



PROGRESS REPORT
**Electoral Support Project: Institutional Strengthening & Professional
Development Support for the Election Commission of Nepal**
January to December 2010

**Institutional Strengthening & Professional Development Support for the
Election Commission of Nepal**

Donors: Danida, DFID, Norwegian Embassy, JICA, UNDP
Implementing Partner: The Election Commission of Nepal

March 2011



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Project Information

Full Title

Electoral Support Project: Institutional Strengthening & Professional Development Support for the Election Commission of Nepal

Award ID

00049636

Expected Output

Improved strategic planning, institutional strength and management for the delivery of voter registration, elections and other events in the electoral cycle

Implementing Partner

Election Commission of Nepal

Project Duration

2008 to 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNDP Nepal initiated the Electoral Support Project (ESP) in August 2008 for capacity development of the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) and the conducting of free and fair elections. Incorporating lessons learnt from the Constituent Assembly election, the ESP supported the ECN in developing its 5-year Strategic Plan and identified eight major areas of UNDP-ESP support. These included, strategic planning, long-term professional development, civil and voter registry modernization, GIS and electoral mapping systems, regional technical cooperation and professional exchanges, planning for an electoral education and information centre, public outreach and voter information/education, and lastly, electoral dispute resolution.

Out of the eight major areas of UNDP-ESP intervention, support to the new biometric voter registration (VR) program has become one of the Project's major activities. Through early 2010, UNDP-ESP assisted the ECN in the preparation of key documents including the VR concept paper, project proposals, an implementation plan, continuous voter registration concept paper, software and equipment specifications related to the VR program and a concept paper for linking the new voter registration to a national ID card initiative. The new voter registration system includes biometric recognition systems and will form a continuous update system. These elements should ensure greater transparency and inclusiveness, and minimize duplication and 'ghost voters'.

UNDP-ESP provided technical assistance to the ECN in conducting a pilot registration in 7 VDCs of five Districts during April 2010. A joint appraisal of the VR pilot project was subsequently conducted to extract lessons learned from the pilot project and the ESP supported the ECN in its incorporation of those recommendations made in the appraisal into the nationwide registration plan. Rollout of the Voter Registration project commenced in 58 municipalities in September 2010 and by December 2010, nearly 1.3 million voters were registered in the new system. In addition to operational and planning support, at the request of the ECN, the ESP procured 3,600 voter registration kits (laptop computers, finger print scanners and web-cameras) as well as mega matcher software for the commission.

A second key area of UNDP-ESP support has been in the Public Outreach program area, and has taken the form of technical assistance to the ECN in its establishment of an Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC). UNDP-ESP supported the ECN in signing an MOU with AusAID for the establishment of EEIC. Through late 2010, UNDP-ESP assisted the ECN with the preparation of key documents including the production of a concept paper and architectural designs of the EEIC building.

UNDP has also supported the ECN in its revision of the election law for voter registration and electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, and provided support to workshops aimed at political parties and civil society.

204 Civil Society, Government and Political Party representatives (192 men and 12 women) were trained as part of UNDP-ESP BRIDGE training program. Participants were trained in the areas of



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Gender and Elections, Electoral Justice, Electoral Dispute Resolution and Electoral Administration and Management. This far exceeds the annual target of 122 persons to be trained.

Work on gender mainstreaming and social inclusion has also continued with a report, outlining concrete recommendations, and with an action plan for promoting gender equality in Nepal's electoral process, produced by UNDP-ESP.

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UNDP/ESP PROJECT SUMMARY

The Electoral Support Project covers the following areas of strategic focus based on the functions, duties and powers of the Electoral Commission of Nepal, as set out in the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 and reflected in the Strategic Plan of ECN (2008-2012).

The project focuses on the following eight strategic interventions:

- Support provided for the implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Plan of the Election Commission of Nepal
- Long term professional development of electoral officials, civil society and other electoral stakeholders
- Civil and Voter Registry Modernisation - support provided for the Election Commission of Nepal voter registration with photo program
- Support in the establishment of a GIS and Electoral Mapping System
- Regional Technical Cooperation and Professional Exchanges Assistance
- Support to Public Outreach and Voter Information/Education processes
- Establishment of an Electoral Education and Information Centre
- Electoral justice and electoral dispute resolution

The following project progress report is presented according to the activity results as set in the project document and annual work plan for 2010.

