



UNDP BANGLADESH

**PREPARATION OF ELECTORAL ROLL WITH PHOTOGRAPHS
BGD/07/002**

December 2009

Evaluation Report

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Abbreviations

AEC	Australian Election Commission
AFIS	Automated Fingerprint System
AL	Bangladesh Awami League
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BAF	Bangladesh Armed Force
BEC	Bangladesh Election Commission
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CDS	Central Database Server
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan (UNDP)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSED	Construction of Server Stations for the Electoral Database Project
CTG	Caretaker Government
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DVL	Draft Voter List
EC	European Commission
ECS	Election Commission Secretariat
EMB	Electoral Management Body
ERP	Election Reform Programme (UNDP)
ES	Election Specialist
ETI	Electoral Training Institute
EWG	Elections Working Group
FVL	Final Voter List
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ID	Identity Card
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute
IT	Information Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NID	National Identity Card
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEP	National Elections Project (TAF)
NEX	Nationally Executed Project
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development
NPD	National Project Director
PERP	Preparation of the Electoral Roll Project
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RO	Returning Officers
RPO	Representation of People's Order
SECIEP	Strengthening the Election Commission for Improvements in the Electoral Process
SEPB	Support to the Electoral Process in Bangladesh Project
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TBB	Translucent Ballot Box Project
TOT	Trainer of Trainers
UEO	Upazila Election Officer
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
TOR	Terms of Reference
VLP	Voters list with photograph

1. Executive Summary

The Preparation of the Electoral Rolls Project (PERP) is a three-year project (July 2007 - June 2010) that was designed to support the registration of voters in Bangladesh and create a sustainable, credible voter list with photos. This USD 78.7 million project is jointly funded by the GoB (USD 29.4 million) and nine international donors (USD 50.3 million) with pooled funding through a UNDP administered project. PERP is a nationally executed project (NEX) by the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) and is headed by a National Project Director (NPD) seconded by the Bangladesh Armed Forces (BAF).

The PERP project focused on one of the main issues of contention for holding the 9th parliamentary elections in Bangladesh. They were originally scheduled for 22 January 2007 but the process was marred by political violence, allegations of bias by the BEC and boycotts of opposition parties. On 11 January 2007 the President declared a state of emergency and named a new caretaker government (CTG) and new Election Commissioners. After consultations with political parties and civil society, the Commissioners developed an *electoral roadmap* that pushed the elections back until the end of 2008 so that needed reforms could take place first. This included replacing the highly contested 2001 voter roll with a new electoral list with photos. It was a very ambitious agenda for the given timeframe with extreme pressure from every quarter to finish the process so that the caretaker government, normally constituted for the three month electoral period, could be replaced by elected government.

PERP directly assisted the implementation of the voter list with photo (VLP) process. This process had already been piloted with support of the UNDP-BEC *Support to Electoral Process Project* (SEPB) and the BAF. PERP was designed to implement this voter registration process. This included registering every eligible voter and digitally capturing their photo, fingerprints and signature and issuing them with a national identity (ID) card. With the logistical and operational support of the BAF, PERP registered more than 81.03 million voters in time for the parliamentary elections to be held at the end of 2008. PERP is currently completing the first updating of the list with 4 million new voters being registered. At the time of the evaluation, PERP had expended about 75% of its time and funding.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh commissioned an independent evaluation of its Electoral Reform Programme (ERP) and its four elections projects, including PERP, in order to assess their performance and to identify lessons to strengthen its support for national efforts to promote a free and credible electoral environment. The evaluation team of one international and two national experts interviewed electoral stakeholders and others in Bangladesh in October and November 2009; visited the PERP project offices and the BEC headquarters in Dhaka; observed voter registration during its updating process; and reviewed available project/programme documentation and election observation reports. This Report focuses on the PERP project. Separate reports were done for the Electoral Reform Programme and for each of the UNDP-administered projects.

