

NEWS LETTER

August-September 2019

Support to Universal Suffrage Elections
in the Federal Republic of Somalia

UNDP / UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) to the Federal Republic of Somalia

IESG News Updates

IESG Project Board meeting



Representatives from NIEC, donors partners, UNSOM, UNDP, UNOPS in Project Board meeting. Mogadishu, 9 September 2019. (Photo credit: UNSOM)

On 9 September, the UNDP/UNSOM Joint Programme and National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) held a Board meeting in Mogadishu with donors. The Board approved the cost extension (\$4.7 million) of the electoral assistance project until 2020. The Board noted the proposed budgets for the voter

registration exercise and funding commitments required. The Board also approved the inclusion of UNOPS as an additional Participating UN Organization (PUNO) of the project to support IESG (in addition to UNSOM and UNDP) to receive funds from the Multi-Partners Trust Fund.

Meeting with Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on electoral law

Parliament established an ad-hoc committee on 20 July to review the draft electoral law for it to report back to Parliament within sixty days. During August, the Parliamentary Ad-Hoc Committee held meetings with the NIEC and IESG as part of their consultations as well as with civil society organisations, media and political parties. NIEC and IESG emphasized to the Committee the need to revise the draft electoral law and provided technical recommendations to give the NIEC the necessary flexibility to conduct elections in the most efficient and cost-

effective manner, including revisions to timelines that are not coherent in the draft law. IESG is working closely with the NIEC to advocate with the Ad-Hoc Committee to pay attention to specific articles that require revisions.

The Ad-Hoc Committee also conducted consultations with electoral stakeholders in South West State, Puntland and Banadir. The Committee extended its workplan from the end of September to mid-October when it is due to submit its report to Parliament. The adoption of the Electoral Law is essential for NIEC to plan for the

Highlights

- ◆ 19 Aug: Meeting with Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Law
- ◆ 20 Aug: Seminar on role of women in electoral process and political participation
- ◆ 22 Aug: Electoral Information Sharing meeting
- ◆ 22 Aug: Electoral Information Sharing meeting
- ◆ 26 Aug: Financial Management Training for NIEC
- ◆ 27 Aug: Briefing session on disability rights for NIEC staff
- ◆ Aug: Identification of potential voter registration sites
- ◆ 2-12 Sept: Training workshop on planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- ◆ 7 Sept: NIEC meeting with Deputy Prime Minister
- ◆ 9 Sept: IESG Project Board meeting
- ◆ 14 Sept: NIEC-MoCA hold joint forum on advancing women rights in the constitution
- ◆ 18 Sept: Establishment of the National Electoral Security Task Force
- ◆ Sept: Registration of Political Parties
- ◆ 22 Sept: UNSOM/UNDP provided vehicles to NIEC field offices
- ◆ 23 Sept: NIEC Legal Framework Training Workshop
- ◆ 25 Sept: Logistics training for NIEC staff
- ◆ 26 Sept: NIEC Chairperson attends 74th session of UN General Assembly and High-Level meeting on Somalia
- ◆ Sept: Two elections-related projects submitted to the Peacebuilding Fund

start of voter registration in early 2020 to meet the constitutional timeline as outlined in the Government's inclusive politics road map. The draft bill would be the country's first electoral law in over fifty years and includes provisions that have significant electoral operational implications. The draft bill currently includes a provision for a minimum quota of 30 per cent for women parliamentarians.

Electoral Information sharing meeting

To strengthen the coordination with the international community and implementing partners on the required technical requirements for the NIEC's electoral preparations, the NIEC and IESG conducts bi-monthly electoral information sharing meetings with international electoral stakeholders. The meetings are jointly chaired by NIEC Chairperson and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

At the electoral information sharing

meeting on 22 August, NIEC and IESG highlighted their work on refining the budget for VR and their plan to present that at the Board meeting on 9 September. Electoral assistance providers presented updates on their programmes, including UNWomen, BUILD, EISA and AU/AMISOM. NIEC highlighted efforts to mainstream gender issues across the Commission's work program including staff professional development on gender mainstreaming, creating opportunities for women, people with disabilities and the marginalized communities at the NIEC.

Establishment of National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF)

On 18 September, the Minister of Internal Security appointed the 16-member National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) which will be chaired by the Police Commissioner. IESG's Senior Electoral Security Adviser will represent UNSOM on the Task Force. A coherent and integrated security coordination mechanism which includes key security actors from the Federal Government, the Federal Member States, the NIEC and AMISOM will lead security planning and coordination for voter registration and other electoral activities across the country. Once the NIEC

approves the list of potential VR sites, the security forces will vet those sites and inform the NIEC after their assessment whether or not they could be secured during voter registration, during the display of the provisional voter lists, during voter card distribution and during the polling day which envisages elections taking place in the last quarter of 2020. The UN has submitted a proposal to the UN Peacebuilding Fund to equip and train NESTF joint operations centres at national, state and regional levels.

