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Project Document
“Strengthening Electoral Processes in Albania (SEPIA)”

<p>Programme of Cooperation GoA and UN, 2012 – 2016 Outcome 3: Governance and Rule of Law Output 3.1:</p>	<p>The Albanian State executes major governance processes following internationally agreed democratic principles and practices, while upholding the rule of law and eliminating key factors of exclusion of women Parliament and electoral institutions have the capacity to perform core functions</p>
<p>Implementing partner: Responsible Party:</p>	<p>Central Election Commission UNDP Albania</p>

Brief Description

The 21 June 2015 local elections represent another critical test for the Albania’s democracy. These elections come immediately following significant reform of Albania’s administrative-territorial structure. As a result of these reforms, Albania will have 61 new municipalities, replacing 378 local government units that exist currently. In order to consolidate a heretofore successful reform process which involved wide stakeholder consultation, public input and analytical and expert research, the citizens of these 61 municipalities must elect new mayors and municipal councils.

The litmus test for any election is credible execution on the part of the election administration and acceptance of the results by competing entities. In Albania, the Central Election Commission (CEC) is the institution charged with administering elections. While elections, and by extension performance of the CEC, have often been fraught with problems in administrations and considerable controversy, the CEC performed admirably in the most recent 2013 parliamentary elections, and continues to strive for improvement. Measures taken by the CEC include the adoption of Election Management Information Systems, new modalities in training and learning, and increasing transparency in several election processes. In order to further the CEC’s development, and that of other stakeholders such as the Electoral College, UNDP will embark on an ambitious technical assistance program designed to improve competencies of election officials and strengthen processes and systems employed to administer elections. In doing so, UNDP will help build transparency and trust in the electoral process, further women’s participation, and consolidate democratic gains to date. A successful election process will also further the process of territorial administrative reform closer to completion and integration into Albania’s system of governance.

<p>Programme Period: POC 2012-2016 Key Result Area (Strategic Plan): 2.3: Support national partners to implement democratic governance practices grounded in human rights, gender equality and anti-corruption</p> <p>Atlas Award ID: Start date: March 2015 End Date: August 2015 PAC Meeting Date: Management Arrangements: (NIM) National Implementation</p>	<p>Total resources required: USD 385,000 Total allocated resources: USD 200,000</p> <p>Regular (UNDP) USD 50,000 (core) Other (UN-DRT): USD 100,000 (UN CF) Other (Sweden) USD 50,000 (UN CF)</p> <p>Unfunded budget: USD 20,000 Unfunded activities: USD 165,000 (Annex 2)</p> <p>----- Unfunded Total: USD 185,000</p>
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Agreed by CEC:

Lefterie Luzi
 Chairperson

Agreed by UNDP:

Zineb Touimi-Benjelloun
 UN Resident Coordinator

I. Background

The June 2015 local elections in Albania, the first held following a major territorial and administrative reform, will be an important test for the country's democratic institutions. Albania's most recent election was in many ways a transformative event in the country's brief history as an electoral democracy. Previous election cycles had been marred by political polarization, allegations about the misuse of public resources, distortion of electoral results, outbreaks of violence, delays in establishing results, and a refusal by the losing side to recognize the outcomes. While Albania faced several of these problems again in the 2013 parliamentary elections, there were a significant number of positive developments unique to this election. Above all, there was a general acceptance by the leading political parties of the outcome, and the incumbent DP went willingly into opposition. This was achieved in no small part through improved election administration.

By legal structure, the policy-making level of election administration continues to be on one level divided along political lines. Polarization of competing parties was so great that the opposition commissioners of the Central Election Commission (CEC) resigned early in the electoral cycle, which left the key decision on results and allocation of mandates up to the judicial appeals body, the Electoral College. However, day-to-day functions were carried out efficiently by the CEC, and significant advances were made in the CEC secretariat's professionalism, transparency, training capacity, and in their timely tabulation of results.