The evaluation found that the PERP project was an extraordinary achievement. It successfully brought together international and GoB support to directly achieve the registration of over 80 million Bangladeshi citizens in eleven months and developed a comprehensive voter list with photograph database with an accuracy rate of 98%. This removed one of the main areas of political contention for the electoral process and directly contributed to the holding of a peaceful, transparent and credible parliamentary election in 2008. This achievement however, is not only due to PERP, but of the remarkable partnership it developed with UNDP, BEC, BAF, CTG3, civil society and the citizens of Bangladesh.

The main objective for the project was *the development of a credible electoral roll with photographs in order to facilitate the preparations for free and fair elections.*¹ The evaluation found that this objective was met and surpassed. Not only did PERP develop an accurate and credible voter roll against immense logistical, political and other odds, it came in on time and under budget. This was an enormous undertaking that required the logistical and operational support of the BAF, the mobilization of more than 80 million citizens to come out to registration sites to have their data captured and the hiring and training of more than 370,000 enumerators and data entry operators. It also required the development and testing of software and the development of a nationwide IT infrastructure to process and transmit the data back to the district and main sever centres.

The PERP project design only had one expected output: *an electoral roll with photograph.* For evaluation report purposes, the evaluation team has also used the two other activity areas targeted by the project as expected results: *central and countrywide technology infrastructure for updating the photo voter list established and maintained;* and *photo voter list and ICT skills capacity developed at the central and field levels* to group its findings. The evaluation team found that PERP has also met these two project objectives.

PERP's success is due to many factors. This includes: government ownership of and commitment to developing a credible VLP; the partnerships developed by PERP with the BAF, civil society, SEPB and others; exceptional leadership and dedication by all involved; successful crisis management and risk taking; and extraordinary civic participation. In addition, the identity card issued as a result of voter registration proved not only to be a motivating factor for voters to come out and register, but it provided a sense of national identity for many who had previously felt excluded.

PERP has already been evaluated by its largest donors, the European Commission (EC) and the Department for International Development (DFID). Their findings were also positive and their main concerns focused on ensuring the sustainability of the achievement. This evaluation concurs with their findings, concerns and recommendations. PERP has met its anticipated results and the BEC, through PERP, has assumed responsibility for the VLP and its maintenance from the BAF. However, the BEC is still dependent on the human resources, knowledge and resources of PERP to maintain the VLP and its technology infrastructure. The challenge now is to build the institutional capacity of the Election Commission Secretariat (ECS) to effectively assume these responsibilities and to maintain the accuracy of the VLP and the widespread political and public confidence in its credibility as Bangladesh moves forward towards its 10th parliamentary elections in 2014.

As a result of the findings and remaining issues, the evaluation recommends:

- ✓ At least a six month time extension for the PERP project to help ensure the conditions are in place that can assure the sustainability of its accomplishments. In particular: for the ECS's planned expansion and reorganization to be approved and the additional permanent personnel hired and trained; for the construction of the physical infrastructure that will provide the permanent housing for the IT infrastructure to be completed; and for the SEPB project to be able to build the capacity of the ECS to manage and maintain the VLP and its infrastructure.
- ✓ A separate project be developed for assistance to the National ID (NID) card but closely coordinated with PERP. Developing a NID database and its uses and linkages with other GoB databases is a very different endeavor from voter registration and requires different

¹ UNDP, *PERP Project Document*, p 1

skills, expertise and vision. The potential size of such a project would also sideline the efforts to strengthen the electoral processes and BEC's institutional capacity.

- ✓ Continued close monitoring of the voter roll process and its database by political parties, civil society and the international community to ensure the continuing integrity of the roll. The current high level of credibility and trusts needs to be maintained and close monitoring can also help ensure this level of trust and integrity is maintained; and
- ✓ Development of a multi-year communications plan to ensure the continued visibility and credibility of the roll. This should be integrated into the larger communications strategy being developed by the BEC for the electoral process as a whole.

