

Whether to Retain UNDP's Procurement Support Office

The Procurement Support Office has the following advantages in electoral procurement compared with Country Offices:

- The Procurement Support Office handles multiple requests for electoral procurement every year. It therefore has considerable experience in the market and is aware of new trends and products.
- Long-term agreements already in place with vendors allow the Procurement Support Office to place orders directly with suppliers. This can reduce the lead time needed by two months.
- In principle, consolidating requests for electoral equipment from all UNDP Country Offices is cost-effective.
- Consolidating demand gives the Procurement Support Office better prices than a Country Office that only needs to procure election equipment once every three or four years.
- Country Offices may be able to obtain better prices from time to time, but often transaction costs, i.e., the internal cost of acquisition, are not taken into consideration.

The Procurement Support Office can also provide procurement advisory services for EMBs to ensure transparency and cost-effectiveness. Advisory services include needs assessment, procurement planning, budgeting, specifications writing, assessing and pre-qualifying local suppliers, and setting up local long-term agreements.

On the other hand, if the EMB has access to goods and services locally or regionally that are up to standards required by the specifications, that option should be encouraged from the perspective of cost, sustainability and value for money. Where possible, fairly basic consumable materials such as pens, pencils, papers and voter registration forms should be sourced locally or within the region. While diversifying sources of procurement may entail slightly more administrative work on the part of UNDP, the added benefits may include considerable contribution to the local or regional economy. Possible positive impacts might include local economic growth, jobs, and sustainability as well as possibly 'greener' procurement in the sense that there is likely to be reduced carbon emissions, particularly in transporting goods from a source nearest to where the elections are taking place. In addition, local suppliers can always register at the Procurement Support Office as suppliers and thus participate in international competition.

Considerations for Effective Procurement

- Involve procurement from as early in the electoral assistance process as possible.
- Link procurement to logistics and, where possible, link the different units working on the issues.
- Ensure (through the EMB) that the national customs authorities are made aware of the incoming shipments of electoral equipment and that these are securely stored and guarded.
- Ensure that all sensitive materials are sampled and tested prior to placing orders. Tests should validate the evaluation when procuring highly complex productions — e.g., digital voter registration and e-voting systems.
- Ensure that the goods arrive in the country well in advance to be tested (as necessary) and distributed throughout the country.
- Maintain an inventory of goods procured; after the election, transfer the goods to the EMB.
- Standardize procurement, in particular the re-supply of consumables.
- Establish specific procedures for convening a Local Programme Advisory Committee.
- Liaise with New York to expedite Advisory Committee on Procurement (ACP) approval.
- Strategize procurement using long-term agreements (LTAs). (A number of these were developed by IAPSO and will be maintained by the Procurement Support Office on behalf of UNDP.). Develop local LTAs.
- Always compare national quotes with international bidding to ensure best value for money. Remember that best value for money does not mean the cheapest but the most adequate.