These achievements notwithstanding, a majority of positive changes in electoral practices were realized in a very short time frame with significant international support and advocacy. Whether or not all the gains realized in 2013 have been instilled in the CEC secretariat is questionable. As is often the case with the conclusion of major election, significant staff turnover followed the parliamentary elections. In addition, much of the technical assistance provided in 2013, including the new election information management system used to establish results and the e-learning platform designed to build the CEC's permanent training capacity, was introduced very quickly and in many cases only partially due to time constraints. The recently completed and still politically controversial administrative-territorial reform, which has seen the creation of 61 new local government electoral units out of the existing 378, is a considerable change in the local election structure.

On a positive note, many of the practices and systems introduced by the CEC for the parliamentary elections have been modified and enhanced in 2014 to accommodate this year's local elections, and will again be employed to manage key election preparations and functions. Moreover, the CEC has demonstrated a commitment to using some of the unutilized functions of new management systems, and expressed willingness to embrace new programs and modules to improve management of certain areas of election administration, such as candidate and party registration, regulation of campaign financing and expenditure, execution of polling station duties, and training of officials. Proposed features within the new modules, as well as changes in electoral legislation such as the inclusion of gender as an identifying characteristic in the voter list, will enable the CEC for the first time to easily report gender-disaggregated data. The extent, to which these new methodologies and IT management systems are used, however, will no doubt be dependent upon the level of engagement and technical support by the international community in the run-up to the elections.

The following program description outlines technical interventions that will enable the Albanian electoral institutions to more fully utilize and embrace the tools and methods introduced in 2013, as well as discrete activities to improve the country's election process.

II. Project objectives

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 will provide support to:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Albanian citizens of voting age, through public information and education programs/materials, particularly related to the new election units (municipalities) and women voters.

The Project will have the following results:

Result 1: A better informed and motivated electorate.

Focus groups on key issues. Prior to implementing any voter and civic education effort, stakeholders must first identify three critical elements: the specific needs or ‘gaps’ in voter information, target demographic groups who need information and/or are open to new ideas and information, and the appropriate mechanisms for delivering such information. UNDP will conduct 8 focus groups of an equal number of men and women in both rural and urban areas to identify key issues in voter education prior to the 2015 local elections. Part of the focus group discussions will concentrate on the recent administrative-territorial reform, to see what impact this reform may have on the electorate’s understanding of local government bodies and the electoral process, and also any impact on the motivations of the electorate. Focus groups will also explore the problem of family voting, where their male head of household determines families’ voting preferences, which continuous to be a regular practice in Albania, particularly in the rural regions. Discussions will also focus on possible messages that resonate with voters, including different messages for men and women. Findings will be central to UNDP’s voter education programming (below), and also shared with other organizations so that it may better inform their election activities.

Voter education. Using the findings from the focus group research, UNDP will work together with the CEC to develop and approve a number of public service announcements, most likely created in audio (radio) and visual (television and web) form, as well as materials for display at voting centers. These messages and materials will focus on general procedures, women’s participation in elections and motivational themes based on the focus group results. By using the focus group findings, the CEC can better concentrate voter education efforts to more effectively use their limited resources, i.e., funding, staff time and free airtime allocated by the Electoral Code. UNDP will also use other information sources to inform its voter education activities, including findings from the recent UNDP territorial-administrative reform programming and research, and studies on gender and elections conducted previously by UN Women.

The CEC has recently overhauled its website <http://www2.cec.org.al/en-us/> and now places several pieces of information about its work and the election process in general. While often getting little traffic in periods between elections, there is a surge of activity by users during an election period. Given the recent administrative-territorial reform and new electoral units (*i.e.*, the municipalities), it will be paramount for the CEC to have basic information about these electoral units available to the public. UNDP will assist the CEC in using elements of the existing website, the CEC’s web-based learning management system, and the election results display modules to provide easy-to-understand information on the local elections including new election boundaries and candidates. The interactive features of the web-based voter information will allow voters to review candidates and parties in the local government units, and provide them filters to view contestants by party, gender, and relevant characteristics.

