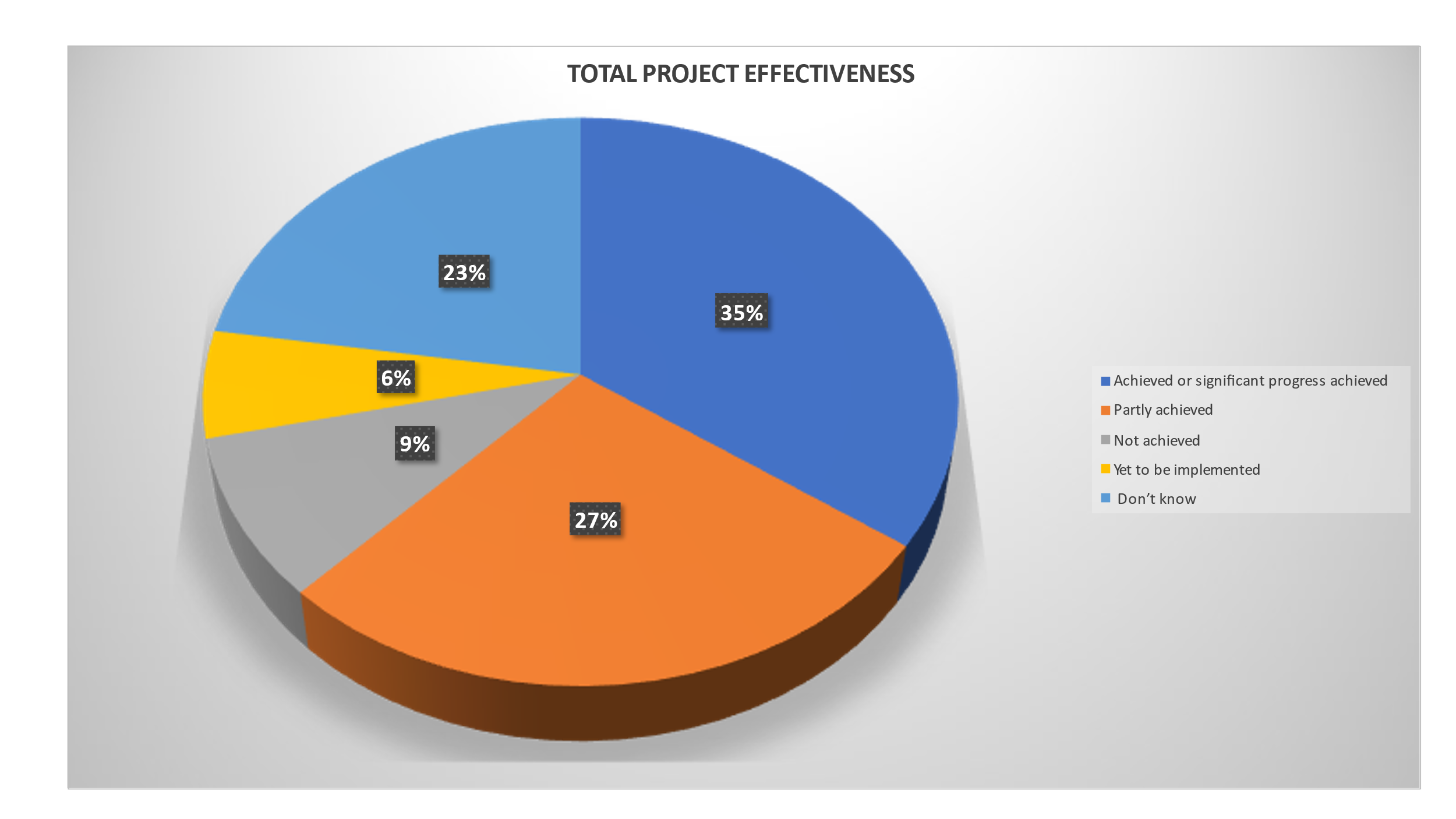
There was no information-sharing platform of the kind often found in multi-contributor electoral contexts, in which all IPs come together to share information about their work and planning, to mitigate duplication of effort, map interventions, and leverage mutual effort.

### Effectiveness: Assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS achieved, or is expected to achieve its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.

##### Perceptions of Achievement Overall

*(N.B. this chart is drawn from the questionnaire and includes results from activities conducted by ECES and IFES)*

As an electoral support project, UNDP SEEDS’ primary focus was on the technical and operational support to the elections. The project was uniquely challenged by two significant alterations in approach which substantially impacted on the project. The first was in early 2019 when responsibility for inputs was shared among the three donors (UNDP, USAID, and the EU) and their IPs (UNDP SEEDS, IFES and ECES) which in turn drive a need for intense collaboration and harmonisation – not always successful but without significant negative impact on results. The second was the profound uncertainty and ultimately rush to the finish line occasioned by the shut-down caused by COVID-19, which resulted in repeated delays and constantly moving timelines. While results milestones and risks were constantly reviewed and re-assessed by the Project Board as evidenced in the extremely comprehensive reporting which has been hailed by donors, the ProDoc however remained static.



The results and comments below embed only those activities that were the discrete responsibility of UNDP SEEDS or carried out jointly with one or other of the implementation partners, IFES or ECES. Note:

* The graphic represents the aggregated opinion of respondents to the questionnaire.
* The **overall achievement** represents the final assessment considering the triangulated responses from the questionnaire, the KIIs, data and reports.
* Comments *in italics* are extracted from respondent comments to the online questionnaire and from KIIs.
* The responses for the full suite of activities including those of other partners is appended at Annex 7

**Output 1**

**Overall Assessment:**  Achieved with significant progress made

The delivery of technical, logistical and operational support to the NEBE for the conduct of the elections was the primary focus of the SEEDS project, reflected both in effort and investment. The interventions under this Output were also the most effectively and comprehensively delivered component of the programme and in which NEBE was most closely engaged. Key successes were reflected in the development of an election timetable (subject to repeated adjustment due to the continually changing context) and the close technical, policy and strategic support provided to NEBE by the UNDP SEEDS management team. A massive procurement effort delivered in collaboration with the UNDP CO and the UNDP Project Support Office (PSO) in Copenhagen ensured the timely delivery of high quality election materials (ballot boxes, voter screens and ballot papers, for example).

The focus of some activities was dramatically altered in the light of capacity and time. A study on biometric voter registration (BVR) was concluded but changes not implemented (there being no effective time was one limitation); errors in VR data necessitated the reprinting of ballot papers for some constituencies and the delay of voting in others, and proposed improvements to and training on a new results management system (RMS) were only able to be partly achieved. The slow recruitment of key staff was also a limitation in building capacity.

Observers noted challenges particularly with the conduct of voter registration and the tabulation and delivery of results, commenting on the implausibility of extremely high turnouts in a non-mandatory voting context, for instance, the slow announcement of results and the absence of disaggregated data. In a tight election these issues can have dramatic consequences but did not, fortunately, impact on the overall credibility of the results, pointing rather to the need to building on the skills developed to date

* *Overall, the project has done very well*
* *Output 1 has been the most significant achievement of the project that contributed towards a conduct of credible and transparent election process.*
* *While several additional systems (over and above the required systems) were delivered the RMS was not completed or delivered. This was due to the issues experienced in Ethiopia and out of our control*
* *Integrity of operations was improved with for example chains of custody, improved ballot papers and translucent ballot boxes. There has been some improvement in transparency, but this is partial.*
* *Inclusiveness of electoral operations appeared to be deprioritised.*
* *Overall, concerns over the transparency of electoral operations (e.g. late/no publication of candidate lists, VR figures, results data)*
* *The electoral process was very much challenged by several factors including the political climate, NEBE’s reform process, lack of human resource, limitations related to stakeholder’ engagement management affecting the transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of the electoral process.*
* *Significant progress achieved at the federal level but less so at the regional level.*
* *Whereas NEBE retained high credibility, the campaigning environment lacked openness despite the registration of a record number of political parties.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

Training and capacity development were addressed by all 3 IPs (as well as in complementary broader electoral landscape interventions). Gender inclusiveness was embedded in the ProDoc as a cross-cutting issue and UN Women, who already had a direct relationship with NEBE which had previously benefitted from capacity development of the (then) DFID GDDP programme, partnered with UNDP-UNDP SEEDS to provide full time gender support. Aspects of this relationship were rocky, including a sense that support to gender through UN Women had high expectations but was “poorly resourced” with funds of “only” $441,000 from a $50m programme. Other inhibiting factors were the very challenging timeline and limited person-power to deliver on activities. UN Women intends to conduct a gender audit with NEBE in the coming months. See comment below under Activity 1.1.1 on other inhibiting factors.

