UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

ELECTORAL SUPPORT

AND PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOME

IN YEMEN

EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2002, the UNDP electoral support project (YEM/02/002) was signed with the Government of Yemen. The main objective of the project, officially launched in May 2002, was to make a significant contribution to the strengthening of the electoral authority's capacity to deliver free and fair elections in the parliamentary elections scheduled for the month of April, 2003. Associated with these global objectives, UNDP identified the following outcome: "improved conformity of the legal, institutional and electoral framework with international standards".

The parliamentary elections took place as scheduled on 27 April, 2003 and the project team's activities came to a conclusion on May 2003. As envisaged, an independent assessment of the implementation of the first phase was conducted, in order to ascertain and document areas of success and areas of difficulty encountered during the project, and to describe the impact the project has had on progress towards the intended outcome. Furthermore, the assessment was meant to serve as a background for the design of a second and longer-term phase of the electoral assistance project.

Synthesis of assessment

Overall, the international electoral assistance (technical and material) provided through the UNDP project is perceived by the key stakeholders as having had a very positive impact in the improved capacity of the SCER, thus favoring the preparation and conduct of credible elections.

The 2003 legislative elections were widely accepted as significant progress in electoral administration. The international electoral assistance under the UNDP umbrella was seen as an important element contributing to the improvements in the preparations and management of the elections. The irregularities observed (particularly in the political sphere) underscore the fact that there is still much to achieve, but they don't overshadow the progress made.

Most outputs of the assistance have been met, and in all cases there has been progress made towards meeting them. As a result, there has been real progress towards achieving the outcomes.

There has been, in most stakeholders' opinion, a real upgrading of the country's capacity to manage and organize elections, indicating that the capacity building focus and approach seemed to have been successful, at least in the short-term. It will be important to see if the progress achieved is sustained in the longer-term.

These appreciations regarding the improved quality of the electoral authority and the international assistance's contribution illustrate both that there has been great progress towards the achievement of having the electoral administration conform to international standards and that UNDP coordinated assistance achieved its proposed outcome. The

supplementary outcome of increased citizen participation has likewise been achieved, in particular through the greater registration and voter turnout by women.

The coordination role of UNDP is perceived as having been extremely useful. It focused efforts of the donor community, efficiently mobilized required resources and served as a very beneficial communication mechanism between donors and SCER. As such, UNDP coordination set a good precedent in a place with weak donor coordination mechanisms.

While initially facing some difficulties, the various partnerships (among international actors and with the SCER) proved to be effective and productive. Many of the achievements were due in good measure because of the work of the UNDP electoral team but also due to the partnership UNDP/IFES/NDI.

In balance, the international technical assistance was successful. The support provided was very positive, and it's clear it had an impact in the SCER, raised public awareness and created effective interaction and partnerships between different stakeholders. There is a perceived linkage between assistance provided and the significant progress towards the achievement of key outcomes.

For the SCER, the UNDP project played a pivotal role in supporting the electoral authority and the electoral process – it was more of a moral, political and technical support than a financial one, given the relative small amount of funds allocated by the international community as compared to the total cost of the election.

The success of the project points to its perceived weaknesses: its short-term character, despite its being linked to a long-term initiative. The first phase is considered to have been short, and being defined independently from phase two, so that there is a perceived danger of loosing momentum and continuity. The focus of the stakeholders (including the SCER) is now on the timely design and implementation of phase two.

A clear consensus among all key stakeholders is the importance of maintaining efforts in support of electoral and democratic strengthening in Yemen and, therefore, of international assistance moving into a second phase as quickly as possible. There is a general agreement among all stakeholders that the momentum acquired in electoral assistance through the first phase should not be lost. The good coordination achieved between the donors achieved through UNDP offers a solid base to move on to phase two.

Initial recommendations

At this stage, the major recommendations for the next phase include the following:

-       move forward as soon as possible in the formulation of phase two, avoiding a gap between the end of the first phase and the beginning of activities in the next phase;

- continue the two-track approach: support to electoral administration and support to voter education should both be maintained in a second phase. To avoid the danger of losing focus and control, the second phase should use a selective approach, both in defining specific areas of support and in the definition of beneficiaries;
- include among the project staff an administrative staff member, dedicated exclusively to the issues regarding the provision of goods and services and serving as the direct link between the SCER and the UNDP country office on implementation issues;

- support to the electoral authority can no longer be *exclusively* articulated around the preparation of the next electoral events. Rather, the emphasis should be on longer-term capacity building in the electoral administration, strengthening the regional structures and concentrating on building skills within the SCER at medium management levels and branch office personnel;
- centralized technical assistance should be specialized on the long-term, responding to specific needs or requests from the SCER (such as electoral reform, or boundary delimitation, or issues related to the electoral roll). At the central level, other areas that could be the *specialized* target of capacity building efforts could be the Media and Awareness Department, and the Training Unit, consolidating important achievements in strategic areas of work;
- day to day advice will be required, but at a *decentralized* level - that is, within the branch offices;
- longer-term capacity building efforts should be initiated, focusing on professional training to develop capacity and build technical skills, without the pressures of an electoral timetable. An electoral administration program, based on BRIDGE for example, would be ideally suited;
- medium-term preparations for the next electoral event require *immediate* attention. It is important to liaise with the SCER and encourage the definition of specific areas of support in that regard and to prioritize the needs identified;
- the concrete support required for the last stage of assistance (roughly defined as a year before the next electoral events, that is from September 2005 to September 2006) would be need to be defined at a later stage, building on the assistance provided thus far;
- long-term support to voter education should no longer be focused on electoral public information efforts, articulated through the SCER. The leap to voter education implies a wider range of activities and actors involved, with an emphasis on fieldwork activities and targeted beneficiaries - which in the case of Yemen should continue to be, mainly, the women and the illiterate;
- voter education should be integrated into a wider civic education and awareness initiatives;
- the focus of assistance to wider voter education initiatives *cannot* (and should not) be channeled exclusively or fundamentally through the SCER. There are a number of different stakeholders that could be involved, but from a wide-ranging democratization viewpoint, there is a clear preference to focus on NGOs and civil society organizations

In this context, longer-term electoral assistance for the next phase could be designed on two stages:

     a)   *low season*, from now until the beginning of preparations of next electoral event, concentrated on and continued capacity-building of the SCER (focused on middle level management and branch office personnel), medium-term preparations for next elections and broad voter education, and;

     b)   *high season* (about a year before the next elections), focused on immediate support to the electoral event, both to the SCER and the voter education efforts of NGOs and the SCER.

Given the need to start without delays the formulation and implementation of phase two, the following activities are proposed for the immediate future:

- a post-electoral assessment workshop, bringing together the main stakeholders in the elections: electoral authorities, political parties, NGOs and civil society organizations. It is important to bring all those forces together on a spirit of constructive analysis and criticism, in order to determine in a consensus manner how to continue working towards strengthening the electoral institutions and practices in Yemen;
- a participatory workshop, with a smaller scope than the previous one, with a view to discuss electoral requirements and assistance, and help formulate the next phase of the coordinated electoral support;
- a needs-assessment mission on the possibilities of adapting and implementing BRIDGE in the Yemeni context, with a view at enhancing electoral administration skills at the medium management and regional levels;
- the formulation, within a three to four month period, of the second phase of the coordinated international electoral assistance under the UNDP umbrella.

<div align="right">Sana'a, June 2003</div>

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   CONTEXT

1.   In April 2002, the UNDP electoral support project (YEM/02/002) was signed with the Government of Yemen. The main objective of the project, officially launched in May 2002, was to make a significant contribution to the strengthening of the electoral authority's capacity to deliver free and fair elections in the parliamentary elections scheduled for the month of April, 2003. This project is one of the most important steps taken by the international community, in support of the efforts of the Yemeni government aiming at strengthening the democratic and electoral institutions and practices in the country.

2.   The project was to be the first phase of a five-year electoral support initiative. The second phase, which would follow with the adoption of a new project, is to culminate in support of the presidential and local council elections scheduled for 2006. The successive implementation of a longer-term second phase of the electoral assistance is meant to contribute to building the sustainable institutional capacity of the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referenda (SCER) to organize genuine, periodic and transparent elections in Yemen, with increased credibility and confidence of the Yemeni electorate and the political parties. It is expected that the overall electoral assistance will support the government's commitment to strengthen the country's democratic institutions and to reform the electoral system, including the urgent need to improve the institutional capacity of the SCER prior to the elections in 2003. Associated with these global objectives, UNDP identified the following outcome: "improved conformity of the legal, institutional and electoral framework with international standards".

3.   The parliamentary elections took place as scheduled on 27 April, 2003. Therefore, after a year of supporting the SCER in all preparations of the 2003 parliamentary elections, including the voter registration exercise, the project team's activities came to a conclusion on May 2003, closing the first phase of the coordinated international electoral assistance under the UNDP umbrella.

1.2 EVALUATION MISSION

4.   The UNDP electoral support project envisaged an independent, external assessment of the implementation of the first phase prior to its end. The principal objective of the evaluation is to ascertain and document areas of success and areas of difficulty encountered during the project, and to describe the impact the project has had on progress towards the intended outcome. This assessment should serve as a background for the design of a second and longer-term phase of the electoral assistance project.

5.   The evaluation is to be carried out on two different areas: the first one deals with the project activities, their efficiency, relevance and impact on the proposed outputs and their influence in making progress towards the intended outcome, while the second one is to assess the administration of the direct execution modality (DEX) undertaken for the first time by UNDP Yemen. Two experts were contacted to carry out each one of these areas.

6.   This report is the result of the evaluation of the project's substantive component as they relate to the achievement of the outputs and the intended outcome. The report is articulated in two distinct, but definitely complementary areas: one dedicated to the evaluation of the project as such, while the second one links the project's assessment to progress made in the achievement of the intended outcome.

7.   Given that the assessment is to serve as the basis for a possible extension into a second and longer-term phase, chapters two and three of the report (part one) deal extensively with the formulation and implementation of the project activities and coordination efforts. This detailed attention to the project's implementation is justified as the UNDP project served as a vehicle for coordinating and unifying the international assistance to the electoral authority. This assessment will help evaluate the relevance of such a comprehensive assistance effort in the achievement towards the intended outcome.

8.   The second part of the report, including chapters four and five, will concentrate on whether the proposed outcome has been achieved or whether there has been progress made towards its achievement. It will also appraise the underlining factors beyond the project's control that influence the outcome. Finally, part two will present guidelines and

recommendations for formulating future assistance, by the international community, in the outcome.

9. The assessment presented in this report is the result of a two-week mission conducted in the second half of May 2003 in Sana'a, which included review of relevant documents and reports, as well as extensive consultations and interviews with the various stakeholders of the project. The interviews conducted included the members of the project team and staff of UNDP/Yemen, the SCER and other Yemeni government agencies, the donor community and international partners, political parties and various national NGO's. The preliminary findings of the evaluation mission were presented to the UNDP country office staff, the electoral team and the donors on a briefing held on 26 May, 2003.