2. Background

2.1. Elections in Bangladesh

Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been struggling to build its democratic institutions to face the uphill struggle of nation-building and poverty reduction in the largely poor South Asian State. Within the context of scarce resources in one of the most densely populated countries of the world, holding public offices whether in national or local government institutions has become a way of building personal and political constituency in a culture of patron-client relations. Except for several years of democratic rule, the first two decades of independence were largely under military or semi-military rule. Since 1991, Bangladesh has largely been under democratic rule after the overthrowing of a military regime in December 1990 by a mass uprising led by the major political parties -- the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and their charismatic leaders Begam Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina respectively.

To ensure free and fair elections, a non-party and neutral caretaker government was first introduced within the legal framework of the then presidential form of government as a way to transition to civilian rule in the run up to the 1991 parliamentary elections. This system was institutionalized in the Constitution by the short-lived parliament elected in early 1996 and was intended to replace elected government for the three month period leading up parliamentary elections. Bangladesh has a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy with a prime minister as head of government and a president elected by parliament. Parliamentary elections are held every five years for 300 single-member constituencies on a first-past-the-post basis. There is also a system of 45 reserved seats for women elected by members on a proportional basis. Local level elections are held at the Upazila, Poursava (municipal councils), Union Council and City Corporation levels every five years. Turnout is generally good, averaging 75% in the 1996 and 2001 parliamentary elections.²

Elections are administered by the Bangladesh Election Commission, an independent constitutional body headed by a Chief Election Commissioner and two Commissioners. Its operations are run by a Bangladesh Election Commission Secretariat. Until 2008, the ECS Secretary was appointed by the Ministry of Establishment. They are assisted during elections by about 500,000 local government administrators who are appointed as Presiding Officers (PO) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APO) and more than a million temporary enumerators and poll workers.

Recent elections have been relatively transparent, free and fair though the alternating rule by the two major party leaders has resulted in fierce competition for political office, politically

² Eicher, *Elections in Bangladesh 2006 - 2009: Turning Failure into Success*, pps 18, 92-94

polarizing party activists from central to grassroots level. The political system is also winner-take-all with political parties developing a culture of non-cooperation, of boycotting parliament while in opposition and staging violent street protests and *hartal*, a protest strike that disrupts business and public life. Bangladesh has yet to develop representative democratic institutions or a political climate that is inclusive or conducive to power sharing. Instead, the two major parties build alliances with fringe political parties to increase their chances of winning elections even though their policy differences are not that significant, except for their public rhetoric. The parties are not seen by the public as representing or aggregating their interests. A December 2007 survey done by the Election Working Group (EWG), an umbrella organization of 32 civil society organizations (CSOs) working on electoral issues and observation, found that 70% of ordinary citizens and 60% of the elites thought that political parties had not represented their interest in any way in the past,³ although this perception was said to have improved somewhat closer to the 2008 elections.

2.2. 2006-2008 Electoral context and elections

On 26 October 2006, a caretaker government (CTG1) was installed in advance of the 9th parliamentary elections scheduled for 22 January 2007 among controversy and political violence. At issue was the composition of CTG1 and the President's self-appointment as Chief Advisor. Opposition parties alleged that the Chief Advisor and BEC were acting on behalf of the ruling party at the time (BNP), and that the electoral roll⁴ was inaccurate and full of anomalies. Some of the CTG1 resigned and the CTG was reorganized and reconstituted (CTG2). A study by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) on the voters list, released in early December 2006 found that more than 12 million excess or duplicate names were on the lists. Although these were thought to be primarily the result of voters with new addresses or deceased voters whose names had not been removed, it increased demands for a more accurate voter roll before elections were held. With the continued deterioration of the political and security environment, the AL and other opposition parties announced a boycott of the elections on 3 January 2007. This led to a rapid deterioration of the environment with the domestic and international observation groups suspending their election observation efforts. UNDP also temporarily suspended its technical assistance to the electoral process done through SEPB.