* *Most of the electoral officials were not onboard in a timely fashion*
* *This is a significant improvement with staff having first-hand experience of substantially more developed electoral operations and practices. However, sustainability is an inevitable issue. Also, ultimately parts of the process had to be outsourced so there are still gaps.*
* *Implementation of gender sensitive reform saw less progress*
* *No information provided of self-evaluation of permanent election staff on their skills development*
* *While the support provided by UNDP SEEDS was instrumental for a “change of attitude”, there is much more work to be done to consolidate processes and good practices.*
* *Good progress is noted in terms of adopting directives and revising law, but the gender equality provisions require further assessment.*
* *A large number of new directives was passed, many of them gender sensitive. There is still room for improvement regarding gender sensitivity*

**Overall Assessment: Partly achieved**

The ProDoc assumed a period of one year following the (then) mid 2020 elections for capacity development and strengthening institutional learning. The gap in electoral preparation driven by COVID-19 was, according to many interlocutors, something of a lost opportunity when it came to professional development of electoral officials. Capacity gaps remain, exacerbated now by the impending loss of NEBE staff where “more than 50 per cent of staff are at risk of being lost in the next 2-6 months. In Operations, half of the staff on contracts have already been terminated,” according to one NEBE official. The reason for this immediate risk of loss of knowledge and skills has its origins in the funding of core NEBE posts by donors (UNDP and other IPs). For example, the donor-funded contracts of the Head and Deputy Head of the Legal Department, essentially responsible for the drafting and advocacy of the Directives, terminate within one month of this evaluation. Similar limitations apply in ICT. No confirmed exit strategies exist to mitigate this loss apart from an expressed belief, not able to be confirmed, that OSIWA will assume the contract obligations; that UNDP SEEDS has funds remaining to support core posts for the next twelve months, and that approaches are being made to the GoE to consider extraordinary salary scales for independent institutions as a means of retaining expert staff.

* *Very little formal professional training was conducted for permanent electoral*
* *The capacity building effort of NEBE was partially achieved as the reform process of the institution combined with the new recruitment took significant time and majority of the key departments were staffed between December 2020 and March 2021. This meant that the newly recruited staff were provided with limited orientation and training. After going through an election cycle their capacity with regard to election operations has been developed and will require extensive trainings to further strengthen it. No significant development from an ICT point of view was attained at all.*
* *Training seemed to be very much improved. However, there was a lack of monitoring and supervision capacity and the lack of availability of polling station data makes it harder to know the quality of polling officials. Professional electoral officials were also thwarted by interference from local authority and party representatives*
* *While NEBE Secretariat staff benefitted of the technical support by UNDP SEEDS, the recruitment of most staff took place during election year. Hence consolidation of knowledge requires medium-long term support.*
* *It takes 2 to tango! For the technical staff, yes, but for the leadership cadre (Board Members), very partially achieved, not because the project team didn’t want to or couldn’t do it, but on the contrary, they didn’t avail themselves of the opportunity*

**Overall Assessment:**  **Achieved with significant progress made**

‘Directives’ form the regulatory framework for elections. Despite high level legal advice on the process, NEBE was slow to approve Directives and the regulatory framework remains incomplete. At the time of the evaluation, 22 Directives had been approved, 4 were awaiting approval and one had not been approved. A breakdown is provided in Annex 9. The COVID-19 pause on activities could have been, but was not utilised, to cement the Directives and the regulatory framework. Nonetheless, coming from a zero baseline, and within the very limited time and capacity available, and with an excellent legal advisor on board, UNDP SEEDS was able to deliver a high level of support to the legal reform process.

* *The electoral law embeds provisions that were not well adapted to the complexities in Ethiopia (e.g. unnecessary complexity around party and candidate agents). Revision of the laws had not taken place by the scheduled end of the project.*
* *Extensive legal support was provided for development of the required number of directives. TA assistance ensured that the operational procedures for VR, candidate registration, polling, accreditation met the legal requirements.*
* *Intense work was done on the directives. However, the impact of this was limited by NEBE being slow to adopt, their lack of availability and some on-going gaps.*
* *The progress made in reforming election related laws and directives is notable. There remains however a need for further attention in application*
* *The legal reform needs to be completed.*
* *UNDP deployed legal specialists within NEBE including one of the best electoral law experts, Dr. Getachew who contributed significantly to reviewing the law and developing a number or crucial legal instruments or directives covering several areas of the Board work, some 22 of them.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved**

UN Women was the principal UN agency partner to the UNDP SEEDS project. The support from UNDP SEEDS (just over $400,000 from a $51m program) was perceived as ungenerous, and bookended an already existing programme of UN Women with NEBE and EHRC. The project engaged international gender expertise through TA for three months, and UN Women seconded a full-time gender advisor to UNDP SEEDS as a component of its support.

* *Inputs were provided by the UNDP and UN Women gender advisor to all the directives developed and approved by NEBE*
* *A number of NEBE’s directives contain provisions that enhance the inclusion and participation of women and people with disabilities*
* *The Gender and Inclusion team at NEBE has been actively involved in efforts to enhance gender- sensitivity of the directives of NEBE.*
* *21 out of 43 regulations have included gender provisions. Further sensitization is required and the remaining reforms to include the required consideration of gender equity.*
* *Although many directives and manuals were gender sensitive, others were not; there is room for improvement*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved with significant progress made**

* *By the far the most significant technical support was provided for a holding of a professional, transparent, and inclusive election process which was recognized as the first of its kind in Ethiopia. All the election operation processes adopted the principles of credibility and transparency during the candidate registration, VR, polling and results management processes****.***
* *Several activities have been undertaken to render the election inclusive of women and people with disabilities.*
* *Professionalism was definitely improved. There was more information available but there were serious transparency gaps – e.g. in regard to regulations, results data, and NEBE decisions and plans.*
* *Ethiopia’s 6th general election was conducted under a more professional, transparent, and inclusive process. The change in the electoral legal framework into the NEBE’s governing legislation strengthened its independence along with the appointment of a relatively impartial Board and recruitment of more professional staff. Nevertheless, the newness of the Board, the staff, the covid-19 pandemic, political and security issues limited a significant progress along the more Professional, transparent, and inclusive Electoral* ***process.***
* *ICT access and in some cases the difficult geographic locations of some areas put considerable pressure on the transparency and inclusiveness of the election operations across all levels.*
* *The electoral process was more transparent and inclusive than in previous elections, but there were significant technical challenges and in the second round reduced transparency. The recruiting of women, minority representatives and youth to the election staff was left to IFES and ECES*
* *UNDP through the project, deployed one of the largest highly qualified technical team of experts to support a highly complex election*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved with significant progress made**

Ownership of the Operation Plan by NEBE precluded UNDP SEEDS sharing the Plan widely with other IPs and donors before NEBE gave approval. This has been misunderstood as there being no Operation Plan.

* *Operational planning was supported from the initial design of the operations to the development of the operational plan, consultation on the operational planning, implementation of the plan and continuous monitoring and review to make the necessary adjustments required. The plan was very extensive and covered the polling stations information, projection of number of voters, training plan, VR plan, candidate registration plan, polling operation plan, logistics plan, security plan etc*
* *Definitely improved. But also seems very dependent on international assistance. The delays to many stages of the process indicates an under-estimation of delivery challenges in planning. There was. Also, a lack of public information about plans (what should happen when).*
* *The technical mishaps underline the need for preparations to begin way in advance of the elections. The operational planning was complicated through the second round of elections in September.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

Until mid-2018, civil society – inclusive of women’s groups – had been in disarray for thirteen years with only a few women’s’ groups, including EWLA, surviving the period somewhat intact. Despite the intent of the ProDoc to embed gender equity and inclusivity across the programme, these areas received significantly less attention and funding than preferred to make a significant difference. Challenges around the gender and inclusion issue are discussed at various points in this report.