10. The author of the report wishes to express his appreciation for the unqualified support received by all during the evaluation mission, in particular the UNDP country office in Yemen, including the members of the UNDP electoral support team, as well as the members of the SCER and of the donor community. A special note of appreciation goes to Mr. Jamal Jarallah, who as the national consultant appointed to support the evaluation mission, contributed immensely to its successful completion.

FIRST PART: PROJECT EVALUATION

II.   PROJECT CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

2.1   PROJECT FORMULATION

11. UNDP/Yemen undertook the task of formulating a project that would coordinate international assistance to the legislative elections scheduled for 2003 in response to a request by the SCER and the Yemeni government. This development was a major departure from the manner in which the international community had been providing support to the electoral process in Yemen, which had thus far been fragmented and uncoordinated. Besides being the focal point for international electoral assistance, UNDP had been asked to assume the lead role in providing technical support.

12.   Not unsurprisingly, the formulation of such a project was not a smooth process, with various attempts at formulating a project that would create consensus among the various donors involved. The approval of a new electoral reform package (including a new law and appointment of new SCER) created additional delays and difficulties in the formulation of the project.

13.   Following a UNEAD needs assessment mission, a first project draft was developed in March 2001, which was followed by months of extensive discussions and negotiations between the donors, the SCER and other stakeholders, resulting in various revisions and updates. The discussions centered on general objectives and scope of the assistance, and dealt in detail on the role to be played by other organizations supporting the process - in particular, the division of responsibilities between the UNDP technical assistance team and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). A final project document was finally approved and signed in April 2002 and launched in May 2002.

Project justification

14.   Following the end of the war, the government of Yemen introduced significant reforms aiming at establishing and consolidating a democratic and multi-party system. The development of democratic institutions figured predominantly in the reform package, including the establishment of the independent and permanent electoral management body - the Supreme Council for Elections and Referenda (SCER). While it had conducted several elections since 1992, the SCER was suffering from major credibility problems following problematic local council elections in 2001. The main problems to be addressed were identified as: (a) the lack of a proper administrative structure, overly centralized, with unclear lines of responsibility and accountability as well as suffering from efficiency problems, (b) the absence of a complete set of by-laws, regulations and definite plans, resulting in improvised and last-minute decisions, (c) an inaccurate and outdated electoral register, which had performed badly in the 2001 elections, (d) poor participation and voter turnout, (e) gender disparity, not only in the number of registered voters, but also in the number of candidates nominated, (f) inadequate training for election officials and (g) poor continuity and institutional knowledge.

15.   In that context, the project identified a priority need for developing the capacity of the SCER to deliver free, fair and participatory elections in April 2003. In broader terms, the project proposed to enhance the administration and management of the electoral process and to significantly increase citizen information, participation and confidence in the 2003 elections.

Project strategy

16.   The objectives of the project were capacity building oriented, and the strategy formulated clearly reflected this approach. With the need to support the impending electoral event, capacity building was focused on the preparation and management of the 2003 elections, but the project envisioned a longer-term capacity building approach. Strategically, therefore, the project was formulated to run through two distinct but complementary phases: (a) phase one, which covered the period from May 2002 until June 2003, concentrating on support to the 2003 legislative elections and (b) phase two, running immediately from the end of phase one to the presidential and local council elections scheduled for September 2006. Nevertheless, the expected results and activities were formulated for the first phase only; the second phase was left to be formulated following an evaluation to be conducted prior to the end of phase one.

17.   The project identified five strategic areas of support, in order to focus the assistance and to meet the objectives of phase one. The areas included: (a) electoral administration, (b) voter registration, (c) decentralization, (d) civic and voter education and (e) training for registration and poll workers.

18.   Equally, the project identified partnerships with a view to conduct its activities and meet its objectives. The SCER is clearly identified as the main partner in the project, as well as the main beneficiary of the project's activities. Supplementary key players are mentioned, most notably other international agencies involved in the provision of international electoral assistance in Yemen, IFES and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Results framework

19.   The intended outputs of the project were defined according to each of the strategic areas of support, as follows:

a) "the administration and management of the electoral process is substantially improved" - so as to reflect international standards and build the confidence of the process by the electorate and political parties;

b) "an accurate and comprehensive voter register is produced";

c) "the SCER has established and gradually consolidated a permanent regional infrastructure" - thus reducing the technical and operational difficulties of past elections;

d) "effective and comprehensive voter education programs have been conducted" - thus increasing the electoral participation, especially by marginalized groups;

e) "professional skills of registration and polling officials have been enhanced" - contributing to improved performances.

20.   Various activities were designed to achieve each of these outcomes. The modalities adopted included of provision of technical assistance, complemented by supply of equipment and electoral materials and the implementation of voter education initiatives. In order to provide the technical assistance, it was determined to establish a core team of two electoral experts (including a Chief Technical Adviser, CTA), based within the SCER, supplemented by two short-term experts: one on voter education and another one on training.

2.2   EVALUATION OF PROJECT DESIGN

21.   The project design, as crystallized in the project document, provided a practical and ultimately effective framework for channeling international electoral support. Nevertheless, this framework was not completely flawless, containing some important ambiguities and inconsistencies. These are very likely the result of the discussions and negotiations carried out between the different stakeholders during the formulation stage. In that light, the shortcomings underscore an important strength of the project design, the fact that it was a product of consensus, agreed to and accepted by all stakeholders.

22.   It is useful, however, to highlight some of the shortcomings inherent in the project design, because doing so will assist in evaluating both the project's implementation and the general impact of the international assistance on the electoral process. More

importantly, it will also provide insights as to how to conceive and design the second phase of the international electoral intervention.

Capacity building: short and long-term approach

23. The focus of the project formulation, both in short and long-term objectives and strategy, was on capacity building. Given the problems to be addressed, this was the correct approach to adopt. Electoral assistance has been moving away from exclusively supporting an electoral event, without supporting and strengthening the capacity of local electoral authorities to manage the process. Multiple experiences have shown that to support the preparation and conduct of an electoral event without a capacity building approach does not contribute to a sustained development of democratic institutions and practices. Thus, the formulation of objectives and methodology from a perspective of enhancing the local electoral authority's capacity to manage the process was very much in accordance to current international standards of electoral assistance.

Long-term and short-term objectives and strategy

24. Consequent with this approach, the project was defined as a first stage of a long-term capacity building initiative. Accordingly, the general goals of the assistance were defined in terms of strengthening the SCER so as to improve its performance in the preparation and conduct of the legislative elections. International assistance focused on the preparation of an electoral event, associating support to the process (results related to the electoral process itself) with capacity building (results related to the improvement of the electoral administration). This was a sensible course of action given the time constraints imposed by the electoral calendar.

25. The assistance to the SCER in improving its performance *in order to* manage the legislative elections reflected a short-term approach. In the definition of strategies and objectives, however, there has not been a clear division between the short and long-term perspectives, creating vagueness and inconsistencies in the definition of objectives and strategies.

26. While at times the project was mentioned as "the first phase" of a long-term capacity building intervention (implying a new project on the second phase), other times the project itself was defined as a long-term intervention running in "two distinct but

complementary" phases. On one hand, if the project is defined in its entirety as the first phase, then its outcomes and activities need to be defined in a short-term perspective. If, on the other hand, the project is seen as the long-term intervention, then it needs a wider-ranging formulation of objectives and strategies. As it is, the project was designed partly as a short-term initiative, partly as a long-term initiative. The outputs defined in the project clearly reflect this inconsistency.

27.   The ambiguity in the project formulation, and the inconsistencies that follow, can probably be traced to the history of the project design. The first draft conceived the project as a long-term initiative, involving long-term goals, and organized in two phases. The project formulation was eventually reduced to a short-term initiative (very clearly defined around the 2003 elections), albeit accompanied by a (vaguely thought out) second phase.

28.   As a result, the objectives, outputs and inputs can be either too broad (if related to the long-term intervention) or too narrow (if related to support to the electoral process as a whole and not just to the electoral administration). On one hand, the outcome and outputs of the electoral assistance can be considered too broad. While they are meant specifically for the first phase, they often refer to longer-term results, clearly outside of the project's short-term timeframe. With capacity building being a major element in the strategy and methodology of the process, the expected results (with a few exceptions) are defined more in absolute terms rather than referring to progress made and sustained management improvement.

29.   On the other hand, the whole intervention is meant to increase the capacity of the electoral authority, with the SCER as the sole or more important beneficiary - the project's name is "electoral support to the SCER". And this is true even of the second phase. Yet it is clear that the intervention was conceived as supporting the overall development of electoral institutions and practices. As one of the donors put it, the idea behind project was to "promote participatory, free and fair elections". The assistance, therefore, aimed not just at electoral institution building but also, and more globally, at strengthening the democratic and electoral development of the country.

Increased management capacity and quality of elections

30.   When the aim of the electoral assistance is to strengthen the electoral institutions and practices in Yemen with a view to consolidate the democratization of the country, support to the electoral authority is certainly a key, crucial element, but not the only one. Elections are managed, and they need to be efficiently and impartially managed to be credible, but the success of the electoral process as such depends in social and political developments as well - including public awareness and participation and political pluralism and respect of fundamental political rights.

31.   One of the motivations to include voter education as one of the more relevant areas of support of the project was precisely the desire to tackle the social aspect of the process, enhancing popular participation and overall electoral awareness. The short-term objectives don't make any mention whatsoever of this aspect, even if it plays an important role in both the identification of activities and the establishment of the budget. This is just a formulation weakness, as the activities and areas of strategic support do clearly express targeting the areas of electoral participation, awareness, and overall confidence on the process by the electorate and the political parties.

32.   Furthermore, the outputs are expressed exclusively in terms of results of the electoral process, linking in a direct casual relationship the performance of the electoral authority and its improved capacity - not an unreasonable relation but not one that always proves correct. Sometimes poor electoral performance might result from the influence of factors beyond the control of the electoral authority, and increased capacity might not result in good performance. This is of course, because the success of the election is not only a function of how the election was technically and operationally managed.

33.   On the other hand, while the emphasis of the project is rightly placed on capacity building, the impact of technical assistance is to be estimated exclusively from the quality of the electoral process, without any direct measures of how local electoral capacity was improved or not. In other words, the impact of the assistance is to be assessed exclusively on the basis of the quality of the elections - results that, as mentioned, are important but not exclusive indicators of the capacity building results.

Strategies and implementation arrangements

34.   With the key exception of voter education, where the project played an active role in the design and execution of a voter education program, the main modality of support adopted was the provision of on-site technical assistance, to be complemented with the supply of equipment, materials and services.