Output 1: A focus group report on critical gaps and needs in voter information is made available to electoral stakeholders to focus voter education efforts.

Output 2: The CEC and other stakeholders provide quality voter education addressing key informational needs of the electorate.

Result 2: Furthering the capacity and technical and management skills of key electoral institutions, including the CEC and Electoral College.

Training programs for party-nominated voting center officials. Acknowledging the limitations in internet connectivity in some regions of Albania, the introduction of e-learning to train electoral stakeholders has the potential to reach tens of thousands of political party representatives and election workers, observers and others, thereby significantly increasing the electoral competency of these groups. Online resources are particularly valuable in a place like Albania, where experience has shown that many commissioners do not have the opportunity to attend CEC training face-to-face training programs because parties frequently change their commissioners post-training. In the period immediately following the 2013 parliamentary elections the CEC developed an e-learning platform and a few introductory courses for the IT administrator, CEC trainers and operators who would transmit results from counting centers. But by far the biggest potential audience for this system is the estimated 35,000 voting center staff nominated by the political parties for each election. The CEC has embraced the potential for e-learning, and begun to develop courses for different electoral officials – although assistance is required in terms of methodological approaches and technical quality of the education. UNDP will work with Department of Election Commissions to improve course content for voting center officials, covering such duties as opening the center, processing voters, preventing “family voting”, closing procedures and the transfer of materials to the ballot counting center. This content will mirror the face-to-face training offerings, and work as a supplementary source of information for both election officials *and* the CEC trainers themselves. In particular, the training module can be used by CEC as a training tool, to introduce standardization in trainings conducted around the country, something that has proven heretofore to be a challenge.

Coalition/ party/ candidate management modules for CEC through EMIS. The current procedure used by the respective local CEAZ for registering and managing political subjects for local elections typically involve hard copy paper filing and the manual compiling of word and excel based tables on candidate information and eligibility, and emailing this data to the CEC. This process is time consuming, non-transparent and subject to human error. UNDP will work with the CEC Departments of Legal Affairs and IT to create a political subject management module, creating efficiencies in the CEC’s work and lowering the burden on political parties in supplying such information. This module will serve as an interactive database by which candidate information can be managed and sorted according to different criteria by a CEAZ and the CEC, for example by party, by gender, and other characteristics. The module will have built in checks to determine both candidate eligibility, and compliance with list gender requirements in accordance with the proposed changes in the electoral code. By housing data in a multi-use module, the information gathered by the Department of Legal Affairs can also be the same used by other departments, for tasks such as ballot design, allocation of mandates and results publishing.

Automation of campaign donation and expenditure declaration forms through EMIS. Under current practice the CEC approves a template for political subjects to register the funds they receive from donors. These donors must attest they are the contributor of the funds are eligible to finance a campaign according to the electoral code. UNDP will assist the CEC to automate the easy submission of these declarations through the creation of political finance management module within the CEC’s EMIS. Political party treasures and others handling campaign finances must also submit records of donors contributions to the CEC. UNDP will automate this process through a basic online submission (database entry page in the EMIS) which mirrors the current approved template of the CEC. The CEC will have all filings in an accessible archive system and can easily supply the required documentation to finance auditors as prescribed by law.

The module will also enable the CEC to present the data (currently published in spreadsheet form on its website) in new, more easily consumable ways, by generating graphic reports to better illustrate campaign financing practices in Albania. The module will allow the filtration of data and the generation of customized reports, such as the source of financing (by gender, by business versus private donation, etc.), type of funding (donations, party income, in-kind, etc.) and the type of expenditure (advertising, staff, events, etc.). Providing the public with easier ways to understand information already available on campaign financing and expenditure, is an important step in looking at reform of this area.