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Strategic Planning

UNDP-ESP has been successful in assisting ECN with strategic planning efforts, especially by introducing “the electoral cycle approach.” UNDP-ESP has also made inroads in capacity development for individual ECN officers. A major project success in the area of strategic planning was the launch of the ECN’s Strategic Plan. UNDP-ESP assisted the ECN by providing technical support to the costing and preparation of the action plan, as well as orientation of ECN staff to concept development. The voter registration with photo concept drew such high levels of national attention that it was incorporated into the President’s formal address to the parliament on the government policy. The ESP has also engaged the ECN in other areas of strategic planning including, Field Operations, Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) and Monitoring and Evaluation.

To assist with the ECN with its strategic plan implementation, ESP supported various meetings with stakeholders. In addition, a gender mapping study was conducted between April and June 2010. The report revealed that in comparison to past elections, the 2008 CA election was a far more gender

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sensitive exercise. Despite positive gender related developments, the report identified a number of gender gaps relating to electoral processes and the ECN itself.

Strategic planning for phase II of VR roll-out, supported by UNDP-ESP, continued in late 2010 with all 75 District Election Officers (DEOs) participating in a two-day lessons learnt and planning seminar. The workshop review indicated that all DEOs deemed such seminars as instrumental in providing field based feedback to the ECN for its strategic planning activities.

A mid-term evaluation of the ESP carried out by UN DPA EAD, New York in November/December 2010 provided useful feedback on the ECN's strategic planning and while giving a mainly positive overview highlighted that even though implementation of some strategic planning efforts has lagged, this is in part because of new operational requirements faced by the ECN. The report also stated that there has been a significant improvement in ECN planning ability, with a five year strategic plan developed and with a number of concepts developed for future activities, most with ESP assistance. Looking to the future, the report indicated that this upward trend in strategic planning should now also be extended to the implementation and monitoring of plans and concepts, with full ECN ownership of activities.

Long-term Professional Development (BRIDGE)

The ESP has delivered multiple BRIDGE training modules at various levels in the Commission and has translated several modules into Nepali, thereby adjusting them to the local context and enhancing the Commission's long term capacity to administer elections. During 2010, a total of 204 Civil Society, Government and Political Party representatives (194 men and 12 women) were trained as part of UNDP-ESP BRIDGE training program. Throughout the course of 2010 participants were trained in the areas of Gender and Elections, Electoral Justice, Electoral Dispute Resolution and Electoral Administration and Management. The total number of BRIDGE training recipients exceeded the annual target of 122.



BRIDGE Training on Gender and Elections



Training on Electoral Administration & Management

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Activities	Duration	Civil Society	Political Parties	Govt. Agencies	No. of Participants		Total
					Male	Female	
Workshop on Gender & Elections	29-31 March 2010	0	0	22	14	8	22
Workshop on Electoral Justice	29-30 September, 2010	5	15	9	28	1	29
Workshop on Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR)	18 November, 2010	7	13	11	29	2	31
Workshop on DEOs Review Seminar	10-11 December, 2010	0	0	101	100	1	101
Training on Electoral Administration and Management	13-15 December, 2010	0	0	21	21	0	21
Total		12	28	164	192	12	204

Civil and Voter Registry Modernization

Out of the eight major areas of UNDP-ESP intervention, support to the new biometric voter registration (VR) program has become the Project's largest, resource consuming and challenging initiative. In this regard, UNDP-ESP played a key role for donor coordination and resource mobilization for the ECN. During 2010, over USD 7 million was raised from multiple donors. At ECN request, a portion of this funding was used for the procurement of equipment for the VR program. Instrumental to the successful roll out of the Voter Registration project was UNDP-ESP's provision of technical assistance in the development of strategy and concept papers, implementation plans and VR equipment specifications.

Over the course of 2010 UNDP ESP developed a series of strategy papers, concept papers, project proposals, implementation plans, software and equipment specifications related to the Voter Registration (VR) with photograph project.

Following the adoption of a final VR strategy and with continued technical assistance provided by the ESP, the ECN to conducted a positive pilot registration exercise in April 2010 at 7 VDCs of 5 districts. A total of 34,569 people were registered during this exercise. A subsequent joint appraisal of the VR pilot was conducted and lessons learned included in planning for phase I of the nationwide VR operation.

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As well as providing strategy planning and technical support to the ECN the ESP has supported procurement of Voter Registration kits for the ECN. UNDP-ESP mobilized USD 5.79 million for the procurement of 3,600 voter registration kits and for the provision of additional technical assistance. (1,000 kits were procured in April 2010, and additional 1,400 kits were procured in September 2010. Furthermore, 1,200 kits were procured in November 2010.).