Technical assistance and material support

35.   To situate the provision of technical assistance within the SCER, with the project experts becoming "in house" resources, was a tactically sound idea, and one that would prove instrumental in the team's success. But, as formulated in the project, it was clear that the electoral team would be understaffed and over tasked, given the broad objectives of the project and the wide spectrum of assistance to be provided.

36.   The combination of technical and material support is a standard one in electoral assistance. The difference here is that material assistance was not an essential requirement of international support, as the national government had committed itself to financing the bulk of the costs of the election. Nevertheless, it seemed a practical choice to complement technical assistance with the possibility of providing equipment and other material support, as it effectively empowers the technical assistance and gives it credibility (matching "advice" with "actions").

37.   On the other hand, the fact that, unlike the other areas of support, voter education was to be assumed to a significant degree by the project (albeit in close collaboration with the SCER) was indicative of the differentiated nature of that component, which had as its direct beneficiary the electorate at large, and not just (or primarily) the electoral institution.

Five areas of strategic support?

38.   In order to "meet its short-term objectives", the project defined its five strategic areas of support, according to the perceived immediate priorities. This was a practical and useful classification to focus activities, since the assistance to be provided encompassed all aspects and phases of the electoral process. Nevertheless, it could also be misleading, as many of the "areas" of support in fact overlapped with each other - support to voter

registration, for example, included support to voter registration training and voter education activities during the registration period.

39.   In fact, it is clear from the project design (and corroborated by an assessment of the implementation of the project) that there were actually two major areas of support: strengthening of the electoral administration (overlapping four of the five areas established) and enhancing public awareness and electoral information (voter education and public information for both registration and polling). Supplementing the two major areas of support, there was a "parallel" track - that of coordinating international electoral assistance, where UNDP would become the lead agency in the provision of support to the electoral process, responsible for building partnerships, mobilizing rsources and ensuring that adequate and efficient channels of communication and information be established. While this parallel track was a major feature of the project design, there were no outputs associated with it that would allow for its assessment.

40.   As mentioned, the strategic areas of support and the activities associated with them referred exclusively to the first phase. It is not surprising that phase one was clearly defined, and phase two was left vague. A couple of donors showed disappointment in this situation, as they had advocated for a longer-term project and would have been happy to commit in a longer-term basis. However, it was precisely donor pressure that eventually reduced the project's scope of activities (if not its major outputs) and the timeline. In fact, it was difficult to get donor consensus precisely on the issue of long-term vs. short-term strategy, and most donors were not ready to finance a long-term project. Ultimately, settling for a short-term approach (while leaving open the possibility of a longer-term second phase) proved to be a very practical approach, as it would have been difficult to define at that moment clear and specific modalities for electoral assistance not tied to a particular electoral event.

III.   IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTORAL SUPPORT

41.   The fact that, with backing of the donors, UNDP was asked by the Yemeni authorities and the SCER to coordinate all assistance provided by the international community for the 2003 elections constituted a major innovation. This coordination exercise was centered in the design and implementation of the UNDP electoral support project but also aimed at establishing working partnerships with other key stakeholders.

42.   UNDP/Yemen articulated its project around two main components: support to electoral administration and voter education. This section looks in detail at the implementation of those two major areas of electoral assistance, while it evaluates the various partnerships established, with a view at determining not only the impact of the assistance, but the efficiency of the coordination efforts.

3.1   SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

43.   Support to electoral administration was designed to provide assistance to the preparation and conduct of the 2003 legislative elections while improving the quality of the electoral administration. This line of action focused on technical assistance to the SCER, but included the provision of some equipment and electoral materials, as well as financial support to training of electoral officers.

Electoral team and technical assistance

44.   The support to the electoral administration was provided mainly through the UNDP team of electoral experts. The UNDP team of experts provided general advice on all matters relating to the preparation and conduct of the electoral process.

45.   The team of experts was very small. The training expert was never appointed and the voter education expert was not present for all the anticipated period of time. Even so, the acknowledgment of the professional competence and dedication of the electoral team was a constant throughout the interviews conducted by the evaluation mission. The SCER repeatedly insisted on the excellent quality of the team and the professionalism of its members.

46.   Arguably, the most significant assistance was that provided through day-to-day technical advice, which touched on all range of issues. The advice and guidance of the team was sought in all aspects, from voter registration to polling and counting and any other matter pertaining to the preparation of the process.

47.   The two long-term experts acted as advisors on all aspects of the process - procedural, technical, operational - with very little, if any, specialized areas of support. They advised on procedures and their implementation and advised against major

decisions made by the SCER. They made various proposals on polling procedures - some of them accepted, others rejected. They advised on the definition of specifications of electoral material: design, quality, availability and suitability of material such as ballot boxes, paper, and indelible ink. They paid special attention to the work of the Secretary General, who was heading a brand new sector in the SCER, and in facilitating communication with branch offices.

48.   A major focus of the technical assistance was the introduction and mainstreaming of the concept of "transparency", encouraging the SCER to publicize its work, use the media, respond to complaints and open channels of communication with other stakeholders, such as political parties and civil society.

49.   Another emphasis of the team's work was training of election officials, as defined by one of the "strategic areas of support". During voter registration the training plans were upset because of the problems associated with the establishment of the registration commissions. These problems were overcome for the polling phase, and the result was an efficient implementation of the cascade-training approach, carried out by the UNDP team, in association with IFES. The project supported not only the production of the training manuals and kits, but also completely financed the "train-the-trainers" process, whereby 301 core trainers were recruited and trained.

50.   Establishment and consolidation of the SCER regional structures (branch offices) was supported by the project team in a variety of ways: provision of basic equipment, support in the preparation of instructions and work plans for the offices and conduct of training sessions for regional officers. Additionally, the electoral team worked in strengthening the operations room at headquarters to enhance communication with the regions.

51.   While well accepted, the experts felt that they did not always enjoy enough access to certain areas - operational plans, protocols and forms, instructions to branch offices - which they felt limited their possibilities of providing pertinent and sound assistance. There were SCER counterparts for the experts, one for each specific area of main focus, although the nomination of counterparts was not really stable or clear. Formal counterparts tended to be the "heads" of sectors or divisions; this situation is easily understood given the centralized structure and the hierarchical functioning of the SCER, characterized not only by a lack of delegation from the heads of section but also by

accessibility difficulties. Given this situation, it wasn't surprising that the technical assistance was highly centralized. The small number of experts comprising the team reinforced this tendency.

52.   As indicated previously, the team of experts was clearly understaffed, given the wide-ranging objectives of the project and the global character of assistance provided. By the donors' insistence in staffing reduction while maintaining initial objectives during the formulation phase, the objectives did not match implementation arrangements, particularly in relation to the presence of experts. Unfortunately, there was also no supporting staff within the team, which would have considerably helped ease some of the work loads.

53.   Additionally, the execution of other aspects of the assistance provided (in particular material support through the provision of equipment and materials) overtaxed the members of the team. The team members continuously dealt with administrative aspects of the assistance, for which they were not prepared (as they were not administrative staff familiar with UNDP rules and procedures) and which distracted them from their foremost role as advisors to the SCER. As there was no direct liaison between SCER and UNDP country office, the experts acted as "mediators" - the matter of discussion between the SCER and the team were often related to problems in the timeliness of inputs of the project due to difficulties with the provision of materials and services. Those difficulties also had negative impact in the credibility of the team as "electoral experts", particularly in the voter education area.

54.   What did ease the situation was that the members of the team worked well with each other, in an extremely complimentary manner, and all had previous experience in Yemen electoral assistance. The team was positioned within the SCER, which as mentioned, strengthened its efficiency. They were, however, positioned as a separate "international technical assistance", which hampered complete integration with the SCER - despite the fact that the SCER felt they were "part of the team".

55.   Generally speaking, it is preferable for the electoral experts to be fully integrated within the structure of the electoral body. In this case, however, having had each member of the team being part of a specific sector of the SCER would probably not have been more effective. The members of the team felt that a certain distance between the international experts and the Yemeni electoral officers was somewhat necessary, in order

to maintain credibility and insure local ownership of the process. The SCER felt that having the experts grouped in one office ("electoral experts office") was a better option because in this manner their advice was accessible to all who needed it. For the voter education expert, being a woman would not have allowed her to work fully if integrated within her corresponding sector.

Provision of equipment, materials and services

56.   While relatively small compared to the overall requirements for the management of the electoral process, the project offered nonetheless substantial support through the provision of equipment and electoral materials (above and beyond the implementation of voter education initiatives, which are dealt with separately).

57.   This support, which amounted to nearly 30% of the project's budget, included provision of equipment for the registration data center (computers), basic equipment for the branch offices, training kits and sensitive polling material (indelible ink). It also financed various services aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the electoral preparations and management, such as the production of TV programs (not as part of the voter education initiatives but as an effort to promote transparency and openness in the electoral management), the organization of events (such as the "transparency forum"), the financing of the training of trainers for polling, the set-up of the Press Center for polling and the conduct of a technical cooperation mission during polling, meant to create contacts between the region's electoral management bodies.

58.   The provision of goods and services was appreciated by the SCER because it allowed some budgetary flexibility, as they received their funding in a staggered manner. As indicated before, provision of equipment also facilitated acceptance of technical assistance by the SCER staff.

59.   There were, however, some difficulties in the implementation of this support, particularly in the early stages of the project. Both the SCER and the electoral team members found the administrative support not to be sufficiently flexible or timely, and they associated this shortcoming to the DEX modality adopted by the project. The UNDP country office, on the other hand, found that neither the members of the team, and certainly not the staff of the SCER, clearly understood the constraints implicit in the rules and procedures that the country office needed to abide by and the accountability issues

with both the donors and the its own structures. The UNDP country office insists that there was plenty of flexibility in regards to their standard rules and procedures, and that further flexibility could have damaged UNDP's accountability to donors and its own headquarters. In any case, the project implementation suffered from the fact that there was no direct liaison between the UNDP country office and the SCER, which would have enhanced a clearer understanding of the procedures to all concerned and would have allowed direct communication between the SCER and the implementing agency (the UNDP country office) without depending on the intermediation of the electoral experts.

3.2   SUPPORT TO VOTER EDUCATION

60.   A major area of support to the electoral process was the conduct of voter education and public information activities during registration and polling. This area of support, by far the most popular with donors (at least in terms of willingness to finance, which partly explains its relative importance within the overall project) was different than the assistance to electoral administration in that it oriented towards the electoral process itself and had the electorate at large as a direct beneficiary, rather than just the electoral authority.

61.   Another major difference with the support to the electoral administration was the fact that it was very much focused on "implementation", even if it contained an important element of technical assistance aiming at capacity building of the electoral administrators.

Voter education initiatives

62.   As mentioned, the activities related to voter education by UNDP were concentrated on the design and implementation of an aggressive information and awareness campaign, in close coordination with the SCER. The responsibility for this campaign ultimately fell on the UNDP electoral team, although there was always close participation with the concerned SCER department. Within the team, it was the voter education expert who was directly implicated in the design and implementation of the various initiatives, but the other members of the team were also closely involved.

