



**Date:** April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

**Local Project Appraisal Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting**

**Project Title:** “Strengthening Electoral Processes in Albania (SEPIA)”

**Donor:** One UN Coherence Fund, UNDP

**Budget funded:** USD 200,000

**Location:** Tirana

**Timeline:** 6 months (March – August 2015)

**Participants:** Mr. Skender Vrioni, General Secretary, CEC  
Ms. Elvira Gaxholli, Director of International Relations Department, CEC  
Ms. Lisa Fredriksson, Head of Development Cooperation, SIDA  
Ms. Claudia Vollmer, Head of Democratization Department, OSCE  
Mr. Marc Ellingstad, General Development Officer, USAID  
Ms. Yesim Oruc, Country Director UNDP  
Mr. Vladimir Malkaj Programme Officer, UNDP  
Ms. Fiorela Shalsi, Programme Coordinator, UNWOMEN  
Ms. Antonela Male, Coalition of Domestic Observers  
Mr. Arben Rama, Programme Officer, UNDP  
Mr. Gavin Weise, CTA for Elections UNDP  
Ms. Xhesi Mane, Programme Associate, UNDP

**Background and Presentation (Mr. Gavin Weise):** The overall development objective of this project is to improve quality, efficiency and transparency in election management and administration which will lead to a more credible election process.

The project aims to support: I) the Central Election Commission to further its management capacities, particularly in the areas of political party and candidate registration, campaign finance, and election operations at different levels of the electoral administration. The projects will also further CEC capacities in training and voter information; II) the Electoral College, to familiarize itself with changes in the election code stemming from territorial administrative reform, and to potential challenges and appeals and how to address them; III) election officials, political parties, independent candidates, and observers in the development of enhanced online training programs on voting and counting center operations and procedures, and gender-focused interactive training on elections; IV) Albanian citizens of voting age, through public information and education programs/materials, particularly related to the new election units (municipalities) and women voters.

**Appraisal:**



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Mr. Skender Vrioni, General Secretary of the CEC: The importance of international assistance from OSCE, USAID, UNDP, and UNWOMEN highlighted. Focus on the module on political party and candidate registration is really needed. The needs in the pre-elections period include face-to-face trainings for the second and third level of commissioners. These trainings could be supported with relevant training materials and videos, not only e-learning.

Ms. Lisa Fredriksson, Swedish Embassy (SIDA): Gender equality results must be explicit not only in the project description as both a general requirement for gender equality but also in light of the Coherence Fund soft earmarked allocations from Sweden to UN for gender equality results. . The improved presentation of gender focus in the power point and subsequent drafts were noted. UNDP representatives agreed to revise the project document to more closely track the impact of the activities on gender.

Ms. Antonela Male, Coalition of Domestic Observers: Open list of political parties needs improvement with regard to gender balance. TAR is well understood by the electorate, despite some concerns.

Ms. Claudia Vollmer, OSCE Head of Democratization Department, and Co-Chair of International Elections Working Group (donor coordination mechanism): Voter education should focus more on the impact of the TAR. The project should focus only on things related to the election management information system, as only UNDP is working on this issue, and it is something the CEC really needs. UNDP is uniquely positioned to help in this regard especially benefiting from the human resources capacity from the previous 2013 elections support provided by USAID and IFES. Efforts in training should be closely coordinated with those of the CEC, OSCE and others. UNDP representatives agreed and thought it wise to reference this in the project document. There is ongoing work by other partners including OSCE and UNWOMEN in voter education. Caution was made as to whether UNDP support to voter education is necessary in light of other actors' valuable work.

Ms. Fiorela Shalsi UNWOMEN: The UNWOMEN study on Women and TAR will be shared with the participants. Alignments of voter education work and gender equality results joint work plans are essential.

Mr. Marc Ellingstad, USAID: The proposed UNDP support to Elections Project is a very good continuation of USAID work with CEC and the election management IT system. BRIDGE modules are an established methodology and CEC/stakeholders will certainly benefit from this approach.

Gavin Weise, Arben Rama, Yesim Oruc (UNDP, Project Developers): There are potential risks with TAR and its impact on elections. On the question of TAR and its impact on elections and whether or not voters will go to vote, the focus groups in sample affected communes will help identify possible TAR impact. Similarly, UNWOMEN's valuable assessment will allow gauging further scope of voter education content. These results will be used on UNDP/CEC voter education activities, and also should be shared with other implementers and donors, hopefully by the next International Working Group on Elections. Further, voter education responds to the explicit request of the CEC, to which UNDP will respond. Voter education is a relatively small component of the project and the focus group work will provide valuable information to international partners in directing voter education.

### **Management Arrangements**

The project will be management under the National Implementation (NIM) modality, under the leadership of Central Elections Commission, with the implementation support provided by UNDP Albania as it will be specified in the standard Letter of Agreement that will also be annexed to the project document.

Program Delivery Strategy: UNDP will deploy services of non-governmental partners for grass roots, focus group assessments of voter education needs especially with regard to TAR. This will be delivered through a micro-capital grant with a non-governmental partner who was engaged for focus groups and participatory consultations for the TAR of the Government (Partners Albania).

Procurement: UNDP will contract directly the Macedonian company "iVote" that has worked with the CEC for the past 2 years on developing the initial stages of the election management IT system. The majority of this work was funded through USAID and overseen by IFES. Continuity of services is much needed. Therefore UNDP will waive competitive selection and engage in direct contracting in line with applicable procurement rules and regulations.

### **Conclusion**

- The LPAC endorsed the management arrangements as described.
- The LPAC positively appraised the project and recommended its approval and timely start, following (1) revisions to the project document to reflect more explicitly the gender equality results (2) additions to reflect comments arising from the appraisal process including (3) the receipt of clearance of the proposal by the UN Electoral Assistance Division to which the project is already submitted for formal review, appraisal and clearance.