Roll out of the first phase of the voter registration in 58 municipalities occurred in September 2010, and by the end of the year, nearly 1.3 million Nepalese were successfully registered. Voter registration during phase I of the process gave a positive reflection of the ECN's ability to conduct its registration project and provided valuable lessons learnt prior to roll out of phase II – that will target nearly 11 million persons during 2011.



Voter registration in Bhaktapur



A woman being registered in Birgunj



Sending portable generators out to the field



Setting up District servers at the ECN Warehouse

GIS and Electoral Mapping System

A concept paper outlining the use of GIS and Electoral Mapping Systems was finalised in April 2010. Following the adoption of the concept paper by the ECN, a GIS unit was established in June 2010 within the Commission and procured essential hardware, software and datasets. In preparation for a planned polling station mapping exercise and the production of GIS maps for operational planning purposes, UNDP-ESP supported three central and two regional GIS/GPS training activities, reaching

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130 ECN staff. Mapping datasets have been established at the ECN and while mapping of polling stations commenced in September 2010, it is as yet incomplete.

Regional Technical Cooperation and Professional Exchanges Assistance

UNDP-ESP facilitated six professional exchanges, for a total of fifteen ECN officials, to five countries throughout 2010.

Date	Country	No of Participants	Area of Exchange	Team Leader
25- 27 January 2010	India	1 (one)	To attend the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Program of the Election Commission of India	Mr Neel Kantha Uprety, Chief Election Commissioner a.i.
21 – 26 March 2010	India	5 (five)	Study visit on Electoral Management System and voter registration and Identification System in India	Mr Rajendra Prasad Sharma, Joint Secretary
29-30 May 2010	Bangladesh	2 (two)	Meeting on Cooperation between Election Commissions of South Asia region	Mr Neel Kantha Uprety, Chief Election Commissioner a.i.,
5 – 8 July 2010	Australia	3 (three)	Study visit to Electoral Commission, Australia with special reference to Education and Information Centre (EEIC) Australia	Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav, Election Commissioner
25 – 31 July 2010	South Korea	3 (three)	Study visit on Election Observation visit program: National assembly by-election 2010	Mr Dolakh Bahadur Gurung, Election Commissioner
13 – 28 August 2010	Mexico, USA	1 (one)	To attend the "VI International Congress on Electoral Law" and participate in the International Program for Electoral Training and research (PICIE), Mexico	Mr Neel Kantha Uprety, Chief Election Commissioner a.i.

Professional exchange programs for 2011 are planned for South Africa on gender mainstreaming, and Mexico on electoral administration.

Electoral Education and Information Centre

See – public outreach and voter information/Education

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Public Outreach and Voter Information/Education

UNDP-ESP support in the Public Outreach program and Voter Information/Education area has taken the form of technical assistance to the ECN in its establishment of an Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC). Through late 2010, UNDP-ESP assisted the ECN with the preparation of key documents including the production a concept paper and architectural design plans. UNDP-ESP also facilitated a study trip for ECN staff to the Australian Election Commission's National Electoral Education Centre.

Establishment of the EEIC was initiated with financial support of AusAID. A cost sharing agreement signed in June 2010 between UNDP and AusAID provided USD 1.9 million to the project. UNDP subsequently contracted UNOPS for the physical establishment of the EEIC. In October 2010, UNOPS despatched one engineer to Kathmandu, who drafted and finalised a detailed design of the EEIC. The Australian Election Commission also provided one consultant in December 2010 who developed a detailed Interpretation Plan for the EEIC.

Once completed, the EEIC will serve as an educational facility for the broader Nepali community to learn about government and electoral processes, as a training facility for election officials and electoral stakeholders and as a knowledge centre for storing and developing knowledge, research and resources.



Design of the Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC) Building at the ECN HQ

Electoral Dispute Resolution

Following the development of a concept paper designed to assist the ECN in its revision of electoral dispute resolution (EDR) systems, UNDP-ESP has supported the ECN in its revision of the draft chapter of the electoral law related to electoral dispute resolution (EDR) mechanisms. Following this

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draft revision, a consultation workshop was organized with 31 key stakeholders (judiciary, political party and civil society representatives) on the revised EDR system.

No progress has been made in implementing public outreach programmes on the EDR mechanisms and likewise no headway has been made in the establishment of EDR related facilities including archiving within ECN central office premises.