* *A gender policy is expected to be adopted by the Board after the completion of a gender audit of the NEBE*
* *Gender policy is not visible in the reports*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved with significant progress made**

* *NEBE opted for paper-based registration due to the findings of the assessment on adopting new technologies. There is limited data to ascertain if this has enhanced inclusivity.*
* *VR operations took place, but few measures were implemented to encourage participation of vulnerable groups, and very little disaggregated data was published that could form a baseline for future planning.*
* *The contextual challenges and limited time made it problematic to introduce a more robust VR system. The VR figures raise questions about the process. There was a lack of data provided (except for regional totals). There were problems with collection of data from the field. Voter education through CSOs for VR was late. Provisions weren’t made for IDPs for the main election. Having said all this, procedures were definitely enhanced from previous elections and efforts were made to target disadvantaged groups so there were clearly improvements*
* *Whereas attention was given to registration of women and youth, especially in the first round, the access for IDPs was extremely restricted. Access for PWDs has room for improvement.*
* *Gender and inclusion trainings were provided for CSOs accredited for voter education*
* *Interventions were not sufficient given the extent of the need.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved**

* *The feasibility study was completed but NEBE opted for ‘best practice’ manual registration with the anticipation that a BVR will be introduced for the next elections.*

**Overall Assessment: Achieved** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc:

* *The quality of key elements like procedures and materials far exceeded what was available in the past.*
* *There was a significant improvement in the VR process by including security features as part of the registration process, which included a number of steps to ensure the eligibility of the voters for registration and provision of voter cards with adequate security features*
* *Although there were clearly problems with VR, it was a much-improved system.*
* *This result was achieved by introducing new material that respond to international standards for paper-based VR*
* *Applicability of technology was limited or in some cases not at all applied. Paper based VR process was applied in all the elections.*
* *Digitization of voter rolls trainings were implemented by IFES and ECES. An online registration system for students was set up*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

* *TA was available, even though it wasn’t fully prevailed upon.*
* *The data collection exercise has considered the gender desegregation at the stage of VR and the same book was used for voting. Though the voter data for registration is now available, however, for voting such exercise was not undertaken*
* *No disaggregated data for youth made public. No disaggregated data below regional level statistics*
* *In June 2021, published figures were not disaggregated by sex and questions remain regarding the completeness of the figures. It is difficult to assess progress against baselines.*
* *Voter registration was only partly gender disaggregated, with no disaggregation for young voters.*
* *NEBE has been extremely reluctant to release disaggregated data even when it has been available.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

This work was essentially carried out by other IPs although the legal reform advocacy with NEBE was supported by UNDP SEEDS. Complementary activities by other IPs included work with civil society the CECOE, with EWLA on election-related violence against women; with the Federation of Ethiopian People with Disabilities (FEPWD) and with IDPs. NDI facilitated a remote-based lessons learned exercise between NEBE and the Nigerian EMB, INEC, on CSOs and IDPs. Ultimately, IDPs were excluded because of the thresholds set by NEBE on IDP community-size and the logistical challenges of providing ballot papers to IDPS who would have been required to register for the area from which they were displaced as opposed to the location where they reside. Limitations on work with IDPs are discussed elsewhere in this Report but it is noted that a Special Polling Status Directive was not put into operation.

* *This seemed to be somewhat minimally achieved, which is perhaps understandable given the overall challenge of VR. For example, provisions were made for students, but it is not clear what arrangements were made for IDPs, pastoralists etc*
* *TA was available, even though it wasn’t fully prevailed upon*
* *Needs a lot more work and strategies*
* *IOM provided the necessary information needed for addressing special VR needs for IDPs. However, NEBE set parameters for IDP registration which rendered the process logistically not feasible. These parameters included a threshold of 400+ IDPs in any one community, and that registration had to be for the areas from where an IDP was displaced, not for their current location.*
* *Limited special consideration was made for the minority constituencies.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

* *No RMS was developed. However, UNDP SEEDS supported the results process by drafting procedures on tabulation of results at constituency level, and verification of results at NEBE HQ level.*
* *UNDP provided technical assistance for development of polling and results management processes and detailed procedures on the polling, counting, tabulation and verification. This was developed in line with international standards of credibility and transparency*
* *It’s not clear what is meant by an “inclusive” RMS. A system was in place that involved more checking than before. However, it fundamentally lacked transparency with no polling station results and constituency results only coming out much later (after announcements of regional results).*
* *During the course of the implementation of the project, UNDP SEEDS re-evaluated the pertinence of the introduction of an RMS and advised NEBE not to implement this ICT solution. NEBE evaluated and decided to proceed with manual tabulation of results.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

* *During the course of the implementation of the project, UNDP SEEDS re-evaluated the pertinence of the introduction of an RMS and advised NEBE not to implement this ICT solution. NEBE evaluated and decided to proceed with manual tabulation of results*.

**Overall Assessment**: **Not applicable as system did not go ahead as anticipated**

* *Procedures were developed. However problematic results data and patterns did not seem to be subject to sufficient checking.*
* *UNDP provided the technical and financial support to procure ICT equipment for supporting the results consolidation process. However, for the final results process NEBE managed the ICT process with limited technical assistance from UNDP.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Not applicable as system did not go ahead as anticipated**

* *System available but not used.*
* *While some data is captured in the system developed by NEBE, only limited information is available[[17]](#footnote-18)*
* *Turnout results were not gender disaggregated*

**Overall Assessment**: **Not applicable as system did not go ahead as anticipated**

* *UNDP SEEDS supported the results process by drafting procedures on tabulation of results at constituency level, and verification of results at NEBE HQ level. The system was not utilised by NEBE.*
* *UNDP provided the procedures and training manuals for the polling, counting, tabulation and verification processes. The roll out of the training was done by IFES.*
* *There didn’t appear to be public information on the results system being used.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved with significant progress**

* *Significant procurement of election materials was undertaken that included ballot boxes, voter screens, indelible ink, polling kits, VR kits, VR books, ICT equipment, warehouse rental services, logistics support services, media production and placement activities, ballot papers etc.*
* *Electoral material procurement conducted as intended. However, re-procurement occurred in some cases that contributed to delay in distribution. This has created a gap in the election process, especially in some regions.*
* *Procurement officers at NEBE trained on procurement planning and execution*

**Overall Assessment: Achieved**  (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc)

* *NEBE staff were trained on procurement in relation to government procedures. This also included technical support for hiring the required skilled people in the procurement team, who were trained.*
* *procurement plans developed and implemented by UNDP SEEDS.*
  + *1- procurement plan completed in 2019.*
  + *revised procurement plan completed in 2020*

**Overall Assessment**:  **Achieved**

* *Significant procurement of election materials was undertaken that included ballot boxes, voter screens, indelible ink, polling kits, VR kits, VR books, ICT equipment, warehouse rental services, logistics support services, media production and placement activities, ballot papers etc.*
* *All planned materials were procured, in spite of challenges*

**Overall Assessment: Not yet implemented** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

* *Due to the postponement of the elections, all post-election activities are delayed. This is relevant for all Sub-Output 1.6. Tentatively scheduled for January 2022*
* *Good that there was a NEBE process of reflection on the June election. It would be better to have some of this documented – and in particular what could be done differently.*

**Overall Assessment:**  **Not yet implemented** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

Despite the formal lessons learned process yet to be undertaken, the key partners have already engaged in substantial, interim lessons-learned processes. NEBE held a comprehensive in-house review after the June 2021 elections in anticipation of the further elections to be conducted in September. It would probably have been useful to share the LL document with donors. In July 2021, UNDP SEEDS UNVs held a lesson learned process and in October 2021 UNDP and the UNDP SEEDS team conducted a three-day review of all activities, noting lessons learned and highlighting recommendations appropriate for this review. The evaluator was present at this process.

* *A NEBE in-house project lessons learned exercise was organized to get an internal reflection on the project activities. A broader lesson learnt is planned with NEBE to cover the overall election process and technical support provided by UNDP, IFES and ECES. This is tentatively scheduled for December 2021January 2022.*
* *Good that there was a NEBE process of reflection on the June election. It would be better to have some of this documented – and in particular what could be done differently*

**Overall Assessment: Not yet implemented** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

UN Women plans to conduct a gender audit with NEBE in the coming months*.*

**Overall Assessment: Not yet implemented** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

*ICT knowledge transfer and training has not happened.*

Terms of Refence for a NEBE-led joint lessons learned process with UNDP, IFES and ECES were in the process of being advertised at the time of the evaluation with an anticipated commencement date in December 2021.

* *Good that all three TA providers are supporting a joint review*

**Overall Assessment: Yet to be implemented** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data)

**Output 2**

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved**

**Output 2: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia in conducting public outreach and external communication, including engagement with media and other key electoral stakeholders, is enhanced.**

This component was more challenged. Innovative technical support to NEBE in popularising voter education modalities was highly successful and well received and NEBE noted particularly the excellence of strategy support in external relations and communications. The preparedness of NEBE to engage with external stakeholders, particularly political parties and civil society, was transformational from prior electoral experience in Ethiopia. However it was NEBE’s decision, ultimately, to work more independently in the area of communications, suggesting that the entry point to this component was not nuanced enough to recognise the deep understanding and lived experience of the national body of the style and modality of public engagement with media and political parties, for example, and relationships between institutions and their constituents.