With support from the military, the President declared a state of emergency on 11 January 2007 and postponed the elections. By the end of January 2007, a new caretaker government (CTG3) had been formed with a reform agenda and a vow to hold free and fair elections. The state of emergency banned political activities and demonstrations, suspended civil rights and prohibited statements against the government, imposed restrictions on media and gave the government broad powers for arrest and detention. At the same time, the CTG3 started efforts to overhaul the electoral system through legal, policy and institutional reforms. As part of this, they reconstituted the BEC by appointing a new Chief Election Commissioner and two other Commissioners with a mandate to improve the electoral process and hold free and fair elections.

Among the electoral reforms recommended by the BEC, and adopted by CTG3 ordinance, was reform of the electoral law (Representative of the People's Order) to include mandatory political party registration, and to revise campaign financing limits and candidate nomination procedures. It also revised the Code of Conduct in an attempt to limit the influence of *black money* and *muscle* by limiting certain campaign activities and enforcing the requirement for the reporting on campaign expenditures. It also separated the BEC Secretariat from the Prime

³ EWG, *Public Perception Study*, December 2007

⁴ Comprised of the 2001 voters list and the registration of new voters in 2006

Minister's Office, bringing it directly under the supervision of the BEC to ensure more independence, transparency and accountability in its operation.

In July 2007, after consultations with the political parties, media and CSOs, the BEC announced an *electoral roadmap* that provided the timeline for reforms, re-registration of voters and elections by the end of 2008. It included updating the delimitation of electoral constituencies, which had not been done since 1984.

At the same time, under the state of emergency the CTG3 pursued its efforts to root out the influence of corruption, and encourage civic-minded participation in politics. The Anti-Corruption Commission actively investigated alleged cases of corruption and detainees included both former Prime Ministers from the two major parties who were later released. The BNP split during this period and there were initiatives for several new parties but they failed to gain popular support and only one competed in the 2008 elections. The BAF played a behind the scene role in backing and facilitating CTG3's efforts for political and electoral reform. But there was widespread pressure from political parties, civil society and the international community, as well as from the CTG3 and the Election Commissioners own sense of commitment, to hold a free and fair election as soon as possible and to hand over power to a democratically elected government in 2008.

Redoing the voters roll was one of the biggest challenges facing the BEC and one of the primary reasons why the elections were delayed until the end of 2008. Initial efforts focused on finding a methodology on how to register more than 80 million people to prepare a new voters list with photographs. This had been one of the key reform demands from political parties and civil society. The BAF, the CTG3 and the UNDP-administered SEPB project provided technical advice and options on how this massive logistical undertaking could be done. A methodology was adopted that started with a door-to-door enumeration done by the BEC. The voters then took their slips to a voter registration centre organized and managed by the BAF where they were photographed, fingerprinted and had their information entered into the computer data base. Registered voters were then given a national identity card (ID) that included their photograph as an incentive to register. This methodology was tested successfully at Sreepur Municipality, Gazipur District in June 2008, and was then used for the national registration process.

A massive logistical effort was mounted to register every citizen over the age of 18 and to create a new, accurate database within the electoral timeline. The SEPB project was used to help jump start this process, while the BEC and UNDP developed the full-scale project, *Preparation of Voter Rolls with Photographs (PERP)*, to help implement the registration effort. The BEC, with the assistance of the BAF and PERP, was able to register 80.03 million voters within 11 months. At its peak, 10 million voters a month were being registered.⁵ Special focus was given to ensure coverage of vulnerable population groups, including ethnic and other groups living in remote or inaccessible areas (Chittagong Hill Tracts, off shore islands, Char areas). Transports ranging from boats to helicopters were used depending on the terrain. CSOs were used to help ensure

VOTER REGISTRATION TIMELINE

June 2007: Sreepur Pilot. 46,000 voters registered in 22 days.