Training for the Electoral College and wider electoral stakeholders (BRIDGE). The role of the Electoral College as the final judge in election disputes is extremely critical. In 2013 the College was

involved in declaring the electoral results as the CEC still had not established a quorum with the absence of the then opposition-appointed members, and consequently could not take the decision. Prior to these elections, UNDP organized a week-long training program for judges who are appointed as members of the College on interpreting the Electoral Code and resolving electoral disputes. UNDP will organize a similar event with members of the College upon their appointment one month prior to the June elections. The training will again rely on BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) approved methodology, combined with a series of case studies based on hypothetical Albanian examples. The training will also take into account new challenges potentially emerging from local elections and the recent territorial administrative reform.

Following the BRIDGE training for judges in electoral dispute resolution, UNDP will organize a workshop for a wider group of electoral stakeholders, potentially consisting of representatives from the CEC secretariat, political parties, civil society, media and others on broader election issues. In particular, this workshop will draw on the BRIDGE gender module, and explore with participants the ways in which electoral processes in Albania can be more inclusive and improve opportunities for participation of women, not only as candidates, but also as election officials, observers, voters and other stakeholders.

Output 3: The CEC develops and administers simple, self-guided online tutorials for election workers such as: managing the voter list; opening the voting center; processing voters; interactions with media and observers; closing the voting center; and transporting materials.

Output 4: The CEC develops and maintains a computerized database that enables it to more accurately and efficiently manage processes involving party and candidate registration and campaign financing.

Output 5: Electoral College members receive intensive training on the adjudication of electoral disputes using an interactive classroom methodology supplemented by case studies and hypothetical examples, and are better acquainted with relevant aspects of the law and potential casework prior to the elections.

Output 6: Representatives of civil society, political entities, the election commission and others have a broader understanding of electoral issues and in particular gender and elections.

Result 3: Citizens have access to timely information on key aspects of the electoral process.

Development of Voting Center functions/modules in the EMIS. Updates on voter turnout are an important feature of elections – it serves as one of only a few important information pieces during the voting day, and can build confidence in the electoral process. It also can be a check on possible fraud in that turnout should be fairly regular and evenly spread across what is a large sample of polling stations. When a CEC cannot provide that information, exactly the opposite is true: a public can lose faith in the electoral institutions and even results.

In 2013, the CEC experienced difficulty in relaying turnout during the day as voting center officials were slow or even reluctant to provide this information to the CEC. The CEAZ officials were also not looped in to this process, and left it to the IT department of the CEC to gather information nationwide. By working with the Departments of Election Commissions and IT, UNDP will help the CEC develop an operational plan for reporting the information regularly, including a pilot program to relay this information directly from the voting center to the CEC. The pilot voting center program will enable the potential for “live turnout” reporting, reporting on the status of voting center (when open and closed) and tracking sensitive election materials into and out of the voting center.

***Creation of mobile application for display of “live” results from CEC website.** In 2013, the public’s confidence in the election was greatly enhanced by the CEC’s ability to display preliminary election results on their website as they came in from the ballot counting centers. In addition, the CEC developed an application (“app”) version of the website, which allowed citizens to access election results immediately on their mobile phones, tablets etc. While the CEC has a results display function ready for the 2015 local elections, it does not have an “app” function to relay this to mobile devices. UNDP will work with the IT department to create this application in time for its wide (and free) publication prior to Election Day. The application will enable users to easily review information on voter turnout and on results. Subject to

discussions with the CEC, users will be able to view information by municipality, administrative unit and even voter center. Data can also be disaggregated by party and gender and other characteristics.

Output 7: Election Day information is reported to the CEC on a timely and consistent basis through the development and implementation of a sound operational plan which includes expanding existing tools for Election Day management to the CEAZ and voting center.

Output 8: Citizens have greater and more immediate access to Election Day information, including turnout and results, through the development of mobile applications.