Ambition to ensure gender parity and social inclusion across most activities fell short. Chapter 3 explores this further and encourages a long-term approach to gender equity through continued work with political parties and civil society

* *Significant expansion in public messaging as compared with past processes, though not attributable to technical assistance*
* *NEBE positively undertook stakeholder consultations and engaged with the media. However, it lacked transparency on key things such as decisions, plans, changes to plans, directives, disaggregated data, and results data.*
* *Press conferences were often running very late and called last minute during the immediate election period. Some journalists complained about the quality of information provided by NEBE*
* *This was one of the main achievements of NEBE whereby regular consultations were held with political parties, media and CSOs to get feedback on the election process, review the related directives and update the stakeholders on the preparations made and issues related to election operations and timeline*
* *For the Voter Education campaigns (Voter Registration and Polling campaigns) nationwide multi-media campaigns were conducted in 5 languages (Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Afar, Somali and Sidaamu Afoo), using all available media in the country: TV, radio, and press (public and private, national, and regional), community radios and social networks. This is the first time that this has been done in Ethiopia and for this purpose a media mapping was necessary, especially with regard to community radios which had never been exhaustively registered.*
* *NEBE’s engagement with the media throughout the election process was commendable. Social media outlets have been actively used to provide timely information.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

* *Capacity improved. Little to no emphasis on reaching vulnerable or marginalized groups apart from voter information materials.*
* *NEBE external communication was significantly improved and tools such as an interactive website, NEBE twitter handle, Facebook page and Telegram account were frequently used to keep the electoral stakeholders informed*
* *NEBE gave updates on social media and had good outreach material. Not sure if this included specific attention to conflict. Conversely NEBE’s lack of transparency may be seen as a conflict risk (heightening potential electoral agitation). Not clear how much capacity was built.*
* *To compensate for the lack of a specific PSA in favour of women’s vote, UNDP and UN-Women co-produced the song "Yehager Kasma" ("Women are the pillars of the Nation") which was released on YouTube in May 2020, one month before the first round of elections, and was very successful (2 million views after one month, more than 4 million views since). The song was sung by renowned female singers of all ages from the 5 major regions of Ethiopia singing in their own language. Upon listening to the finished song, NEBE immediately loved it and made it its own by organizing an official launch in the presence of all the media, which had a great impact. Madame Birtukan is even quoted as saying that the song was a gift from NEBE to all the women of Ethiopia*
* *The Gender and Inclusion team had several engagements with the media resulting in improved communications of NEBE’s messages on inclusion of women and PWD.*
* *Gender-specific messages were not a communication priority for NEBE. In the original communication plan, it was planned to produce a specific PSA in favour of women's suffrage, but it could not be produced due to lack of time. However, all of the visuals developed for the campaigns (TV spots, print ads, posters, training materials) were gender balanced (equal numbers of men and women).*
* *For NEBE motivational and information campaigns (to get registered and to go and vote) had to include a central message in favour of peaceful elections. Slogans were therefore developed in this sense (TV spots, radio spots, t-shirts, paper bags, etc.). The main fear was that electoral violence could occur during the electoral operations, fortunately they took place without any notorious violence.*

**Overall Assessment: Partly achieved** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

* *Multiple strategies and plans produced, though not absorbed*
* *A new strategy including rebranding of NEBE was undertaken and implemented.*
* *Improved communications compared to previous years.*
* *NEBE with support of UNDP has developed the communications strategy document that will guide the Communications work of the organization*

**Overall Assessment**: **Party achieved** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

* *TA available, though not prevailed upon*
* *Not clear how much capacity was developed. However, some positive precedents were set which is good for showing what should be attained in future years.*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved**

* *The launch of the media campaign was difficult and often late compared to the timing stated in the original media plan. This was mainly due to technical difficulties (time-consuming translations and validations) and to the fact that the dates of Voter Registration were often postponed and that the official date of the elections was made official only at the very last moment*
* *Media campaign was supported via third party contractors*
* *NEBE undertook an extensive media campaign as part of its external relations and voter education strategy through radio, TV, and face to face communication activities to reach voters at the grass roots level.*

**Overall Assessment: Achieved** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

* *Media centre was established and run in a largely responsive and ad hoc fashion with exclusive access (e.g. observers and agents not permitted to access)*
* *So many factors beyond the control of the project, too little time, etc., means This was taken up by IFES. Achievement can only be partial at best.*
* *Stakeholders were not fully informed due to transparency gaps. Not sure what training happened.*
* *Unclear whether media centre encouraged conflict and gender-sensitive messaging*
* *Task allocated to IFES*
* *MC established, yes-but not sure about effective messaging on gender and especially conflict via the MC*
* *Media centre has been established, provided information for media, political parties and CSO stakeholder s*
* *Consultations with electoral stakeholders held, Media Centre was established by IFES*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved**

* *Registration took place but with significant shortcomings.*
* *Candidate registration system was developed and designed for registration of political party and independent candidates. An accreditation system was also designed though not used.*
* *If this is referring to agents, media representatives and observers, there were problems in June with very late and problematic distribution of accreditation cards. Also, no organisational accreditation was given until after candidate registration, which therefore was unobserved.*
* *We note that NEBE conducted registration* of political parties according to the plan and timeline

**Overall Assessment: Achieved** (triangulated with KIIs, reports, data etc

* *While civic and voter education (CVE) took place, it is not clear to what extent it was well coordinated, nor to what extent women and youth were prioritized.*
* *UNDP SEEDS involvement in this was relatively limited but it delivered what was expected of it.*
* *A very extensive campaign was developed and launched with UNDP and ECES taking the joint responsibility. The voter education campaign covered the candidate registration, VR, campaign, and polling periods*
* *This seems to have been undertaken, but not well coordinated as it started very late in the process putting pressure on CSOs and reducing the service to the public.*
* *Unclear how effective inclusive participation of women and youth were and whether the barriers to participation were identified and sufficiently addressed through e.g. videos/songs/PSAs.*
* *Regarding inclusive participation of women, see comments developed above.  
  About youth and first-time voters, a specific PSA had been proposed in the original communication strategy. As with the PSA in favour of women’s participation, this PSA was not a communication priority for NEBE and could not be produced due to time constraints. To compensate, the visuals developed in all the other priority PSAs depicted many smiling, energetic young people*
* *Although CVE plans were developed and materials produced, actual CVE to stakeholders did not happen.*

**Overall Assessment: Achieved**

* *NEBE had no experience in designing and conducting a Voter Education campaign, and although it was difficult to get the awareness and information campaigns off the ground on time and on the scale that had been planned, it is certain that NEBE realized that short-term communication could not fulfil its role as well as a deeper, more intense, and longer-term communication. Now it is difficult to know in advance whether NEBE will have learned from this relative failure and whether it will implement the means to achieve better and more timely communication in the future.*
* *Covid and other restrictions undermined the effective achievement of this output especially on implementation*
* *Not sure how the strategy worked, but there did seem to be a focus on professional voter education and working with civil society to achieve this*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved**

While the perception survey and KIIs indicated a degree of achievement, it is the view of the evaluator that this achievement must be qualified. This being the first UNDP-supported election since 2005, in a country that had lived under a repressive regime until mid-2018 when a revived legal framework for elections and civil society breathed fresh life into the concept of participation, UNDP SEEDS came into this project with very little in the way of baselines to inform programming, including on gender inclusion. Core statistics were of course available: e.g. despite the increase of the share of women in parliament growing from 2% - 38.8% between 1995 and 2015[[18]](#footnote-19), women remain under-represented and experience barriers to participation including serious harassment through social media and at other levels. Levels of female literacy are much lower than those of men (29% compared with 49% respectively[[19]](#footnote-20)) and women experience election-related violence at high levels than do men.[[20]](#footnote-21) **The baseline research intended to inform the inclusion aspect of the program’s strategy was not conducted.** There was a reported lack of willingness by NEBE to conduct a pre-election baseline and attempts to coordinate mechanisms to map the gaps were not effective. When research was available from other sources[[21]](#footnote-22), it was too late to be usefully embedded. Interlocutors reported an inability to match resources with expectations in the areas of women’s participation, which actually saw a drop in participation in these elections. UN Women conducted a series of trainings on gender inclusiveness in voter education with NEBE but had “less scope” to engage in the regions. Although UNDP-supports all-party capacity-building of women candidates as part of electoral support processes elsewhere, and despite the progressive advocacy of NEBE to incentivise political parties to include women as candidates, the gender component was advised not to engage with women candidates for fear of being seen to be ‘’taking sides”. This was a lost opportunity to match capacity building with legal reform initiatives.