63.   The UNDP voter education support was articulated on implementation of diverse activities of public information and electoral awareness campaign. The SCER had its own

media plan, but was closely involved in the planning and design of the UNDP voter education initiatives.

64.   The campaign was carried out in two phases, associated to voter registration and polling. The activities included publications and printed materials and brochures, wide use of advertising (MUPIs), and banners. It also made aggressive use of the media through TV advertisements, sketches, radio skits and audiocassettes. Finally, the media itself was directly involved through financing of voter education projects.

65.   There was an effort not only at qualifying the voter education messages (moving away from the traditional slogans to more precise, information oriented messages) but also at widening the use of modalities for transmitting the messages. Some of these innovative methods were initially received by the SCER with reticence, but later were recognized as being effective, particularly after the voter registration phase. These innovations included the production of calendars, plastic carrier bags, the use of info-tents, mobile vans, mobile luminous advertising (luminous tops of urban buses) the incorporation of sign-language and even the use of GSM technology.

66.   Voter education initiatives had, from the formulation stage, envisaged substantial involvement of NGOs. This was indeed an important element of the voter education program during the voter registration phase, but that area of work was substantially reduced during polling because SCER felt it was politically sensitive, given the politicized character of some of the Yemeni NGOs.

67.   Finally, the "multi-media" proposal mentioned in the project document was deemed unrealistic and unsustainable, and it was decided that subcontracting facilities was a far better and efficient option.

Appraisal of voter education support modalities

68.   The fact that voter education support was organized on the implementation (by the project) of a public information campaign clearly illustrates the specificity of that component within the international assistance provided for the legislative elections. The question that immediately comes to mind is: why assume direct responsibility for the implementation of voter education initiatives?

69.   First, everybody recognized the importance of the outcome related to higher citizen participation and awareness in the electoral process. It is accepted that aggressive awareness raising initiatives are required to improve the quality of the electoral process because the electoral "tradition" is still new and fragile, with a situation still characterized by lack of awareness and knowledge about the electoral process. The low participation rate in previous elections was a clear indicator of this. The high illiteracy rate and the remoteness of some areas (isolation of population) not only underscore the need for increasing public awareness but also point at the difficulties in implementing initiatives in that regard.

70.   Secondly, the department dealing with public awareness and voter education within the SCER is a new one, and it suffers from insufficient funding from the SCER's budget. This is a reflection of a common situation: while the importance of voter education is never doubted, other electoral operations are prioritized within the electoral budget in detriment of public awareness and education campaigns. This explains why the international community often finances voter education initiatives as part of electoral assistance projects.

71.   Of course, it can be argued that the willingness of the international donors to finance voter education might discourage local authorities from including them into their own budgets. In the Yemeni case, given the importance of the public information and voter education initiatives and the lack of sufficient funds of the local authority, it can be said that the effective subsidizing of voter education by the international community was a valid choice.

72.   There were more difficulties associated with the implementation of the voter education modalities than with any other aspect of the international assistance. This is hardly surprising, as this component had more demanding requirements than any other in the project in terms of "execution". It seems, however, that the implementation problems were reduced for the final phase of polling, having profited from the lessons learned in the registration phase. Ultimately, it has been acknowledged that the voter education initiatives were effective, indicating that the difficulties encountered complicated, but did not prevent, the successful implementation of the initiatives.

73.   There were other complications arising from the fact that nearly the totality of the SCER's voter education program was under the responsibility of the international

community. Unlike the other components, where the support in equipment or services complemented the SCER's own resources, there was full dependency of the SCER on the project's activities. This is the one area where local ownership of the process can be questioned, despite the efforts of the team in involving the concerned electoral officers in the decision-making process. As many of these decisions involved allocation of funds to contractors, which were ultimately made by the project, the result was resentment towards the experts in charge from the part of the SCER officers concerned.

74. It is illustrative that, voter education is the only area where the SCER officials complained of lack of good coordination with the electoral team. Further discussion indicated that the complaint referred more to the implementation problems already alluded to, but it also indicated tensions as to how the money should be spent and, more importantly, as to who handled the money.

75. These circumstances are well illustrated by the issue of working with the NGOs on implementing voter education initiatives. There was fundamental disagreement as to whether NGOs should be a major part of the exercise or not - the international community's view (represented by the UNDP electoral team) insisted in the major role the NGOs should play, where the SCER argued that NGOs were politicized and not really qualified, and therefore the funds would be better allocated to other agencies - such as other government agencies. As a result, some government agencies were funded (the General Union of Educational Professions, the General Federation of Workers' Trade Unions), but they performed poorly. Once it was clear that NGOs would be a part of the initiative, the argument centered on what NGOs to fund, and how. Following the philosophy of the project, the UNDP team and the SCER jointly decided which NGOs were to be funded. The UNDP team deferred in a couple of instances to the decision of the SCER and did not insist on involving particular NGOs to which some donors were partial. Moreover, the NGO budgets were revised by the SCER, cutting down funds intended to allow field work in isolated areas (funds the SCER found excessive) thus crippling the activities planned for in the initial projects.

76. Finally, it is important to make an observation that will become relevant in defining the second phase of the project - while the component is called "voter education" (in the project document is actually called "civic and voter education") it is clear by reviewing the impressive lists of initiatives that were carried out that the efforts undertaken are best described as "electoral public information".

77.   The goal of the initiatives is to raise awareness and participation in the process, and this is done quite effectively through public information campaigns. In fact, when working in close association with an electoral body, it is the most effective line of action. Voter education refers to more continued activities, with a pedagogical, rather an exclusively informative, nature. And in contexts like that of Yemen, voter education is most closely associated with field activities and face-to-face meetings - hence the motivation to work with NGOs. In a longer-term perspective, these considerations will be relevant, as public information will need to give way to voter education efforts.

3.3   BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

78.   The fact that the project was to coordinate and focalize international assistance to the elections was a major defining element of the whole exercise. The overview of the project implementation would be incomplete if it didn't include what kinds of partnerships, and how, were created by the dynamics of the coordinated electoral assistance.

79.   Three types of partnerships can be readily identified: a) between the international community and the Yemeni electoral authority, b) among the international donors and, c) among the international providers of electoral assistance.

International community and the SCER

80.   It can be said that the project and overall support to the electoral process consolidated relations and coordination between the international community and other public institutions, such as the office of the President and the Ministry of Planning, for example. Yet the primary association is that between the international community and the electoral authority - the SCER. And the most direct partnership established under the umbrella of the project was between the SCER and the UNDP electoral team.

81.   From the SCER's perspective, the team was very well integrated, fully participating in the planning and implementation of the various stages of the process. As mentioned, the team members themselves felt that, despite the integration, they were limited by lack of full information. Nevertheless, it is clear that there was mutual trust and good personal relations that allowed for a productive professional interchange.

82.   Additionally, the project established channels of communication between the donor community at large and the electoral authority. In the view of many stakeholders, in particular the leadership of the SCER, the project allowed for a "dialogue" between the internationals and the electoral authority – the Steering Committee serving as a constructive and fruitful communication and information mechanism.

International coordination - donors

83.   Through the course of the project implementation, a close partnership relation was established among the international donors. Nonetheless, the role of UNDP as the coordinating agency met with some difficulties in the initial stages, which created some doubt as to whether the coordination would function effectively.

84.   Initially, there were some reservations from the part of some donors regarding UNDP's capacity to be the lead agency in coordinating and providing support efficiently. In some donors' appreciation, UNDP has shown a tendency to get support for its own projects rather than actually carrying out effective donor coordination. Nevertheless, besides the fact that it was a request from the SCER and the Yemeni government, there was a recognition that nobody else would be in a better position to coordinate such an effort and serve as the focal point for international electoral assistance.

85.   Once the project was formulated and launched, most of the skepticisms vanished, though there still remained some hurdles to overcome. There was disagreement as to the mechanisms that should be used for coordination: UNDP's insisted in pushing the role of the SCER in the exercise (by establishing the Steering Committee, chaired by the Chairman of the SCER) while some donors felt that the internal donor coordination mechanisms were not in place. Nevertheless, the disagreements were quickly resolved and the handling of the coordination by UNDP was very much appreciated and valued by all involved.

86.   One very important result of the good partnership built between the UNDP and the donors was the efficiency in the mobilization of the resources required for the project. Ultimately, US$2,1 million were mobilized by UNDP, adding to its own resources contributions from six different donors: the Netherlands, the European Commission, Italy, Sweden, France and the United Kingdom.

International coordination - implementing agencies

87.   Besides UNDP, the other two international agencies offering electoral assistance are the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES). The role of both UNDP and IFES centers on technical and material assistance to the SCER. NDI's electoral mandate, on the other hand, deals with monitoring and evaluation, and works with civil society and political parties; as such, it is not directly concerned by IFES/UNDP technical and capacity building mandate.

88.   The difficulty in reaching an agreement regarding the formulation of the electoral assistance project was due, in large part, to the lack of consensus as to the division of labor of the various agencies providing electoral assistance to the SCER, in this case UNDP and IFES.

89.   The difficulties arose because the perception of the IFES office in Yemen that technical assistance to the SCER, at least in certain strategic areas, was its prerogative. As the leading agency, and accountable as such by the electoral body, UNDP felt that it was important to be able to offer widespread technical assistance to the SCER, without restrictions. Discussions and negotiations ensued, with a view to finding a mechanism allowing for a complementary cooperation between the electoral experts from IFES and those from UNDP. After some time, during which the formulation of the project suffered delays, working arrangements were agreed to, and with the project launched, the difficulties were finally resolved. Eventually, IFES and UNDP came to a constructive division of labor, characterized by good working relationship, for the benefit of the SCER.

90.   But the partnership also went beyond technical assistance and included NDI. The three agencies worked as an integrated force on various issues, incorporating different perspectives and approaches. This was most obvious in the presentation to the SCER of the concerns of civil society and political parties, thus addressing some of the "political" aspects of electoral administration. In this area the three agencies were very mutually supportive. A significant example is the role UNDP/IFES/NDI played in facilitating the dialogue between political parties and the SCER and in finding a formula agreeable to all parties concerned for forming the voter registration committees.

SECOND PART: EVALUATION OF OUTCOME PROGRESS

IV.   IMPACT ASSESMENT

91.   Having established what kind of electoral assistance was provided and in which areas, and after having reviewed how the activities were implemented, it is now necessary to evaluate its overall impact and to determine if there was any progress towards the achievement of the outcomes. In order to do so, it is necessary to examine the outputs of the electoral assistance, referring to both the quality of the 2003 elections and the improvement of electoral administration to organize and conduct elections.

92.   This assessment includes the short-term objectives and outputs, as formulated in the project, but also incorporates general appreciations of the wider effect of the international assistance, including other elements influencing the overall aim of electoral support. This is in keeping with UNDP's framework of "outcome evaluation", where assessment is focused on progress towards the achievement of the outcomes.