NIEC Chairperson attends 74th Session of UN General Assembly

On 26 September, the NIEC Chairperson, Ms. Halima Ismail, attended the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. NIEC Chairperson also attending the High Level meeting on Somalia on the sidelines of UNGA and provided updates on NIEC's achievements and the Commission's readiness to deliver the elections on time with voter registration scheduled to begin in the first half of 2020. The Chairperson called on international partners to offer assistance to deliver these elections on time, identifying voter registration, electoral dispute resolution mechanism and electoral operations as specific areas that require financial support. Speaking at a High-Level Meeting on Somalia, the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia assured the international community of his country's commitment to holding universal suffrage elections in the last quarter of 2020 and promised his government will make every effort to mobilize some domestic resources in support of the election.



Craig Jenness, Director, Electoral Assistance Division UN with Halima Ismail Ibrahim, Chairperson NIEC, at UN HQ during the UN General Assembly, Sept. 2019

Identification of potential voter registration sites

The NIEC with IESG assistance continue to work on refining the list of recently identified potential voter registration sites for Banadir, South West State, Hirshabelle and Galmadug. When finalized, the list will be submitted to the NIEC Board of Commissioners for approval. Following approval, the list will be shared with the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) for their assessment on whether these sites can be secured during the voter registration and polling process. Identification and verification of voter registration sites in Puntland and Jubbaland are currently on hold and awaiting FMS' consent to move forward.

Projects submitted to Peacebuilding Fund

Two projects were submitted to the Peacebuilding Fund for consideration during September. One project seeks support for the activities of the National Electoral Security Task Force while the second project seeks support to NIEC's electoral dispute resolution (EDR) mechanism to enhance peaceful dispute resolution and minimize elections-related violence. The proposal includes construction of a secure and accessible stakeholder outreach and EDR centre to facilitate NIEC engagement with stakeholders on electoral dispute resolution; train NIEC staff, judges, political parties and civil society on electoral issues including electoral dispute resolution as a conflict prevention mechanism.

Role of women in electoral process and political participation



Participants from political parties, women MPs from both houses of parliament and CSOs at workshop on role of women in electoral process and political participation. Mogadishu, 20 August 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 20 August, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) held a workshop on women's political participation in Mogadishu. The workshop was attended by women from civil society organizations, political parties and women

parliamentarians from both Houses of the Federal Parliament. The workshop aimed to inform women on their role in the electoral process and politics.

Dr. Khadija Osoble, NIEC Commissioner,

called upon the women participants to actively participate in political and electoral processes as the country gears up for universal suffrage elections in 2020. "I encourage Somali women to participate in the electoral process and play key roles in their respective political parties", she stated. The women participants engaged the Commission in a question and answer session on their roles in the electoral process and underscored the importance of women's empowerment so as to actively participate in the political arena.

The NIEC Chairperson Ms. Halima Ismail stressed the importance of women actively participating in political parties and encouraged political parties to promote gender sensitive policies and practices to foster women's leadership as the country moves to a multi-party system.

Briefing session on disability rights for NIEC



A briefing session on disability rights for the NIEC Commissioners and secretariat staff Mogadishu, 27 August 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 27 August 2019, the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development and UNSOM Human Rights and Protection Group (HRPG) conducted a briefing session on disability rights for the Commissioners and staff of NIEC.

The objective was to enable the NIEC Commissioners and staff to better understand the barriers that persons with disabilities face, familiarize them of the obligations under the Convention on the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as well as provide the NIEC a better understanding of how to consider disabilities rights in their work.

At the end of the event, the participants gave following recommendations:

- Review the terms of reference of the different units of NIEC, the staff and Commissioners and incorporate the disability rights principles into these

documents to ensure that these rights are more embedded in the tasks of NIEC.

- Develop internal procedures that will ensure that CRPD principles are appropriately considered during the planning phases of the work of NIEC.
- Incorporate disability rights considerations into the awareness-raising and community outreach campaigns of NIEC.
- Recruit a disability rights and inclusion expert for NIEC to provide advisory support in their overall work and conduct training for the Commissioners and staff.
- Review the electoral cycle from the perspective of the rights of persons with disability and to ensure that this cycle is fully inclusive.

The current draft electoral bill before the Federal Parliament be improved and made in line with the CRPD to facilitate participation of people with disability in all national election cycles as voters, candidates, electoral offices and observers.