* *This aspect was made part of the voter education campaigns*
* *This activity was not implemented following the suspension of the electoral process that resulted in re-prioritization of activities by the NEBE*
* *Better planning of Voter Education campaigns will certainly allow NEBE in the future to view both women's and youth voting as part of a coherent whole and not as a secondary priority that can be cancelled due to time constraints*
* *It’s highly relevant to provide a disaggregated data of voters while analysing the participation level but figures have not yet been formulated and or shared*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly achieved**

* *Some products were targeted towards women, but very few.*
* *Several campaigns were developed for promoting participation of women and youth. This included a very well-received special song on promoting women participation and national harmony using popular performers.*
* *Better planning of Voter Education campaigns will certainly allow NEBE in the future to view both women's and youth voting as part of a coherent whole and not as a secondary priority that can be cancelled due to time constraints*
* *This activity was not fully implemented following the suspension of the electoral process that resulted in re-prioritization of activities by the NEBE*

**Overall Assessment**: **Partly Achieved**

* *NEBE held consultations. However NEBE was very late to set up arrangements for CSOs to be approved for conducting civic and voter education.*
* *In the original communication strategy presented to NEBE, part of the Voter Education campaign was to be supported on the ground by CSOs. Several meetings were held at NEBE with their representatives to try to develop an operational plan but unfortunately no agreement could be reached in time. Roadshows were implemented but it was through the intermediary of the production agency which carried out the PSAs (the roadshows were a success but too limited geographically). It is a shame because the CSOs, by the importance of their networks, would certainly have brought real added value in the field*
* *Notable coordination with CSOs engaging in voter education*

**Output 3**

Output three was not anticipated in the NAM. However, within UNDP there was an awareness, reflected in the ProDoc, of the risk of electoral violence and the need to address it. The EC-UNDP JTF team in assisting the CO in project design, supported this intervention which was, of course, signed off by NEBE and the MoF. As the project progressed, however, concerns regarding the sovereignty of sensitive information and the appropriateness of NEBE to be the information-holder outweighed the preparedness to go ahead. JEOCs (JEPPS) were established in local areas, but rarely utilised. A system of local mediation of issues led by NEBE regional officers, prevailed. If unable to be resolved locally, they were escalated to the Board and if unable to be resolved there, referred to the Federal Supreme Court.[[22]](#footnote-23) In hindsight, Output 3 was excessively ambitious for the timeframe and compromised further by the COVID-19 delays.

**Overall Assessment: Partly achieved**

**Output 3: The capacity of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and other key stakeholders to identify, manage and respond to electoral violence enhanced.**

This output was not anticipated in the NAM, an issue explored in Chapter 3 under the criteria of Relevance. TA was delivered with skill and excellence but was not, in many cases, adopted. Ultimately it was the decision of NEBE to withdraw from the electoral violence management and response component (EVER) of this Output, citing doubt and concerns around the appropriateness of the EMB as an institution in handling and managing sensitive, security-related information.

* *This output seemed very overly-ambitious – for any EMB working in these conditions and especially for NEBE given that it is a nascent institution. Causes of violence are deep-rooted and may be beyond the capacity of NEBE or others. Overly ambitious programming risks non-implementation and distraction of NEBE time when the focus needed to be on core responsibilities and deliverables.*
* *TA was provided but not utilised.*
* *JEOCs were formed at the regional level but were not very effective in conflict mitigation and all complaints came to HQ for resolution*

**Overall Assessment: Partly achieved**

* *The capacities were in place but not clear if they were used*
* *There was not buy-in over the EVER.*
* *While a system was set up, it doesn’t seem to have been used. The system could be of use in the future, however at the current time it does not seem to have been owned or used*
* *It’s relevant to note that the early warning mechanisms in place contributed positively to the election process.*

**Overall Assessment: Achieved (**although output not taken up by NEBE)

* *This was done to a high standard, but it was supply driven and the EMB did not meaningfully participate.*
* *Risk analysis was undertaken, and several iterations were conducted by the team, which were very useful for NEBE and UN internal processes.*
* *Think this was partly done. But it’s not clear how reliable it was or how much it was used. It’s not clear how much it could keep up with on-going changes and how much extra value it brought.*
* *As a donor, we participated at the initial stage of the conflict mapping exercise but the follow up, at least in the presence of donors, has been limited*

**Overall Assessment**: **Achieved (**although output not taken up by NEBE)

* *The design of the EVER system was developed and handed over to NEBE, though its implementation period was short and not very effective*
* *EVER has cemented a foundation for future development of Electoral Violence Early Response system for NEBE.*

##### What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outputs?

###### Contributing Factors to Success

Four significant contextual factors that significantly altered Ethiopia’s electoral landscape and raised expectations of a transformative electoral environment all occurred within a dizzyingly short period in 2018/2019.

* **New Prime Minister**

The assumption of leadership by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali in April 2018, with the concomitant awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for his work in ending the 20-year stalemate between Eritrea and Ethiopia, together with the rapid enactment of more liberal electoral and related legislation and appointment of women to key posts, ushered in extremely high - and unrealistic - expectations that the election due in 2020 would be transformational.

* **Lifting of Proclamation 62109**

The Charity and Societies Proclamation 62109 of 2019 imposed a draconian and restrictive operating environment on civil society for the next ten years from which only about five survived, effectively silencing human rights, governance, and democratisation CSOs. The CSO Organisation Proclamation 1121 of 2018 immediately lifted these restrictions and revitalised the civil society sector which saw hundreds of new organisations emerge.

* **Electoral Legal Reform**

Proclamations establishing the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and the Electoral Law indicated an intent to conduct elections in a more transparent manner. Decisions by NEBE to incentivise political parties to include more women (not especially successful), the invitation by NEBE to CECOE to observe the 2019 Sidama referendum and other more inclusive Directives issued by NEBE

* **Appointment of NEBE Chair**

Mme Birtukan Midekssa appointed as Chair of NEBE in 2018, is a former judge, and former opposition party political leader gaoled twice for life terms under the prior regime. Her appointment created an immediate and transformational sense of visibility and trust in the NEBE as an institution and the intent to conduct elections differently.

* **Flexibility and Adaptability of the Programme Approach**

UNDP SEEDS was subject to an extraordinary level of change that had been both under-estimated (volatility of the environment) and impossible to predict (COVID-19). From the initial adaptation to delivering across three IPs, to the impact of COVID-19 on staffing, planning, and preparations; to the massive procurement obligations required to be delivered in a timely way, and to working within an evolving political and electoral environment, the project demonstrated a responsible, nimble, and responsive approach to change. Project Board minutes and reports evidence a consistent emphasis on contextual and risk assessment and mitigation; an ability to re-plan and a monitoring of delivery across the results matrix.

“*The programme has proved its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In particular, the staffing shortages at NEBE that needed to be addressed, the changing circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic and need to quickly adapt to a remote working context and working in a complementary way with other implementing partners*,” reported one donor.

* **Direct support from GoE**

In a rare gesture, the GoE contributed US$10m to support ballot paper printing and other logistics.

###### Inhibiting Factors

* **Impact of COVID-19**

The impact of COVID-19 was massive – but with a “silver lining”. The most obvious impact was on the eventual decision to delay the elections for almost a year until June 2021. The arrival of the pandemic forced the immediate cessation of many field-based and interactive components of work especially around training and capacity-building that were not picked up again when timelines for the election were re-set. COVID-19 created delays in the appointment of advisors; international technical assistance staff returned home in the main to telecommute and NEBE was hamstrung in the appointment and placement of core staff. The eventual decisions on the electoral timelines created a reactive, crisis-driven environment and a rush to the finish the across all interventions.

* **Capacity building component compromised**

The ProDoc envisaged an election within a tight delivery timeframe of one year followed by a period of capacity building and consolidation. COVID-19 turned this vision on its head with preparatory activities ceasing during the lockdown period. When the strict limitations were eased, UNDP SEEDS was in the position of then having to deliver on a revised electoral timeframe within extremely tight deadlines, with limited opportunity to consolidate the capacity building approach.

* **Slow decision-making within NEBE**

The appointment of the NEBE Chair in 2018 created a context of sole leadership, with a consequent reluctance to delegate decision-making and authority to the Board when it was appointed some months later. Centralised decision-making resting with the Chair was encumbered by the claims of multiple IPs for direct engagement and the lack of an information-sharing platform at the IP level which could have mitigated against the burden of 11-plus IPs all expecting facetime with the Chair over interventions.