93.   The overall impact appraisal of the coordinated electoral assistance, therefore, is oriented towards qualitative developments and also takes into account the effectiveness of the partnerships built and of the coordination efforts, as well as the effect of the assistance in the longer-term development of electoral institutions and practices in Yemen.

4.1   REVIEW OF OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

94.   As mentioned, UNDP has moved away from evaluating its interventions at the level of inputs and outputs to focus on *outcomes*. The outcomes are developmental changes between the completion of outputs and the achievement of the overall aim or objective. The support to the electoral process, however, was formulated under the old project design framework, focused on inputs and outputs.

95.   Nevertheless, UNDP/Yemen, with a view to support the objectives of the project, centered on capacity building of the SCER to contribute to the organization of credible elections in 2003, identified the following outcome for the electoral assistance: "improved conformity of the legal, institutional and electoral framework with

international standards". Most of the outputs defined in the project document relate to this outcome, and should be reviewed in that light: how have they had an effect in achieving, or in moving towards achieving, this outcome.

96.   Although the aim of the intervention is very broad ("promotion of free, fair and participatory elections"), this outcome is limited, as it refers only to the administrative/institutional dimension of the electoral process. And we have shown that, by including with great relevance the area of voter education, the project had also decided to intervene in the social dimension of the electoral process. Thus, another outcome needs to be defined: "increased citizen participation in the electoral process". In fact, this outcome had been integrated to project formulation as one of the outputs.

97.   The assessment of the electoral assistance is centered then on how it has contributed in achieving those two outcomes: a) conformity of legal, institutional and electoral framework to international standards and b) increased citizen participation in electoral processes. We will do so by reviewing all the outputs defined trough the project and also new ones to complement the defined outcomes. The focus will be placed on developmental changes, by adopting a comparative approach: has there been progress towards achieving this outcome since previous elections?

98.   Following the discussion on the evaluation of project design, it will be useful to group the outputs in two categories - those related to the quality of the electoral process and those related to the improvement on the management capacity of electoral authority. While obviously inter-related, and often overlapping, it is useful to separate them for analytical purposes in order to be able to establish the impact of the project on its two main emphasis: support to the electoral event and electoral institutional/capacity building.

Quality of the electoral process

99.   The major outputs related directly to the quality of the elections include (a) overall improvement of the electoral administration of the process, (b) establishment of an accurate and comprehensive electoral register, (c) increased levels of public participation an awareness, (d) increased confidence in the process.

"Administration of the electoral process is improved"

100.   The general perception is that these elections were substantially better prepared and managed than previous elections. This is a general appreciation, shared by the SCER, the Yemeni government, political parties, the civil society at large and the international community. It's a position illustrated by observer reports; NDI's international election observer delegation, in its preliminary statement, writes about "impressive improvements in both logistical preparations and the performance of officials at the polling station level (sub-commissions) compared to past elections". Reports mention the lack of operational problems encountered in previous elections.

101.   These appreciations refer also to all aspects of the electoral preparation leading to polling. Voter registration was considered an administrative success, as was the nomination of candidates despite some difficulties. Effective and comprehensive electoral information campaigns were conducted for both the voter registration and polling phases of the process. And the polling operation was widely praised, although some problems with counting were also noted.

102.   Not only were they more technically and operationally sound that any other held in Yemen before, but they were the result of a substantially more transparent management throughout the process. In this area, observers reported a gradual progression that seems to have made a difference, pointing at better use of the media by the SCER, as well as the institution's encouragement to observe and monitor the process and attempts to create or develop a dialogue among various players.

103.   There are still problems in the electoral administration - procedures for voter registration were cumbersome, there was a significant problem of underage registration and voting, conditions for the nomination of independent candidates were exceedingly harsh, and the counting process broke down at a number of voting centers.

104.   Another major concern is the issue of cost-effectiveness (and thus, sustainability) in the administration. The 2003 elections were very expensive by world standards, and a close look at the management of the process shows that many choices and decisions were not very cost effective.

105.   Yet, despite the flaws present in the administration of the legislative elections, the progress made is unquestionable. The administration of the process reflected, more than ever before, international standards such as efficiency, transparency and impartiality, although further advance in all these areas is still required. It is thus possible to ascertain that the output was achieved.

"Comprehensive and accurate electoral register is established"

106.   The SCER's decision to engage on a new voter registration exercise, instead of trying to update the existing roll, was a technically sound one. The voter registration exercise was considered a success, allowing for the establishment of a brand new, computerized register.

107.   The new electoral register is *significantly more* accurate and comprehensive than the previous voter register credible tool for the 27 April poll. The number of registered voters rose from 5.6 million to over 8 million. Notably, the share of women voters registered increased substantially, to 43% of the total registered population (from 30% in 1997 and 18% in 1993).

108.   There are, however, valid concerns regarding the quality of the electoral roll. The first of them is the underage registration - while the magnitude of the anomaly is still not exactly determined, it is clearly a major concern in assessing the quality of the register's database.

109.   The problems associated with lack of documentary proof to establish voter's identification and eligibility had a negative impact on the quality of the information collected. In particular, the registration of voters regardless of their voting domicile (habitual residence) is a problematic issue, which will have an impact in the use of the roll in future elections. Furthermore, the process of exclusion of voters from the preliminary list (during the period of exhibition and challenges) was also flawed, and a number of registered voters, holding a voter card, found themselves crossed out from the register and thus unable to vote.

110.   Despite the serious concerns on the accuracy of the electoral roll, once again the quality leap regarding previous electoral rolls to the one established for the purposes of

the 2003 elections is remarkable, enabling most eligible voters to exercise their right to vote. Therefore, this key output can be considered as having been achieved.

"Increased level of citizen participation and awareness"

111.   The already mentioned success of the voter registration drive was a result not only of improved administration but also, and significantly so, of the motivation of the electorate. A much higher number of voters were not only able but also willing to register, indicating an enhanced level of awareness and enthusiasm to participate in the electoral process.

112.   The turn-out rate for polling reaffirmed this statement - 76% of the 8,086,000 registered voters turned out to vote, as compared to 62% of 4,600,000 registered voters in 1997. Observer reports note that polling day was marked by "enthusiasm and determination".

113.   Again noteworthy, the participation of women in polling showed a marked increase. Unfortunately, the participation of women as candidates decreased as compared to previous elections. This is probably more a result of flaws within the political parties and their internal behavior as well as traditional gender values in Yemeni society, rather than a reflection of a low level of political awareness of women.

114.   The tangible increase in participation, both in registration and voting, clearly indicate higher levels of public awareness and interest in the electoral process. It is also indicative of a better-informed electorate, as corroborated by NGOs and political parties. Therefore, the output defined by a tangible increase in public participation in, and awareness of, registration and polling, including significant advances in the participation of women, was also met.

"Increased levels of credibility and acceptance of the process"

115.   Not unsurprisingly given that the previous outputs have been met, it is safe to say that public confidence and trust in the electoral process in Yemen has significantly increased, comparing with results from previous elections.

116.	The improved electoral administration, which contrasted so markedly with the deficiencies of the past, was a major element in increasing public trust in the process. The new computerized electoral register, with photos on the voter lists that match new voter identification cards, for example, was a very useful tool in building public confidence. Electoral safeguards used during polling also increased confidence (use of indelible ink, transparent ballot boxes), as did increased openness of the SCER to work with media, political parties, NGOs, and electoral observers.

117.	Another important element in building public confidence in the process is the fact that 21 of the 22 political parties chose to participate in the elections, while only 12 did so in the 1997 parliamentary elections. Furthermore, it was noted that pre-election and polling-day violence was significantly reduced. The adoption, by political parties, of a code of conduct, is at least partially responsible for this reduced level of violence, which reflects gains in the public trust in the process. And, despite claims and disputes about the results in specific constituencies, the global results seem to have been accepted, albeit reluctantly, by all parties.

118.	Finally, evidence of internal assistance and support to the process, which was showcased through the project, also counted as a factor of confidence building in the process.

119.	Nevertheless, and despite the major gains made during this process, substantial problems in the area of trust and public confidence remain, particularly from the political side of the process. If the 2003 legislative elections were "technically" satisfactory, they were still characterized by important shortcomings, many of them of political nature.

120.	Opposition political parties have serious complaints regarding the process, both in its administrative and political dimensions, feeling that it is still controlled by the ruling party. Despite progress in transparency and more efficient electoral management, the SCER still faces credibility problems regarding its independence and impartiality. The SCER continues to be perceived by the opposition parties as an instrument of the ruling party representing the interests of the government. There is a perceived interference of the government in the administration of elections, which reinforces the view held by some parties and sectors of society that, despite progress, the SCER is biased towards the ruling part.

121.   A further issue lies in the difficulties faced by individuals looking to be nominated as independent candidates - the demands and conditions were too restrictive, there was a lack of proper notification from the SCER's side and inconsistency in application of procedures.

122.   Moreover, international and local observers have reported continued manipulation and undue influence of political parties in diverse areas of the country, and this by all parties, although the government party has been more often signaled as an offender. Heavy-handed and coercive measures during polling were mentioned in observation reports, and the most problematic issue for credibility factors was reports of obstructions by party representatives (mostly GPC) of the counting procedures.

123.   The political character of the polling/counting committees was often blamed for the breakdown of the process at the counting level, where many of the complaints regarding the elections were focused. The results in a number of constituencies were thus challenged, and there have been provisions for by-elections in at least two cases.

124.   Finally, the process also suffered from credibility by the way in which electoral complaints filed by the parties were handled. Opposition parties claimed (backed by detailed reports) that the courts dismissed their claims while accepting all claims made by the GPC against them.

125.   All in all, it is sound to conclude that the 2003 elections enjoyed an increased level of public trust and were, therefore, more credible than past elections. This statement needs to be qualified, however, by stating that the credibility of the electoral administration and the elections themselves is derived more from the technical than the political dimension of the process and that there is still a long way to go before the electoral process as a whole is fully accepted by the electorate and the political parties. In this sense, the output referring to increased trust and credibility is only partially achieved.

Institutional and capacity building

126.   The outputs most directly related to electoral institutional and capacity building include (a) professional skills of electoral administrators are enhanced, (b) international standards for electoral administration are adopted, (c) permanent branch offices are established and consolidated and (d) progress achieved is sustained.

"Professional skills of electoral administrators are enhanced"

127.   Technically there was great progress within the SCER, both at the top managerial level and that of registration and poll officers. The first and most obvious evidence of this progress is the marked improvement in the management of the electoral process. This can be seen as a reflection of enhanced local capacity since, despite the international electoral assistance, by all accounts responsibility and accountability of all phases of the elections fell on the local electoral authorities. The SCER had complete ownership of the process - advice was invited and often accepted, but decisions and implementation were always in the hands of the members of the SCER.