Financial Implementation

Fund Source - Donor	Funds Committed	Total Funds Received	Expenditure	Available Balance
		2010	2010	
<i>DANIDA</i>	2,100,000.00	2,100,000.00	1,878,596.07	221,403.93
<i>DFID</i>	1,452,904.83	1,452,904.83	1,452,904.83	
<i>NORWAY</i>	2,142,739.41	2,142,739.41	2,142,739.51	
<i>JICA</i>	94,214.94	94,214.94	94,215.00	
<i>AusAID</i>	1,090,604.03	1,090,604.03	169,391.78	921,212.25
<i>UNDP</i>	809,317	809,317	435,267.43	374,049.57
TOTAL FUND in USD	7,689,780.21	7,689,780.21	6,173,114.62	1,516,665.59

Priorities for 2011

1. Continued support to the ECN's implementation of nation-wide Voter Registration will remain at the core of UNDP-ESP assistance in 2011 – the focus on assistance to the VR process will however shift from field implementation and operational support to the storage of registration data at central level. The establishment and set-up of a Central Data Centre at the ECN HQ will be central to this. The ECN voter registration applications comprise of three main components which are; Voter Registration Units, District Server Systems and a Central Data Centre. The Central Data Centre will allow for aggregation, cross referencing and management of Voter Registration data at the central level. In addition, the central database will allow for qualitative assessment, cleaning, and rationalisation of the voter registration data. Support to establishment and operation of the Central Data Centre will be crucial to the success of the VR project. UNDP-ESP will be involved in the procurement of essential hardware and software for the planned Central Data Centre as well as refurbishment of the server room and centre

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2. Construction of the Electoral Education and Information Centre at the ECN and ensuring operationalization of the Centre will be one of the projects main priorities in 2011.
3. UNDP-ESP will continue providing support to the implementation and monitoring of the ECN's Strategic Plan (2009-13). Support will be given to the ECN in building a system to retaining staff. ESP will also provide technical assistance on the preparation of a retention strategy paper with an Organisation and Management (O&M) report.
4. Support to the ECN in public outreach and gender mainstreaming in electoral activities will remain the priority areas for the year 2011.
5. Support to the BRIDGE training program on various modules at central and regional levels, Support ECN officials (2) for BRIDGE TTF, support on south-south professional exchange programs with EMBs as well as support to the ECN in polling station mapping across the country using GIS application will continue during 2011.
6. With the possibility of promulgation of the new constitution in 2011, a call for elections may follow. UNDP-ESP focus in 2011 may therefore also shift to planning and preparing for an election event. Consideration of the type of technical assistance the ECN may require in the build up to an election will have to be made, and as with the current voter registration, UNDP-ESP support to the ECN may shift from a strategic planning and capacity building to an increasingly operational role.

Major Challenges

The followings are the main challenges/ issues related to the UNDP/ESP:

- Need Assessment for the future election in Nepal is pending due to uncertain timeframe in promulgation of new constitution.
- Some activities, for example, public outreach, BRIDGE training and gender-related activities of the ESP are un-funded.
- There is a possible obstruction by political parties/ affiliated groups (Limbuwan and some Madhesi-based parties) against the on-going voter registration program with photographs and biometrics.

Conclusions

In the process of implementation, the project has identified challenges which need to be taken into account in assessing the achievements described above.

Weak Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms exist within the ECN. Increased technical assistance in this area is required and in the roll-out of the VR program, insufficient M&E was undertaken. Improved M&E will play a key role in enhancing voter registration, as well as other election related activities, and ensure greater legitimacy.

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Uncertainty in the Electoral calendar is a challenge that will affect 2011 planning. As a commission moves closer to an election date, associated technical assistance parameters change. With no foreseen election date the delivery of timely technical assistance will be negatively impacted.

As noted, the ECN's Geographic Information System unit is not properly staffed – the GIS unit missed mapping opportunities during phase I of the project in 2010. With an estimated 12 million voters to be registered in the first half of 2011 the GIS unit, if operational, will provide a valuable tool in capturing, storing, analyzing, managing and presenting voter registration data.

In another area related to ECN performance, political consensus and government support to the ECN, if not forthcoming, will present a challenge to project implementation. The 2010 debates on the citizenship certificate issue undermined the reputation of the ECN and continued government, political and public support to ECN needs to be assured.

On a final note, no forward movement in the appointment of the chief commissioner will impact leadership, management and project implementation.

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