* **Revised thinking within NEBE with regards to Outputs 2 and 3**

Although Outputs 2 and 3 were reviewed and agreed to between UNDP and NEBE, a later re-think around issues of self-determination, the entry-point of and ownership of external engagement approaches (Output2) and of sovereignty and the handling of and response to issues of electoral related violence (Output 3) meant these two Outputs were deprioritised. The Chair acknowledges the excellence of the advice and strategies provided on external engagement, but issues of integration with NEBE and the “starting point” for engagement requires a re-think. These inhibitions are due mainly to the fact that the NAM, which was conducted before the appointment of the Chair, and subsequently the ProDoc, did not reflect enough appreciation of the lived experience of politically-related violence and its consequences; the deep understanding internally of PEA-related ‘rules of the game’ as they apply in Ethiopia vis a vis external engagement, and the sensitive balance with regard to the collecting and holding of sensitive information. Nor was the NAM able to embed a nuanced understanding in relation to NEBE capacity.

**Lost opportunity for capacity development during COVID-19 delays period**

* The “silver lining” referred to by many interlocutors was the breathing space the delays allowed for NEBE’s organisational structure to consolidated. However multiple informants have described this period as a “lost opportunity” to build capacity within the NEBE, especially at the Board and structural organisational level including the consolidation of the regulatory framework.

To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?

UNDP has established a strong and primary partnership with NEBE which must be nurtured and grown with continued support and engagement. The focus of UNDP’s work in logistics and operations and the nature of the IP partnerships precluded a close relationship between UNDP SEEDS and the broader electoral stakeholder community. As other IPs assumed these areas of work and relationship, the impact on UNDP SEEDS was negligible. The internal UN-family set of partnerships did not evolve as anticipated by the ProDoc due in part to a lack of understanding of the role UNDP plays as lead agency on elections. Donors have been very positive in their acknowledgement of UNDP SEEDS reporting and coordination. Frustrations were expressed about the increasing irregularity of meetings as the elections drew near, the lack of awareness about the role of other donors and interventions, the absence of transparency generally from NEBE, and the lack of detail and analysis on VR irregularities and how that was being addressed. While not a component of the UNDP SEEDS partnership strategy, the value of the Electoral Working Group was widely acknowledged.

To what extent has UNDP SEEDS been appropriately responsive to the needs of national constituents and changing partner priorities?

Donors and NEBE both commend UNDP SEEDS for its responsiveness, nimbleness, and adaptability - both politically and operationally - in a continually evolving context of COVID-19 delays and changed dates. *(This question is dealt with extensively elsewhere).*

To what extent did UNDP SEEDS contribute to the participation of vulnerable groups identified in the UNDP SEEDS document: women, PWD, youth and IDPs?

Refer to KEQ 1 (c) above.

### Efficiency: Assess the extent to which UNDP SEEDS delivered results in an economical and timely way

##### Were resources (human, financial, material) allocated to UNDP SEEDS sufficient and appropriate for the delivery of UNDP SEEDS and achievement of established objectives?

UNDP SEEDS is a large project with a total approved budget of USD$54m with the primary obligation on the delivery of technical and operational support to NEBE though Output 1.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outputs** | **Project Budget** | **Approved Budget\*** | **Expenditures** | **Obligations^** | **Total Exp Obligations** | **% Delivery** |
| Output 1 | 29,409,450 | 46,742,828 | 40,031,870 | 1,365,773 | 41,397,643 | 89% |
| Output 2 | 5,217,000 | 4,912,450 | 2,543,060 | 236,032 | 2,779,092 | 57% |
| Output 3 | 3,157,950 | 1,204,757 | 561,524 | 149,700 | 711,224 | 59% |
| Output 4 | 2,220,000 | 1,651,328 | 1,922,504 | 2,591 | 1,925,095 | 117% |
| **Total** | **40,004,400** | **54,511,363** | **45,058,958** | **1,754,096** | **46,813,054** | **86%** |

\* Approved budget is based on budget approved by Project Board as part of Annual Work Plan approvals

^ Obligations include expected expenditures for POs and for months of Nov-Dec 2021 and Jan -Feb 2022

Donors responded quickly, with interest piqued by the rapidly emerging liberalisation and opening of the legal and political framework from mid-2018. The project did not suffer from want of funds which were contributed in a timely manner by 16 donors.

##### To what extent was UNDP SEEDS management structure outlined in the ProDoc efficient and in generating the expected results?

The project management structure was lean with a small core international team and a short-term injection of locally engaged UNVs. UN Women seconded a locally appointed gender advisor, and the highly skilled legal advisor was also locally engaged. In the view of the evaluator, the low capacity starting point of NEBE justified a greater international expertise presence although some of those prospective roles were in fact assumed by other IPs when scopes of work were distributed. It was reported that NEBE opposed the bringing in of additional internationals. The management structure was also efficient. UNDP CO maintained a close interaction with the management team through weekly personal meetings with the Resident Representative. However, the Technical Team envisaged by the ProDoc did not eventuate in an effective way with this relationship driven more by informal personal contact than structured dialogue. Given the tensions that existed for some time between IPs, the more neutral forum of a Technical Team might have assisted here. Broader information-sharing would have benefitted from a NEBE-initiated information-sharing platform between all IPs (and in the absence of NEBE leading on this, it could be UN-hosted). Positive experience from other electoral programmes where the UN has hosted similar processes clearly demonstrates the value of such a platform in highlighting new work, mitigating duplication, reducing competitiveness between IPs, agreeing on key messaging, and leveraging existing effort.

##### To what extent were UNDP SEEDS funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?

The biggest risk to an election project which has no flexibility regarding timelines are in the procurement and contracting processes. UNDP SEEDS was able to deliver a complex operational programme with high levels of efficiency and timeliness and no deal-breaking procedural obstacles, other than those arising from, for example, flawed VR data which necessitated the re-printing of some ballot papers and the delays in fact of some polling. That this was achieved without rancour or political agitation is a reflection on the capacity of NEBE leadership to convincingly read and engage with political parties and other stakeholders

UNDP SEEDS hired a dedicated Procurement Officer with strong electoral experience. With the support of the UNDP Country Office operations and procurement services, and the UNDP Procurement Support Office (PCO) in Copenhagen, and utilising pre-exiting, pre-approved service providers through LTAs, massive contracts were delivered on time and with significantly improved standards, the quality of ballot papers, voting screens and ballot boxes being three outstanding examples. The local and regional contracting approval process (CAP and RACP) both prioritised electoral procurement matters.

The hiring of short-term electoral staff was a major obligation supported by UNDP through the subcontracting of a local personnel company. Examples include: In NEBE headquarters, 28/80 staff were paid through the project with contracts ending in 2021. Of NEBE Zonal staff, 144 were hired through UNDP SEEDS and paid by the project. The majority of these contracts ended in July with some continuing till October 2021. Thirty temporary ICT staff and another 20 short term data encoders were hired by the project on a short-term basis. Additionally, 66 warehouse management support staff were funded through the project, with another 142 temporary staff supported at peak periods.

An external audit of UNDP SEEDS carried out by the Office of Audit and Investigation, the report of which was provided in early 2021, was clean with no management findings of note.

##### To what extent are the monitoring, oversight and reporting structures of UNDP SEEDS effective and consistent with UNDP’s monitoring and evaluation procedures?

Monitoring against outputs, indicators and risk was comprehensively addressed in the Project Board Minutes, Quarterly and Annual Reports, with intensive deliberation focused on the impact and mitigation on planning and delivery driven by continually changing circumstances. Specific lessons learned processes were also conducted with UNVs in July 2021; within NEBE also around July 2021; and with the UNDP SEEDS and UNDP CO teams in October 2021. Another, separate joint review and lessons learned to be led by NEBE and engaged the three principal IPs is due to commence in January 2022. At the time of the evaluation, and because capacity development was always intended to be a year -long post-election processes, much of the capacity building and knowledge management benefits of the programme are yet to be implemented.

### Sustainability: Assess the extent to which the net benefits of UNDP SEEDS continue or are likely to continue.

Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardise the sustainability of UNDP SEEDS outputs and its contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes.

The most immediate political risks to the legacy of the election were already evident at the time of the evaluation. The impact of an effectively-delivered electoral process – even with delayed polling caused by conflict and operational issues – is currently overshadowed by subsequent political events that will inevitably inform future processes and may dictate the direction of donor funds away from governance support to humanitarian responses.

Because of the inverted calendar of delivery, the extremely valid exit strategy of a year-long capacity building consolidation of skills and capacity strengthening within NEBE is yet to bear fruit and it is unfair, in this evaluation, to pass judgement on the sustainability of a process that is yet to be implemented. What can be done is to highlight some concerns about eventual sustainability of the investment and interventions.