128.   Training of registration workers was not a smooth process and therefore not completely effective, due mostly to the problems created by the political composition of the registration committees. Training of poll workers, on the other hand, went extremely well, with good cascade training implemented by the SCER with strong combined support from UNDP/IFES. Thus, the skills of polling officials were effectively enhanced, as demonstrated in the improved performance during polling.

129.   The enhancement of professional skills was more noticeable at top management levels and polling staff, whereas at the middle level management level, including regional staff, there was less perceptible progress.

130.   With some reservations, then, it can be stated that the output was achieved, and that the professional skills of the electoral staff have been enhanced, contributing to improved performance during the process.

"International standards for electoral administration are adopted"

131.   It is widely accepted that certain principles form the basis for a credible electoral administration: efficiency is one of them, but impartiality and transparency are equally fundamental. The technical advances of the SCER and its staff during the process has already been highlighted, and their importance has been duly noted. But from an electoral administration perspective, the major qualitative leap of the SCER was the mainstreaming of "transparency". There is, as mentioned, still much more work on the area of transparency. More importantly, the SCER still suffers from credibility problems

and it needs to overcome its perceived partiality and lack of independence from the government.

132. Increased efficiency and greater transparency certainly mark a fundamental difference from previous experiences, and this progress indicates progress towards the achievement of this output. Nevertheless, there is more work to be done, in particular in the area of impartiality (and the perceived interference form the government in the electoral management).

"Branch offices are established and consolidated"

133. The push for the implementation of the SCER decentralization plans was supported by the launching of the voter registration drive, which served as a catalyst in establishing the branch offices. This was because the new decentralized structure played a fundamental role in the registration exercise.

134. The SCER 20 branch offices were set up, equipped and made fully functional in a very brief period of time. The SCER carried out, with support form the electoral support project, training of senior regional staff. Following the registration period, they remained operational throughout the period.

135. There are still deficiencies in the administration of the branch offices, and more worked is required in enhancing the skills of its workers and managers. While the regional structure was established and made operational, it still cannot be assessed as fully "consolidated". Nevertheless, it can be stated that the objective has been at least partially achieved.

"Progress achieved is sustained"

136. One of the main concepts usually associated with capacity building is sustainability, which was not clearly stated in the outputs of the project. From an institutional strengthening perspective, it is necessary to assess how viable is the progress achieved within an institution ("sustained development").

137. A major source of concern in this regard refers to the centralized and personalized nature of the leadership of the SCER. Much progress was noted at the top management,

and even tough the transfer of skills and know-how did trickle down to other levels, this did not happen in a systematic enough manner to guarantee sustained capacity gains. And given the fact that there is a traditional mobility of high-ranking public servants, the effect of the capacity building efforts can be greatly diminished in a longer-term perspective.

138.   At a different level, sustainability refers to the choice of technology and operation modalities. In this respect, as already indicated, the administration of the process does not fare very well. The generous financial commitment of the government had a perverse side effect, in that cost-effectiveness (and efficacy with it) was sacrificed so that credibility of the election itself would be enhanced. The result is one of the most expensive elections per capita in the world - $45 million dollars for registration alone, and a further $37 million for polling, for 8 million registered voters.

139.   The picture is grimmer if, in spite of the high costs, the choices prove to be unsustainable. An important example is the electoral register, on which significant resources were invested, but whose viability is not at all guaranteed. It is possible that the SCER will be compelled to establish a *brand new* electoral register for the next elections, and in any case will have difficulties updating this one, not least because of the expensive choices that went in the register design.

140.   Thus, while it is expected that many of the improvements noted in the professional skills of the official and the progress made in electoral administration will be consolidated in the future, there are serious concerns regarding sustainability of the gains. This is one output that probably was not achieved as anticipated.

4.2   CONTRIBUTION OF ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

141.   Having reviewed whether the expected outputs had been achieved or whether progress had been met in their achievement (and thus whether there has been progress towards meeting the outcomes), it is now necessary to look at the factors affecting the outcomes. Identifying those factors beyond the control or the scope of technical assistance (external factors) is necessary in order to realistically evaluate the effective impact of the electoral assistance provided.

External factors affecting the outcomes

142.   While highlighting some of the remaining problems, an assessment of the process draws a positive picture in terms of the advances made in the Yemeni electoral administration. In considering the factors which had an influence in this positive development, the first one to be signaled is strong political will and commitment from the government. The prominent place and priority that the government gave to the electoral process were reflected in the substantial amount of resources committed to the SCER and the process.

143.   On the electoral side, the improvement in the legal framework, which resolved many of the previous bottlenecks, and the restructuring of the electoral authority, also paved the way for a more effective and credible administration of the process. In particular, the more effective composition of electoral management levels, and the professionalism and commitment of the new SCER leadership, opened the doors for improvements and progress of the electoral administration. That new management also proved to be open and eager to embrace international assistance.

144.   On the other hand, there were "external" obstacles to the achievement of the outputs. Some of them refer to structural problems within the electoral body - overstaffing, political nature of appointments and the centralized and personalized character of the institutional leadership - characteristics not only of the SCER but common to many Yemeni public institutions.

145.   And while the new electoral law was a step forward in the establishment of a rational framework for the electoral administration, it still contains important flaws that delayed or hindered progress in strengthening the electoral process. Inadequate provisions and inefficient or irrational procedures established in the legal framework would certainly limit the possibility of technical assistance of having a constructive effect.

146.   The most problematic area, as mentioned, is the political dimension. An electoral process contains not only administrative aspects, but is also and fundamentally a social and political event. While the electoral administration, in its technical and operational management of the process, undoubtedly plays a political role and has a clear political dimension, the political environment and its complex dimensions are beyond its control.

Thus, the political structure and environment (referring among other to the degree of respect of basic political rights) will be important factors affecting the electoral process, often beyond the control of the electoral administration - thus limiting the effective impact of technical assistance.

Impact of electoral assistance

147.   International electoral assistance, and the work carried out by the UNDP electoral team, received nearly universal praise, and its effectiveness recognized at all different levels. According to the SCER counterparts, the team's work contributed tremendously to their good performance. It is pertinent, however, to look into more detail as to where electoral assistance had a positive impact (or not) in the achievement of the outputs. In this section the impact of the two tracks of intervention (support to the electoral administration and voter education) is evaluated, as well as that of the "parallel" track: the coordination of electoral assistance.

Impact of support to the electoral administration

148.   The general appreciation is that the support to the electoral administration through the technical advice of the electoral team and the provision of equipment, materials and services was exceptionally helpful. In particular, the head of the technical sector singled out the assistance provided through the team, and stated that it was essential for the good results achieved.

149.   The improvement of electoral administration can be associated, at least partially, by the technical assistance provided. The day-to-day advice was a major input in the making of critical and strategic decisions. The continued advice and specialized professional guidance increased standards of technical and operational decision-making, strengthening the operation but also enhancing the technical understanding of the decision makers. The trust and good working relationship of the experts with the SCER top management allowed for this achievement.

150.   With the team based "in-house" at the SCER, a permanent and continuous presence was guaranteed. Implementation possibilities allowed a "show by doing" approach – convince with products (training manual, for example). In the words of the

SCER chairman, the team was efficient, as it could also implement - mentioning the examples of public awareness activities and the training programs.

151. The emphasis of the team's work on transparency paid off, and the progress observed on this area can be attributed in large degree to the project's support. The SCER, the political parties and other stakeholders have acknowledged this fact. The gradual progress of the SCER on the transparency issue was notable following the first event (organized by the project), where the SCER had a very defensive, combative attitude towards political parties, to a series of dialogues and openness that characterized the final stages of the process.

152. Training, being a priority focus of the team's work, was another area where the efforts of the electoral team played a significant role in the enhancement of skills of polling officials. There was also a capacity building effect, as the initial resistance to the training methodology proposed by the electoral team was overcome by good results. The concept of innovative training manuals was also initially met with skepticism, but after production they were accepted as recognized as more efficient and user-friendly.

153. The assistance to the decentralization process was uneven: despite the variety of actions carried out, support to decentralization was not a systematic, comprehensive intervention - in fact, it consisted of isolated efforts, with important, but limited impact. Initial support of branch offices was needed and proved helpful in making them functional. Nevertheless, the emphasis of the work of the team was elsewhere and, as a whole, assistance was not up to the demands for such an important component of the institutional building efforts.

154. There was an additional impact of the provision of technical assistance: the involvement of international experts, viewed as neutral players, served as a confidence building mechanism. Political parties, both attached and opposed to the government, were demanding international technical assistance and, overall, more international involvement, in order to guarantee increased technical standards and impartiality.

155. Although the overall evaluation of the impact of technical assistance in the progress made by the electoral administration is very positive, there were limitations that hindered maximum impact. Besides the external factors already mentioned, such as structural problems of the SCER, there were other elements such as the tight timeframe

and the broad nature of the technical assistance mandate ("all aspects of all phases"), which often hindered the possibility of following a systematic work plan, and required from the members of the team to be constantly "reacting" to the daily (and often haphazard) needs and demands of their counterparts.

156.   Another limitation was the late start of the project, due to the difficulties in the formulation phase. When the team began its activities, the preparations for voter registration were already underway and many key decisions had already been made. Time was required for good professional relationships to develop and, in particular, to establish trust. Moreover, it took time for the UNDP structure to adapt to the implementation needs, and the administrative support in the provision of goods and services was often untimely. As a result, the technical assistance had a much wider impact in the polling phase than in the registration phase.

157.   A final remark, once again referring to "external factors" - the positive and significant contribution of the technical assistance was made possible because this SCER was cooperative and open to assistance, much more so than previous commissions. And while the assistance came belatedly for the registration preparations, the electoral team did arrive at a time when the restructuring of the SCER was on-going, thus providing timely input to the consolidating of the new institutional arrangements.

Impact of voter education initiatives

158.   As mentioned before, the voter education initiatives made up a comprehensive public information *blitz*. The impact of these initiatives needs to be considered in two fronts: a) was public awareness and participation increased as a result of the initiatives? and, b) what was the impact in terms of capacity building?

159.   The initiatives were extremely high profile, particularly in the urban areas. It was the first time such a large-scale campaign had been carried out, and the innovative character contributed to enhance its visibility. Therefore, the campaign had a very tangible impact in increasing the visibility of the electoral process, the electoral authority and even of the international community as represented by the project. Many of the stakeholders expressed their view that this evidence of international support contributed to build public confidence on the process.

160.   It has been mentioned that the high turn out rates for both registration and polling attest to the increased levels of motivation and awareness of the electorate. There is a consensus among all stakeholders that the voter education initiatives played a major role in motivating high participation. Because many of the activities were particularly targeted towards women, the increase of the participation of women in the process by registering and voting can also be attributed, at least in part, to the effects of the campaign. Equally, given the particular attention given to the choice and packaging of the electoral messages, the campaign played a significant role in familiarizing voters with the steps and procedures of the registration and polling processes.