III. Implementation and Management Arrangements

The project will be implemented in accordance with UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM) http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Programme%20and%20Operations%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/NIM_for_Government_english.pdf whereby the Central Election Commission is the designated National Implementing Partner.

UNDP will be responsible for the provision of project inputs upon formal request from the Chair of the Central Election Commission.

Services will be provided according to UNDP rules and procedures, based on a standard letter of agreement with the CEC for the provision on support services. In addition to the broader stakeholder consultation and advisory fora, the management of the project at hand will entail functions as defined in National Implementation Guidelines:

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Programme%20and%20Operations%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/NIM_for_Government_english.pdf.

I. ANNEX ANNUAL WORK PLAN BUDGET SHEET

Year: 2014

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	TIMING			PLANNED BUDGET			
		Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Resp'ble Party	Funding Source	Budget Description	Amount in USD
<p>Output 1: A focus group report on critical gaps and needs in voter information is made available to electoral stakeholders to focus voter education efforts</p>	<p>Activity 1: Recruit international consultant to advise on election education activities</p>	X	X		UNDP		Procurement services	18,000
	<p>Activity 2: Develop and contract for 6-8 focus groups</p>						Subcontract to NGO for focus group research	8,000
<p>Output 2: The CEC and other stakeholders provide quality voter education addressing key informational needs of the electorate.</p>	<p>Activity 3: Develop and contract for voter education materials etc.</p>	X	X				Materials acquisition for voter education products	28,000

<p>Output 3: The CEC develops and administers simple, self-guided online tutorials for election workers such as: managing the voter list; opening the voting center; processing voters; interactions with media and observers; closing the voting center; and transporting materials.</p>	<p>Activity 4: Recruit international consultant to oversee election management information (EMIS) system and Learning Management System (LMS) development</p>	X	X					27,000
<p>Output 4: The CEC develops and maintains a computerized database that enables it to more accurately and efficiently manage processes involving party and candidate registration and campaign financing.</p>	<p>Activity 5: Contract for EMIS and LMS development</p>	X	X	X			Procurement services	65,000
<p>Output 5: Electoral College members receive intensive training on the adjudication of electoral disputes using an interactive classroom methodology supplemented by case studies and hypothetical examples, and are better acquainted with relevant aspects of the law and potential casework prior to the elections.</p>	<p>Activity 6: Recruit 2 international consultants Recruit 1 national consultant Organization of BRIDGE training</p>	X	X		UNDP		Procurement services	22,000 4,000 5,000
<p>Output 6: Representatives of civil society, political entities, the election commission and others have a broader understanding of electoral issues and in particular gender and elections.</p>				X				

<p>Output 7: Election Day information is reported to the CEC on a timely and consistent basis through the development and implementation of a sound operational plan which includes expanding existing tools for election day management to the CEAZ and voting center.</p> <p>Output 8: Citizens have greater and more immediate access to Election Day information, including turnout and results, through the development of mobile applications.</p>	<p>Activity 7: Recruit international consultant to advise the CEC on election day operations and pilot program with voting centers, and conduct reporting</p>						Procurement services	18,000	
	<p>*Activity 8: Develop mobile application for display of election results from CEC results server</p>				UNDP			Procurement services	12,000
Travel									
Miscellaneous									2,650
NIM (National Implementation) audit costs									
Evaluation costs									
Programme costs in total								209,650	
UNDP management fee								10,350	
TOTAL									220,000