Interlocutors note that as a body, NEBE has benefited hugely from the support of the programme. However, it has not yet had to face scrutiny of its lack of transparency, slow responsiveness to results announcements, VR irregularities, lack of publicity over Directives, its centralised decision-making, poor delegation processes, absence from donor meetings, focus on vision over management, poor results processes, and other core problems that will hopefully be addressed as a year of capacity strengthening proceeds that will include a focus on organisational and strategic planning.

To what extent does UNDP SEEDS have well designed and well-planned exit strategies.

From a sustainability perspective one of the most controversial aspects is that of the endurability of skills and knowledge capture when so many core positions within the NEBE are funded by time-limited donor contracting. There is significant divergence of opinion among IP-supporting donors on this issue. At the time of the evaluation, options included reliance on OSIWA to support key funded positions, to the ability to continue funded posts for a year on a no-cost extension basis. This is an issue that requires urgent resolution.

The steps forward attributed to NEBE – both tangible and non-tangible - and key takeaways that have set new standards for elections in Ethiopia and by which future elections will be judged, set important new baselines. The liberalised legal framework must be protected. The independence of NEBE and its new-found and hard-earned status as a trusted institution must also be protected and nurtured. The new, high standards of voting basics from better quality infrastructure to world-class ballot papers that people trust, and voter education that is popularised and reachable also set new standards. Initiatives to increase the participation of women and other cohorts to embed social inclusion in process can continue to be strengthened.

### Impact: Assess the extent to which the net benefits of UNDP SEEDS generated positive or negative, intended or unintended effects on wider democratic governance?

##### What contribution did UNDP SEEDS make towards the wider objectives outlined in the UNDP country strategies and in the ProDoc?

Triangulated responses from interlocutors reflect a strong sense that the elections of 2021 have contributed significantly to progress on issues of wider democratic governance.

Observer statements reflected positively on the overall process, while noting a number of operational challenges. For example:

*…the June 2021 general elections took place within the context of reforms that opened the political and civil space……. Among the most positive of the many positive political developments, the most prominent were the institutional strengthening of the NEBE….*

*The AUEOM notes the NEBE enjoys the trust and confidence of stakeholders*

*The AUEOM commends the efforts of NEBE in professionalising the institution and asserting its independence.*

AUEOM

The immediate impact has been somewhat overshadowed by political events in part triggered by election delays, but these should not take away from the improvements in electoral delivery capacity nor deplete the positive visibility, neutrality, and trust NEBE has been able to embed for the institution. The process also highlighted inherent weaknesses in electoral systems particularly pertaining to reliable VR processes, the ability to provide checks against implausibly high turnout figures and disaggregated turnout data. None of the serious systematic weaknesses identified had an outcome on the final result. In a tight election, however, unaddressed, such weaknesses can imperil the reliability of and confidence in the overall outcome and the internal security of the country.

As one locally-based interlocutor put it: *“NEBE has never been as strong. It has never been considered independent, transparent, efficient, or effective. NEBE has played an important role.”*

“*Governance programmes are notoriously hard to measure,”* said a local interlocutor. “*This takes more than five years. But there has been a re-creation of people’s perspectives towards elections. People wanted to vote because they have that right*.”

A joint statement by Embassies noted:

*There have been…positive measures taken by NEBE to develop integrity in the process and engage with political parties, civil society, and media.*

It was noted however that the level of participation by women running for office reduced by almost one third from the last general elections, highlighting a deficiency, already noted elsewhere in the evaluation, of the intended more positive impact on women and social inclusion generally.

Another observer statement reflective of the impact of UNDP SEEDS noted:

*The overall electoral process……showed important improvements over past elections, particularly regarding the establishment of the national electoral body…. The positive factors can serve as the basis for more credible future elections and could contribute to national reconciliation and further democratic reform…...* NDI/IRI

Overall, the impact of UNDP SEEDS has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting well on the synergies between the broader UN objectives and the goals of the ProDoc, the limitations of which in terms of ambition have been noted previously.

## Chapter 4: Lessons Learned

1. Project design did not adequately acknowledge the impact of the lived experience of NEBE. An outcome was a less than optimal nuanced starting point with regards to external engagement, and a lack of appreciation of the inappropriateness of NEBE to gather, hold and respond to security-related issues. Greater awareness of this context may have led to a revised approach to some aspects of Outputs 2 and 3.
2. The Project Design was quite detailed and prescriptive, prima facie limiting elasticity of approach. The reality of delivery was in fact very nimble but neither the Theory of Change nor the Project Document itself were revisited even when significant changes in approach were required. It would be helpful to add a component to the Risk Matrix that requires any risk evaluation and major re-focus or orientation to also be reflected in ProDoc amendments.
3. Expectations for a transformational election were implausibly high. Across the continent, donor expectations are driven by a weakness in understanding of political realities and the pace of embedding and institutionalising change. Change in attitudes and behaviour is long-term and unrealistic hopes should have been moderated.
4. Coordination and partnerships suffered at several levels. At the outset, lack of clarity on the role of UNDP as agency lead on electoral support impacted on perceptions within the UN family of estrangement from the programme, reducing the viability of a joint-agency approach. Lack of clear guidance vis a vis expectations of other agency efforts to be generously funded by the programme led to a degree of resentment. At the broader IP level, the creation of a NEBE, joint or UN-led information-sharing platform that brought all IPs around the table to share information on inputs mitigated against a comprehensive picture of support. Such a platform can support harmonisation, mitigate against duplication of effort, leverage complementary effort, agree on key messaging, and reduce the burden of engagement with individual IPs on the EMB. As the UNDP’s primary donor and one with vast experience on the continent and embedded within the UK Mission itself, consideration might usefully have been given to inviting the UK into the higher-level donor coordination processes.
5. Caution should be applied to donor-funding of key institutional posts in the absence of an agreed sustainability or exit strategy.
6. The EMB Board was not engaged by key IPs in a way that maximised its potential to encourage devolution of responsibility for decisions within NEBE and increase in capacity.
7. The delay incurred by COVID-19 was a lost opportunity in terms of planning, and especially capacity development.
8. The level of engagement and coordination between NEBE HQ and regional areas was patchy and weak in many areas.
9. Inclusion of vulnerable and other cohorts is a long-term objective. Incentivisation by NEBE of political parties to raise the level of participation by women did not result in significant change. Barriers to women’s participation are deeply embedded and work with political parties and on women’s advocacy needs to be long-term. Consideration should be given to introducing mandatory quotas for women candidates and elected representatives within parties.
10. It was recognised that the EMB is not the appropriate platform for the outcomes envisaged by Output 3 and the EVER activities. Despite the lack of take-up locally, lessons learned are being absorbed by the JTF in terms of reviewing prospective partnership options and the experience is being applied to the tools, trainings and methodologies continually evolving in the area of election-related violence, prevention, and response.