161.   While there were deliberate attempts at reaching far away and isolated corners of the country, it was noted that many of the rural areas were not as well covered as had been expected. And while women were particularly targeted (apparently with excellent results) some stakeholders expressed that more particular efforts should have been implemented directed to other disadvantaged groups, such as the illiterate.

162.   Nevertheless, the overall appreciation, despite any limitations, is that the public information and voter education efforts were effective and useful in raising public awareness and knowledge of the process, resulting in a higher public awareness and electoral participation.

163.   In terms of capacity building, the direct beneficiaries of the support to voter education were the counterparts of the electoral team, which were staff of the Media and Awareness department of the SCER. The dependency of the SCER on the project for the implementation of the voter education campaign has already been highlighted, yet it must be emphasized that the project chose to work very closely with its counterpart on all aspects of the campaign: design and implementation included.

164.   In this context, there was a qualification of the SCER media and voter education staff, in terms of the attention given to the choice and packaging of the messages, away from the traditional slogans to more precise and informative messages. That the SCER praised the effectiveness of the voter education efforts and acknowledged progress in the technical aspect of public information are indicators that there was transfer of skills in that important area of electoral administration. As in other components, however, this enhanced capacity was limited to high-level staff.

Impact of coordination efforts

165.   In spite of some of the initial doubts, at the end all stakeholders found that the coordination arrangements worked out very well - that UNDP proved to be a good and efficient coordinating agency and that required partnerships were established effectively and productively.

166.   It was expressed often during interviews with the donors that it was very beneficial for them to have had the UNDP umbrella through this project, as bilateral relations with the SCER wouldn't have been as effective. There is consensus that and information and communication channels were good and effective. The donors repeatedly praised the reports furnished by the electoral team. The communication channel with SCER, through the Steering Committee, was assessed as very effective. In the view of some, it also allowed for communication between the SCER and political parties.

167.   If donors found it useful to be direct contact with the electoral authority, from the SCER's perspective, UNDP's coordination role was a "moral and political" one, as it opened a window to the donor community. The SCER benefited immensely from the united front for international support of the process provided by the project. Moreover, beyond its impact on technical and operational progress in the preparation and conduct of the 2003 legislative elections, the electoral assistance provided by the international community was also important in legitimizing the process.

168.   There is agreement in the positive impact in the rationalization of the international donor assistance to the electoral process, as focalized by the UNDP project – it avoided previous fragmentation of assistance, facilitated mobilization of funds, favored rationalization of resources and guaranteed coherence of the international support to the electoral process.

169.   The joining of force between UNDP and IFES was very productive - they were able to push together for unified positions at the SCER, making joint recommendations (such as the use of the voter cards, training efforts, formula for the nomination of the registration committees). This assessment is shared by the SCER, which felt there was good coordination between the international technical advisers (UNDP, IFES).

170. Beyond the coordination on technical assistance, different stakeholders view the UNDP/IFES/NDI partnership as a force "pushing" change within the SCER, benefiting NGO observers and political parties - and thus strengthening the electoral process.

4.3 ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE AND OUTCOMES: SYNTHESIS

171. Overall, the international electoral assistance (technical and material) provided through the UNDP project is perceived by the key stakeholders as having had a very positive impact in the improved capacity of the SCER, thus favoring the preparation and conduct of credible elections. In the words of many, the contribution of the project to a much-improved technical election process was significant and unquestionable. The excellent quality of the assistance impacted favorably in the overall preparation of the process – in technical, procedural and operational issues. Most outputs of the assistance have been met, and in all cases there has been progress made towards meeting them. As a result, there has been real progress towards achieving the outcomes.

172. The 2003 legislative elections were widely accepted as significant progress in electoral administration. The international electoral assistance under the UNDP umbrella was seen as an important element contributing to the improvements in the preparations and management of the elections. The irregularities observed (particularly in the political sphere) underscore the fact that there is still much to achieve, but they don't overshadow the progress made.

173. Stakeholders insisted that the most important achievement of the coordinated international electoral assistance was to increase the capacity of the electoral authority - not only is the SCER much more efficient but, even more importantly, more open and transparent. There has been, in most stakeholders' opinion, a real upgrading of the country's capacity to manage and organize elections, indicating that the capacity building focus and approach seemed to have been successful, at least in the short-term. It will be important to see if the progress achieved is sustained in the longer-term.

174. These appreciations regarding the improved quality of the electoral authority and the international assistance's contribution illustrate both that there has been great progress towards the achievement of having the electoral administration conform to international standards and that UNDP coordinated assistance achieved its proposed outcome. The

supplementary outcome of increased citizen participation has likewise been achieved, in particular through the greater registration and voter turnout by women.

175.   The coordination role of UNDP is perceived as having been extremely useful – very effective and well managed. It focused efforts of the donor community, efficiently mobilized required resources and served as a very beneficial communication mechanism between donors and SCER. As such, UNDP coordination set a good precedent in a place with weak donor coordination mechanisms. The Steering Committee, chaired by the SCER Chairman, was well set up and well managed, maintaining donors on-board and well informed (thus, well disposed).

176.   While initially facing some difficulties, the various partnerships (among international actors and with the SCER) proved to be effective and productive. Many of the achievements were due in good measure because of the work of the UNDP electoral team but also due to the partnership UNDP/IFES/NDI.

177.   In balance, the international technical assistance was successful. The support provided was very positive, and it's clear it had an impact in the SCER, raised public awareness and created effective interaction and partnerships between different stakeholders. There is a perceived linkage between assistance provided and the significant progress towards the achievement of key outcomes.

178.   For the SCER, the UNDP project played a pivotal role in supporting the electoral authority and the electoral process – it was more of a moral, political and technical support than a financial one, given the relative small amount of funds allocated by the international community as compared to the total cost of the election.

179.   The success of the project points to its perceived weaknesses: its short-term character, despite its being linked to a long-term initiative. The first phase is considered to have been short, and being defined independently from phase two, so that there is a perceived danger of loosing momentum and continuity. The focus of the stakeholders (including the SCER) is now on the timely design and implementation of phase two.

V. SECOND PHASE: GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUED ELECTORAL SUPPORT

180. A clear consensus among all key stakeholders is the importance of maintaining efforts in support of electoral and democratic strengthening in Yemen and, therefore, of international assistance moving into a second phase as quickly as possible.

181. Electoral institutional and capacity building continues to present a variety of challenges despite the progress observed in the last year. There is still a perceived need of continuing the pace of electoral reform and to increase public awareness in the electoral process, particularly of marginalized sectors. Confidence in the process by political parties still needs reinforcing and there is much work to be accomplished in the political aspect of the electoral process. It's also important to consolidate "good practices" acquired within the electoral authority and maximize the openness of the SCER to improvement and international assistance. Finally, the SCER will be facing important medium-term challenges, preparing for a complicated simultaneous process of local council and presidential elections.

182. All these considerations indicate that the international community still has a role to play through continued electoral assistance. There is a general agreement among all stakeholders that the momentum acquired in electoral assistance through the first phase should not be lost. There is a basic assumption that the strong political commitment to the process will still be maintained, and that the international community should take advantage of this opening. The international community's commitment to the process constitutes, in that sense, an important political message to the government. The good coordination achieved between the donors achieved through UNDP offers a solid base to move on to phase two.

183. In this context, the SCER and concerned government agencies, the donors, the international agencies, all concur that it is crucial to maintain the dynamic of the assistance created by the first phase of international electoral assistance. This chapter looks in more detail at the areas still requiring support and identifies the decisions required, and options available, in order to design the second phase of the coordinated international assistance to the electoral development in Yemen.

5.1 AREAS REQUIRING CONTINUED ATTENTION

184. In the context of an electoral process hailed as the best managed in the history of the country, and a wide consensus that the electoral administration has greatly improved, there are still a number of areas that require attention to in the consolidation of the institutional, social and political basis of elections in Yemen.

Improvement of managerial skills and overall efficiency

185. As mentioned throughout the previous discussion, and notwithstanding the impressive progress, there is still more room for improvement in the SCER's management capacities. There are various issues, related to the managerial and organizational aspects of the institution that require continued attention: consolidation of the decentralization process, mainstreaming of transparency, cost-effectiveness and sustainability, and simplification of procedures.

186. The SCER continues to be an extremely centralized organization. Centralized management accompanied with good leadership is not a bad state of affairs to initiate reform dynamics, but it is not beneficial in a long-term perspective. The challenges now lie in the turning the institution into a viable, sustainable one, without dependency on its leader, through improved administrative capacity at middle management levels and increased delegation of power.

187. Despite the gains on transparency, there is still a gap between SCER, political parties, civil society and media. Further work is therefore required on the SCER handling of the media and information, which is still reluctant to produce and present information. By strengthening the openness and transparency of the elections commission, and its ability to maintain dialogue and communication, civil society and political parties can be further empowered. Relations between the SCER and the parties have improved, and have become more cooperative, but there is still much more to be achieved in this area. In regards to strengthening the independent character of the commission, the SCER needs to improve its image moving away from that of a government biased institution; in effect, this implies reducing the interference of state authorities in the management of the electoral process, or the perception thereof. Finally, the role of the military within the

SCER, particularly in the operations sector, must also be reviewed, in order to lessen the dependency of the electoral institution on the armed forces.

188.   As mentioned, cost-effectiveness and sustainability constitute major concerns regarding the future of electoral administration. The SCER will need to start making sustainable choices, both in regards to technology and modes of operation. Furthermore, electoral procedures need to be revised and simplified - including in voter registration as well as nomination of candidates. In order to consolidate advances in operational training, the training unit needs to be consolidated with highly skilled core trainers.

Challenges in the preparation of future electoral events

189.   The conduct of the presidential and local council elections, scheduled to be held simultaneously in 2006, present a number of challenges. The preparations for these elections require long-term efforts, as they include refining of the overall legal framework, and dealing with problematic and complex issues such as the update of the electoral roll and the redefinition of the electoral boundaries.

190.   There is general consensus in the need to continue the electoral reform process through further review of the electoral framework. Such a review will probably need to undertake a number of areas where notable deficiencies are still present. Appeals and complaints is one are of electoral management that requires extensive overhauling, although it doesn't directly deal wit the SCER, but rather with the court system (district courts and the Supreme Court). The issue of independent candidates is one where key stakeholders have mentioned needs revisiting through legal reform – the meaning of "independence" still unclear.

191.   Additionally, the two major tasks the SCER will be facing in the not so-distant future, the update of the electoral register and the delimitation of boundaries, are beset with difficulties that require immediate attention.

192.   The shortcomings of the electoral register database will pose serious challenges to its updating - which the SCER is by law required to do by 2004 and then again by 2006. The high technology features of the roll will make difficult (and expensive) any updating effort. Besides the problem of the underage registration, the new roll will need to deal with the deficiencies in the information, particularly regarding the habitual residence.