UNDP/UNSOM provides 6 vehicles to the NIEC



Ms. Hiroko Miyamura, Chief of UN IESG handing over keys of 6 Hilux Pick-Up vehicles to the NIEC Chairperson in Mogadishu. 22 September, 2019. (Photo credit: IESG)

handed over six Hilux Pick-Up vehicles to the Chairperson of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC). The NIEC requested IESG for support with meeting transportation needs of NIEC headquarters and field offices in the federal member states. The vehicles will assist NIEC to improve coordination, overcome transportation challenges and support movement of electoral material enabling the NIEC to effectively

On 22 September 2019, the Chief of UN Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) carry out electoral operations.

NIEC-MoCA hold joint forum on advancing women rights in the Constitution



NIEC Chairperson with Minister of Constitutional Affairs in a joint forum on advancing women rights in the constitution, Mogadishu. 14 August (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 14 September, in Mogadishu, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) and the Ministry of Constitution Affairs (MOCA) organized a joint forum to discuss women's quotas and gender equality as well as promoting women's political participation. Representatives from political parties, civil society organizations, MPs from the Houses of Parliament and various officials participated in the discussion. NIEC Chairperson highlighted the NIEC's efforts to encourage women's political participation in the electoral process and stressed the necessity for quotas to be included in the Constitution, the electoral law and other laws to ensure women are given equal opportunities to participate in public life.

NIEC meeting with Deputy Prime Minister

On 7 September, the NIEC Chairperson held a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Ahmed Khadar, to seek full cooperation from all ministries and agencies of the Government to ensure credible elections. The Deputy PM assured that the 'one person one vote' is a key priority for the Government and promised to convene a meeting of all government departments whose involvement and assistance are critical for the electoral process. Representatives will include Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Security and Ministry of Finance.

Voter Registration

In preparation for Somalia's first one-person, one-vote elections since 1969, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) plans to conduct voter registration in the first half of 2020. With technical assistance from the UNDP/UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG), the NIEC has been working on a draft concept of operations and tentative budget for the 2020 voter registration exercise, including the display of provisional voters list and distribution of voters' cards.

Registration of Political Parties

The Amendments to the Political Party Law was submitted by the Cabinet to Parliament on 2 May but has not yet been tabled for its first reading in Parliament. In addition to those amendments, a number of important revisions are required to bring the Political Party Law in line with electoral timelines including allowing political parties to apply for formal registration once the law is ratified rather than only 5 months before election day. This conflicts with the timeline for submission of the candidate list and with timeline for determining polling day in the draft electoral law. There is also a conflict with the timeline of 7 days for campaign silence in the Political Party law while the draft electoral law states the silence period should be 48 hours which is an accepted practice. The NIEC has provided provisional registration to 57 political parties to date.

NIEC Legal Framework Training Workshop

On 23 and 24 September 2019, IESG organized a two-day training workshop on the legal framework for the NIEC Legal Department. The objective of the workshop was to enhance capacity of NIEC legal staff in drafting clear and implementable regulations and procedures. The workshop examined national and international guiding principles which need to be considered while drafting electoral regulations and procedures.

A training video showing the entire process of polling and counting stimulated lively discussion. The participants enhanced their skills in drafting by producing a draft voter registration form and the outline of the voter registration procedure that could be used in a voter registration manual for voter registration staff.



NIEC team engaged in a two-day training workshop on Legal Framework in Mogadishu. 23-24 September 2019 (Photo credit: IESG)

Financial Management Training for NIEC



NIEC staff participate in a two-day Financial Management training workshop, Mogadishu. 26-27 August 2019. (Photo credit: IESG)

On 26 and 27 August 2019, IESG organized a training workshop on financial management for key NIEC administration and finance staff. The workshop focused on financial management, understanding the government's financial policies, UNDP's financial procedures and Letter of Agreements (LOAs). This training was in line with UNDP's capacity development plan to improve NIEC staff's skills to manage and facilitate the electoral process.

Logistics training for NIEC staff

From 24-25 September 2019, IESG in collaboration with Bringing Unity, Integrity and Legitimacy to Democracy project (BUILD) conducted a training on logistics with NIEC logistics, operations and field coordination staff from headquarters and field offices. The training focused on familiarizing staff with logistics planning, timelines, asset management, warehouse management, packing of voter registration and electoral materials, distribution and secure delivery plans for electoral materials and equipment.

Training workshop on planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

From 2 to 12 September, NIEC staff attended a 10-day training on planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting facilitated by NIEC's M&E advisor. The main objective of the training was to equip staff with the concepts and tools of result-based planning, M&E and reporting. The training is part of the NIEC's plans to build the capacity of its staff in preparation to conduct universal suffrage elections in 2020.



NIEC staff attend training workshop on planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting 2-12 August, Mogadishu (Photo credit: NIEC)



Contact:

Mary Cummins, Deputy Chief Electoral Advisor, Elections, Email: mary.cummins@undp.org
Mahmood Akhtar, Communication & Reporting Officer, Email: mahmood.akhtar@undp.org
UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)