## Chapter 5: Recommendations

1. The continuation of support be enabled through a no-cost extension or other means to be determined to ensure the anticipated capacity strengthening intent of the project is not lost and to ensure knowledge capture, knowledge management and professionalisation is embedded within the NEBE.
2. A future programme needs to identify areas of prioritisation and restrain from offering an all-in-one approach where deliverables are overly ambitious.
3. Urgent consideration be given to the issue of staff retention and knowledge capture within NEBE. Future programming (from all IPs) should carefully consider the risks and implications of funding key institutional posts in the absence of an agreed exit or sustainability strategy.
4. A strategic planning exercise be conducted by NEBE with appropriate expert and experienced facilitation to lay out a plan for the next five years. The planning exercise should include:
   1. reflection on national development priorities;
   2. the articulation of vision; overall goals and activities and plan for known events (including major exercises such as boundary delimitation, the design and testing of BVR, and candidate registration systems and a new RMS that will contribute to great transparency and certainty and mitigate the potential of doubtful results such as implausibly high turnout, and local elections);
   3. organisational structure review including HQ and regional structures and needs;
   4. the articulation of a capacity development plan;
   5. articulation of a warehousing and maintenance plan for equipment; and
   6. the elaboration of goals, milestones and resources required department by department, especially HR, Operations, ICT, and external relations.
5. The Strategic planning exercise would be usefully accompanied by a review of the electoral framework for relevance, applicability, gaps, and recommendations.
6. NEBE is required to provide recommendations to Parliament on boundary delimitation, an exercise not conducted for many years due in part to the unavailability of up-to-date census data. UNDP SEEDS should consider the support NEBE may need for such a process.
7. Effort should be made to consolidate experience and learning from the project’s evaluative processes to articulate core baselines as a starting point for any consequent interventions. These would be helpful, particularly around the issues of the barriers to and experience of women’s participation and that of other vulnerable minorities including people with disabilities and IDPs; and disaggregated data on voter and candidate registration, turnout, and elected representatives.
8. A NEBE and/or UNDP led information-sharing platform that engages all IPs (e.g. UNDP, UNDP SEEDS, ECES, IFES, NDI, IRI, USAID, EU, UK, EHRC, EWLA, CECOE, the Carter Center and others) would mitigate against the burden on NEBE of constant individual engagement with the Chair; leverage individual IP input; mitigate against duplication and provide a space in which a comprehensive overview of the logic of interventions can be reviewed. If NEBE is too burdened by other tasks to take an active lead, the UN should use its convening power to host such a platform.
9. Donor partnerships should be prioritised. UNDP CO could usefully provide a more participatory forum for its most highly contributing and experienced donors, and ensure that, even when the national partner is not available, quarterly and other donor meetings proceed. NEBE should delegate authority for consultation with donors to other Board Members when the Chair is unavailable.
10. A positive uptake in women’s participation and broader social inclusion in electoral processes will evolve from long-term advocacy, not short-term interventions. Engagement on women’s participation as candidates and voters must be maintained, using the forthcoming local elections as an early opportunity to reach out to regions and local communities as well as political parties. A continued relationship with UN Women and the maintenance of close ties and the enabling of CSOs such as EWLA to support these initiatives is recommended.
11. In the interests of a broader governance focus and in the context of an electoral cycle approach, and as other IPs inevitably fall away in the years between elections, UNDP should consider ways in which it can build and strengthen partnerships with the broader electoral stakeholder networks including CSOs and key independent institutions including the EHRC. The options of a grants based CSO approach with NEBE, or an independent programme, might be considered.

ENDS

## Annex 1: Individuals Consulted

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **UNDP SEEDS Project Staff** | |
| 1 | Costanza Lucangeli | Chief Technical Advisor, Operations Advisor |
| 2 | Azhar Malik | Project Manager |
| 3 | Melissa Rudderham | External Relations / Electoral Violence Prevention Advisor |
| 4 | Justin Nettman | ICT Advisor |
| 5 | Ahmed Sheku Kamara | ICT Advisor |
| 6 | Ahmed Seid | ICT Expert |
| 7 | Jacques Zahles | Public Outreach Advisor |
| 8 | Prof Getachew Assefa | Senior Legal Expert |
| 9 | Alexander Endalkachew | Translator |
| 10 | Cherer Aklilu | Gender Expert (UN Women) |
| 11 | Hiwot Berasa | Finance and Administration Officer |
| 12 | Qais Yuosofzai | Procurement Specialist |
| 13 | Ayenaddis Kebede | Procurement Officer |
| 14 | Riccardo Barranca | UNDP SEEDS Inception Period CTA |
|  | **NEBE** | |
| 15 | Birtukan Midekssa | Chair |
| 16 | Wongel Abate Abebe | Head, Legal Department |
| 17 | Hanna Abebe | Deputy CEO |
| 18 | Meron Mulugeta | Director of Operations |
| 19 | Diriba Mergesa | Head, ICT Department |
| 20 | Kidest Dawit | Electoral Violence Advisor |
|  | **GoE** | |
| 21 | Habtamu Shewalemma | Director, UN and Multilaterals, Ministry of Finance |
| 22 | Rakeb Mesale | Deputy Chief Commissioner, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission |
|  | **UNCT Ethiopia** | |
| 23 | Turhan Salah | Resident Representative, UNDP Ethiopia |
| 24 | Cleophas Torori | Deputy Resident Representative, Programmes, UNDP Ethiopia |
| 25 | Shimels Assefa | Head, Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding Unit, UNDP Ethiopia |
| 26 | Hien Dang | Deputy Resident Representative, Operations, UNDP Ethiopia |
| 27 | Donna Bugby-Smith | Senior Governance Advisor, UNDP Ethiopia |
| 28 | Anna Parini | Deputy Country Director, UN Women |
| 29 | Ester Ruiz de Azua Jimenez | Emergency and Post-Crisis Programme Coordinator, International Organization for Migration |
|  | **UN EAD** | |
| 30 | Deryck Fritz | Principal Electoral Officer, UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group |
| 31 | Richard Gee | Political/Electoral Affairs Officer, EAD |
|  | **EC-UNDP Joint Task Force** | |
| 32 | Gianpiero Catozzi |  |
|  | **International Community** | |
| 33 | Hannah Roberts | FCDO Electoral Advisor |
| 34 | Alisha Patel | Governance, Peace and Human Rights Advisor, British Embassy |
| 35 | Adrienne Stone | Director, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID |
| 36 | Daniela Forte | EU Mission, Addis Ababa |
| 37 | Dario Poddighe | Head of Programme – Governance and Civil Society  Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Embassy of Italy |
| 38 | Laura Katlieinen | Second Secretary, Political Affairs, Embassy of Finland |
| 39 | Karin Borovic | Deputy Head, Bilateral Development Cooperation Section, Embassy of Sweden |
| 40 | Tasmin Akbar | Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan |
| 41 | Andreas Rosberg | Embassy of Norway |
| 42 | Heske Van Boekel | Second Secretary Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Netherlands |
| 43 | Trine Hansen | First Secretary/Bilateral Affairs, Embassy of Denmark |
| 44 | Idrissa Kamara | Mission Coordinator, AU Election Observation Mission |
|  | **Non-government sector** | |
| 45 | Abera Heilemariam | Project Coordinator, CECOE |
| 46 | Lensa Biyena | Executive Director EWLA |
| 47 | Rakeb Abate | Ethiopia Country Director, IFES |
| 48 | Staffan Darnolf | Senior Advisor, IFES |
| 49 | David Lenotre | Representative in Ethiopia, A European Response to Electoral Cycle Support, ECES |
| 50 | Rindai Vava | Head of PEV Project, ECES |
| 51 | Franklin Oduro | Program Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI) |
| 52 | Lauren Oing | Country Director, International Republican Institute (IRI) |
| 53 | Michael Baldassaro | Senior Advisor, Digital Threats to Democracy, The Carter Center |

## Annex 2: Documents Sourced

UN Needs Assessment Mission Report, October/November 2018

Initial Project Document, December 2018

Project Document June 2019

UNDP SEEDS Quarterly project reports through to September 2021

UNDP SEEDS Annual Report 2019, 2020

NEBE Post June 2021 internal lessons learned review

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa Pre-Election Assessment Mission Report, May-June 2020

NDI Public Opinion Survey on the Pre-Election Environment, February/March 2021

IRI-NDO Ethiopia June 2021 National Elections Report, August 2021

African Union Election Observation Statement, 23 June 2021

CECOE Press Statement on commencement of voting, 30 September 2021

Joint Statement on the Ethiopian Elections (13 Embassies)

EWLA Observation and Election Day Monitoring Report

EWLA Preliminary Statement on Violence Against Women in Elections

K4D *Barriers to women and girls’ participation in electoral processes in Ethiopia and policy responses*, Robin Richards, October 2020

UK FCDO Annual Review of UNDP SEEDS, October 2020

1. KEQs are elaborated in Chapter 2: Methodological Approach [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Austria; Canada; Denmark; Finland; France; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Luxembourg; Ethiopia; the Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; the United Kingdom [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See Table 1 in Summary of Achievements for the IP split of inputs. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Austria; Canada; Denmark; Finland; France; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Luxembourg; Ethiopia; the Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; the United Kingdom [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. See Table 1 in Summary of Achievements for the IP split of inputs. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. A no-cost extension is anticipated until later 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. One donor interlocutor questioned the inclusion of UNDP in the tripartite donor group, suggesting UNDP was an implementer, not a donor. UNDP TRAC funds of $2m were contributed to the project.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Aspects of partnerships are reviewed in Chapter 3.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Source: CEO representatives [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See Annex 1 for list of persons consulted [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Appended at Annex 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Through KIIs and questionnaire responses. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. See Chapter 3, Methodological Approach for details on the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is appended at Annex 6.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Activities 3.1.1, 3.1.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Activities 3.2.1. 3.2.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Sub-Output 3.3 and Activities 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. See Annex 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. See K4D’s October 2020 paper *on Barriers to women and girls’ participation in electoral processes in Ethiopia and policy responses p 4* [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Op cit p 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Note that NDI had a component of work in partnership with EWLA on election violence against women [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. K4D analysis; EWLA research [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. See Annex X for a summary of Federal Supreme Court electoral challenge matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)