193.   The need to update the electoral roll raises the issue as to how this electoral administrative issue will interface (or not) with other processes the government is planning to carry out almost simultaneously, namely the civil registry and the population census. Moreover, these same processes will have a bearing in the delimitation of the electoral constituencies, as they are to be determined by population figures. Should these different processes be linked? This situation opens the issue of inter-ministerial use of available statistical tools and introduces issues of timing and mandate.

5.2   CONTINUITY AND LONGER-TERM INTERVENTION

194.   There are enough areas of attention that would warrant continued electoral support from the international community. The consensus, as mentioned earlier, is that there is a need to consolidate the improvements achieved and to build on the progress made. Thus, *continuity* seems to be a major theme when formulating the second phase of the coordinated international assistance under the UNDP umbrella.

195.   Continuity implies retaining the capacity-building approach adopted for the first phase, linking it to the preparation of future electoral events. Continuity also implies working in at least one (or both) of the two-major tracks that framed the intervention on the 2003 process: support to the electoral administration and voter education. The focus on continuity and building on the current momentum would exclude work directly linked to the political dimension of the election, such as promotion of political parties, although it could include dealing with political elements through support to legal reform or indirect support, through partnerships, of political party capacity building of political parties.

196.   Continuity also has to take into account the timeframe and the nature of the assistance intended for this next phase: while the next electoral events will be conducted in 2006, there is yet another consensus that the second phase should start as soon as possible. Thus, this next stage of the electoral support needs to be defined in a longer-term perspective. A number of choices are therefore required before any guidelines for the formulation of the second phase can be presented.

Fundamental choices for a conceptual design

197.   The first element to clearly identify is the outcome (or outcomes) expected of the coordinated assistance, based on the global aim as explicitly agreed to by all stakeholders. If the global aim continues to supporting the development of elections in Yemen, then the outcomes could be those identified earlier for the purposes of this evaluation: "conformity of legal, institutional and electoral framework to international standards" and "increased citizen participation in electoral processes".

198.   While the continuity principle would indicate work on either support to the electoral administration or voter education or both, a clear decision has to made on this respect. Moreover, not only should the area of work be clearly chosen, but also the beneficiaries need to be clearly identified. In terms of support to the electoral administration, there is complete agreement by all concerned that support to electoral management should be consolidated. It is important to point out, however, that while the SCER is the main electoral authority in Yemen, it is not the only one. For example, the courts play an important role in the management of the process, dealing with the important area of appeals and complaints. Legal reform, which was repeatedly mentioned as a priority area of support, would have as beneficiary the legislative body and not directly the SCER.

199.   On the other hand, there was a degree of disagreement as to the priority of voter education. Some of the donors involved felt that voter education is not quite as relevant in this phase, as voters have good information and are aware; in this view, broader civic education is linked to social transformation of traditional attitudes and values, outside the scope of electoral assistance. Most stakeholders, however, disagree and insist on the need to work on wider issues of citizen awareness and knowledge of the electoral process. In fact, a view often expressed was that support to the electoral administration and support to voter education are two aspects that are inter-linked: it is not enough to increase technical capacity if there is not enough public ownership of the process.

200.   Therefore, some fundamental choices are required, before the second phase can be formulated: should electoral assistance concentrate on one track (support to electoral administration?) or should it continue its support to both tracks? Who should be the

primary beneficiaries of the assistance: the SCER alone, or should it include other major key stakeholders of the process: political parties, electorate at large, NGOs, other public institutions? To help the decision-making process, some considerations on the longer-term nature of the assistance might prove useful.

Longer-term assistance: implications

201.   For whatever area is chosen, longer-term assistance cannot be designed as it was for the first phase; the modalities of support differ significantly. Long-term capacity building for the SCER, for example, cannot be centralized. It has mentioned earlier that efforts are to focus on middle level management and branch office personnel, as well as in maintenance of the equipment and infrastructure. On the other hand, support to voter education in a longer-term perspective implies a leap from public information (focused on the SCER) to more sustained voter education efforts. In other words, because of its broader scope, support to voter education should not be approached exclusively or fundamentally through technical or material assistance to the SCER, but should rather be associated with NGOs and other civil society organizations.

202.   Related to the choices required are doubts expressed by some stakeholders as to the need to focus attention, or resources, to one or another of the two tracks. This concern becomes particularly relevant because of the longer-term nature of the assistance. Longer-term educational process, for example, increasing general democratic awareness and participation, is a more difficult area of assistance to handle than voter education related to an electoral event. In that light, concentrating on support to the electoral management, the SCER, which is the easiest modality to plan and implement, would make it easier to avoid diffusion of resources, although it would limit the effects of the assistance in achieving the stated outcomes.

203.   One final observation relates to the resources required for a longer-term intervention: contrary to what some donors expected, long-term support requires more resources than the short-term approach. The fact that the next electoral event is three years away does not imply that financing demands of a longer-term assistance for the second phase might be less significant than was the case during the first phase. The nature and scope of the assistance for the second phase will ultimately depend on the extent of resources available.

5.3 SECOND PHASE: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

204.   A first recommendation echoes the views of all concerned stakeholders regarding the need to go ahead as soon as possible in the formulation of phase two. It is essential not to let a gap develop between the end of the first phase and the beginning of activities in the next phase. The partnerships as established during fist phase should be consolidated, based on clear division of labor and identification of shared tasks between agencies - it is therefore important that the formulation of the next phase clearly defines funding sources to avoid conflicts over funds.

205.   Based on the improvements achieved during the first phase and the assessment of the areas that still require attention in the electoral development of Yemen, a second recommendation is to continue the two track approach: support to electoral administration and support to voter education should both be maintained in a second phase. To avoid the danger of losing focus and control, the second phase should use a selective approach, both in defining specific areas of support and in the definition of beneficiaries.

206.   Whatever the number of electoral experts (short and long-term) deemed necessary to provide assistance, it is important for the project to count with the services of an administrative staff member, dedicated exclusively to the issues regarding the provision of goods and services. While the senior electoral expert would liaise with the SCER on substantive issues, the administrative officer would serve as direct link between the SCER and the UNDP country office on implementation issues.

Longer-term support to electoral administration

207.   Support to the electoral authority on a long-term basis means that the assistance can no longer be *exclusively* articulated around the preparation of the next electoral events. Rather, the emphasis should be on longer-term capacity building in the electoral administration, strengthening the regional structures and concentrating on building skills within the SCER at medium management levels and branch office personnel.

208.   International technical assistance will still be required, but its structure should be very different than during the previous phase. Centralized technical assistance should be specialized on the long-term, responding to specific needs or requests from the SCER

(such as electoral reform, or boundary delimitation, or issues related to the electoral roll). At the central level, other areas that could be the *specialized* target of capacity building efforts could be the Media and Awareness Department, and the Training Unit, consolidating important achievements in strategic areas of work.

209.   Day to day advice will still be required, but at a *decentralized* level - that is, within the branch offices. While it is certainly not realistic to have 20 experts in the field (one per branch office), different modalities could be adopted, based on a selective approach: either the formulation of pilot projects in selected branch offices, or the "regionalization" (for the purposes of technical advice) of the 20 branch offices: say, five experts for five regions, with four branch offices each.

210.   The current context is an excellent one for longer-term capacity building efforts, focusing on professional training to develop capacity and build technical skills, without the pressures of an electoral timetable. An electoral administration program, based on BRIDGE for example (a capacity-building tool develop jointly by the Australian Electoral Commission, International IDEA and the United Nations) would be ideally suited, as it is module based and offers enough flexibility to adapt to Yemeni needs.

211.   While "immediate preparations" for the local council and presidential elections will not begin before September 2005, it has been made sufficiently clear that there are medium-term preparations, essential for the success of those elections, that require *immediate* attention. It is important to liaise with the SCER and encourage the definition of specific areas of support in that regard and to prioritize the needs identified. Electoral reform, boundary delimitation and electoral register update have been tentatively identified already, but a more detailed needs assessment is necessary.

212.   Finally, the concrete support required for the last stage of assistance (roughly defined as a year before the next electoral events, that is from September 2005 to September 2006) would be need to be defined at a later stage, building on the assistance provided thus far.

Longer-term support to voter education

213.   Electoral public information efforts, articulated through the SCER, can no longer be the focus of the support in a long-term perspective. The leap to voter education implies

a wider range of activities and actors involved, with an emphasis on fieldwork activities and targeted beneficiaries - which in the case of Yemen would continue to be, mainly, the women and the illiterate.

214.   Because of the longer-term perspective, where the next electoral event is a couple of years away, voter education needs to integrated into a wider civic education and awareness initiative. Legally, the SCER is responsible for voter education, even in-between elections, and SCER initiatives should be supported (linked with the capacity building component of the Media and Awareness Department). Nevertheless, it is important from the immediate post-electoral period that the international community does not assume complete responsibility of the voter education and public information component of the electoral administration.

215.   In any case, the focus of assistance to wider voter education initiatives *cannot* (and should not) be channeled exclusively or fundamentally through the SCER. There are a number of different stakeholders that could be involved, but from a wide-ranging democratization viewpoint, there is a clear preference to focus on NGOs and civil society organizations. Again, a selective approach should be adopted when deciding exactly the scope of the initiatives to be supported and the choice of organizations to be involved. A careful review of the experiences the UNDP project had with NGOs during the registration and polling phases of the 2003 elections should be the first yardstick in determining which organization would constitute a good choice for further work. General capacity building and training of NGOs might be a useful first step, before actually engaging in support of specific voter education projects.

Final considerations

216.   In this context, longer-term electoral assistance for the next phase could be designed on two stages:
c)   *low season*, from now until the beginning of preparations of next electoral event, concentrated on and continued capacity-building of the SCER (focused on middle level management and branch office personnel), medium-term preparations for next elections and broad voter education, and;

d)   *high season* (about a year before the next elections), focused on immediate support to the electoral event, both to the SCER and the voter education efforts of NGOs and the SCER.

217.   Given the need to start without delays the formulation and implementation of phase two, the following activities are proposed to be carried out in the immediate future:

- a post-electoral assessment workshop, bringing together the main stakeholders in the elections: electoral authorities, political parties, NGOs and civil society organizations. It is important to bring all those forces together on a spirit of constructive analysis and criticism, in order to determine in a consensus manner how to continue working towards strengthening the electoral institutions and practices in Yemen;
- a participatory workshop, with a smaller scope than the previous one, with a view to discuss electoral requirements and assistance, and help formulate the next phase of the coordinated electoral support;
- a needs-assessment mission on the possibilities of adapting and implementing BRIDGE in the Yemeni context, with a view at enhancing electoral administration skills at the medium management and regional levels;
- the formulation, within a three to four month period, of the second phase of the coordinated international electoral assistance under the UNDP umbrella.

Sana'a , 31 May 2003.