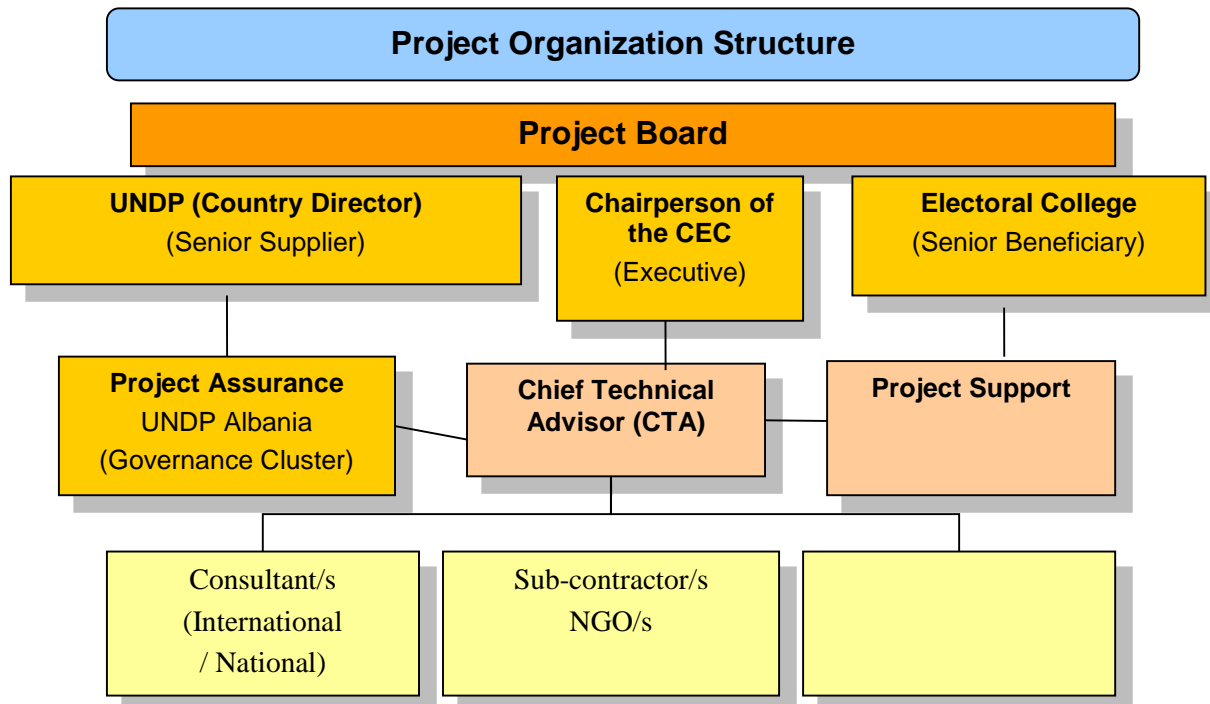
*** Activity 8 is dependent on securing additional funds**

IV. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Project will be managed under the National Implementation (NIM) modality with implementation support provided by UNDP:

- (a) Day-to-day project support
- (b) Identifying expertise which is available in the international and domestic market
- (c) Recruiting necessary international or local expertise
- (d) Carrying out tenders for procuring services and/or goods as per the rules and regulations
- (e) Issuing contracts and making payments related to expenses incurred as part of project implementation
- (f) Preparing and distributing periodic reports including financial reports

The project organization structure will be as follows:



A Project Board – aimed to monitor and steer the strategic direction of the programme implementation – will be convened under the chairmanship of the CEC as the Executive, the Electoral College as Senior Beneficiary, and UNDP Country Director as Senior Supplier. The Senior Supplier's primary function within the Project Board will be to provide guidance regarding the technical feasibility of the project. The Senior Beneficiaries will be representing the interests of those who will ultimately benefit from the project. Their primary function within the board is to ensure the realization of project results. The Project Board will meet at least once in six-months or upon need. The first board meeting will convene following the approval of the Project Document in order to discuss and agree on the following matters:

- How to ensure successful implementation with the cooperation among all the parties involved
- Agree on the following activities
- Adjusting and confirming the work plan and strategy of the project
- Making decisions on the direction of the project if needed
- How to ensure sustainability of the project

The UNDP Governance Cluster will be in charge of Project Assurance. The Project Assurance role supports the Project Board by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and

monitoring functions. This role ensures that appropriate project management milestones are properly managed and completed.

V. MONITORING FRAMEWORK AND EVALUATION

In accordance with the programming policies and procedures outlined in the UNDP User Guide, the project will be monitored through the following:

Within the annual cycle

- On a quarterly basis, a quality assessment shall record progress towards the completion of key results, based on quality criteria and methods captured in the Quality Management table below.
- An Issue Log will be activated in ATLAS and updated to facilitate tracking and resolution of potential problems or requests for changes.
- Based on the initial risk analysis submitted (see annex 1), a risk log shall be activated in ATLAS and regularly updated by reviewing the external environment that may affect project implementation.
- Based on the above information recorded in ATLAS, Semi-annual Progress Reports will be submitted to the Project Board, using the standard report format available in the Executive Snapshot.
- A project Lessons-learned log shall be activated and regularly updated to ensure on-going learning and adaptation within the organization, and to facilitate the preparation of the Lessons-learned Report at the end of the project.
- A Monitoring Schedule Plan shall be activated in ATLAS and updated to track key management actions/events.

Annually

Annual Review Report: An Annual Review Report will be prepared and shared with the Project Board. As a minimum requirement, the Annual Review Report will consist of the ATLAS standard format for the QPR covering the whole year with updated information for each above element of the QPR as well as a summary of results achieved against pre-defined annual targets at the output level.

Evaluation

A formal UNDP evaluation *may* be conducted at the end of this project.

Quality Management for Project Activity Results

OUTPUTS: Preparedness for Local Elections 2015		
Activity Result Atlas Activity ID	Activity Results: Technical assistance provided to strengthen processes and systems to administrate elections, and improve competencies of elections' officials	Start Date: Mar. 2015 End Date: Aug. 2016
Purpose	Help further transparency of and trust in elections, and bring the process of territorial administrative reform closer to completion and integration into the governance system	
Description	The activity result will enhance the capacities of the EMBs to better administrate and manage electoral processes	
Quality Criteria	Quality method	Date of Assessment
Enhanced formulation and implementation capacities	Assessment of the capacities to manage the required processes	Quarterly

LEGAL CONTEXT

This document will be signed by the Government and UNDP, and it constitutes a Project Document as referred to in the CCPD and SBAA and their provisions apply to this document.

Consistent with the Article III of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement, the responsibility for the safety and security of the implementing partner and its personnel and property, and of UNDP's property in the implementing partner's custody, rests with the implementing partner.

The implementing partner shall:

Put in place an appropriate security plan and maintain the security plan, taking into account the security situation in the country where the project is being carried;
Assume all risks and liabilities related to the implementing partner's security, and the full implementation of the security plan.

UNDP reserves the right to verify whether such a plan is in place, and to suggest modifications to the plan when necessary. Failure to maintain and implement an appropriate security plan as required hereunder shall be deemed a breach of this agreement.

UNDP Resident Representative alone can make project revisions with regard to budget and timeframe. On substantive revisions, the approval and signature of Government will be required.

The implementing partner agrees to undertake all reasonable efforts to ensure that none of the UNDP funds received pursuant to the Project Document are used to provide support to individuals or entities associated with terrorism and that the recipients of any amounts provided by UNDP hereunder do not appear on the list maintained by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999).

The list can be accessed via <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1267/1267ListEng.htm>. This provision must be included in all sub-contracts or sub-agreements entered into under this Project Document.

Risk Analysis: An assessment of risks that may affect the project should be conducted during the formulation

RISK LOG

#	Description	Date Identified	Type	Impact & Probability	Counter measures / Mgmt. response	Owner	Submitted update by
1	The project activities may risk to be implemented on time because of the delays to approve the required law amendments, so creating difficulties in meeting the expected deadlines	Prior to project beginning	Operational	Probability: 3 Impact: 3	Use all the possible institutional support to ensure the project implementation progresses in all directions	Project Board	Project Assurance