August 2007: PERP project approval and nationwide registration starts

November 2007: Major equipment deployed (including 10,000 laptops, webcams and fingerprint scanners)

December 2007: 20,722,348 voters registered

July 2008: 80,508,311 voters registered

December 2008: 81,032,456 voters registered

November 2009: 1st updating of voter roll. As of Nov 14, 2009: 4,439,903 new and left out voters were registered

⁵ PERP, *Celebrating the halfway mark of Photo Voter Registration... Progress on Track*

the participation of the elderly, isolated and others. This effort resulted in the world's largest civilian electronic database of voters with an accuracy rate estimated at 98%.⁶

In August 2008, local elections were held in four city corporations and seven municipal councils. The new VLP was used during this process. The main issue seemed to be that the VLP was done by number rather than by name, which caused difficulties for voters to find their polling stations. However, the list and the August elections were found by domestic observer groups to be credible.

The parliamentary elections were held on 29 December 2008. Thirty nine parties had registered to contest these elections and the state of emergency was lifted on 17 December 2008 to facilitate the election campaign. These elections had a voter turnout of 87% and were widely perceived by domestic and international observers as "*credible elections, consistent with international standards of freedom, fairness and transparency.*"⁷ With 48% of the vote, the AL won 230 of the 300 parliamentary seats and the BNP with 32% of the vote, won 30 seats. Upazila elections were subsequently held in January 2009 which had more problems than the parliamentary elections, but were still found by domestic observers as credible.

The success of the provisional national identity card issued by the BEC during the voter registration process resulted in a GoB decision to develop it further as a National ID card (NID). Draft legislation putting this process under the BEC had not yet been ratified by the time of the evaluation, but it appeared probable that this responsibility will be given to the BEC for the foreseeable future. The first updating of the roll was undertaken in 2009 by the BEC with the support of the PERP project, resulting in an additional 4 million new voters registered.

2.3. Assistance to the electoral process

The international community actively supported the 2006 - 2009 electoral processes. A significant portion of the donor funding was provided through two main mechanisms: (1) the UNDP Electoral Reform Programme of four projects which pooled donor funding for technical assistance and support to election administration and reforms; and (2) The Asia Foundation (TAF)'s National Elections Project (NEP) which supported civil society participation and observation of the process by the EWG funded by nine donors.⁸ This USD 9.3 million programme started primarily to support domestic election observation but later was expanded to include voter awareness activities. The EWG undertook monthly national perception surveys on the process from 2007 to January 2009. It had a nationwide network and fielded about 155,000 domestic observers during the December 2008 elections. In addition, USAID providing funding for election-related activities by IRI and NDI that included surveys, party dialogue on reform issues and voter registration, training of trainers (TOT) for Poll Agent Master trainers, a handy manual for polling agents and long and short-term election observation. DFID also provided funding for the BBC's Shanglap Programme, a question answer show of political leaders, which aired mayoral debates for the 2008 local elections and special programming for the parliamentary elections.

2.4. UNDP Assistance

⁶ An independent assessment of the VLP conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

⁷ EWG, *Observation Report, January 3, 2009*

⁸ Canadian International Development Agency - CIDA, the Department for International Development - DFID, Australian Agency for International Development - AusAID, Swedish International Development Agency - SIDA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, U.S. Department of State and the Embassies of Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands.

UNDP had supported the strengthening of the electoral processes in Bangladesh since 1996. Its first project, *Strengthening Election Commission for Improvement in the Electoral Process (SECIEP) - BGD/96/018* (1996 - 2005) supported the 2001 national elections and electoral system reforms by strengthening the BEC's technical capacity for greater operational transparency and oversight. SECIEP helped to: develop the BEC's Central Database System (CDS) of 76.2m voters; supported the ETI to provide more effective training of electoral officials, polling agents and others; and raised awareness of women and other sectors of society on electoral and democratic processes to increase participation. In addition, UNDP provided support for the coordination of international election observers for the 2001 elections.

A one-year follow-on project, *Support to the Electoral Process in Bangladesh (SEPB) - BGD/05/005* was designed to bridge the period between the end of SECIEP and the preparation of a full-fledged project document. Primarily funded by UNDP core funding,⁹ it was also to help the BEC to efficiently manage training, civic awareness programming and the voter roll.¹⁰ As it became clear that the voter registration needed to be redone from scratch, a separate UNDP-administered project was signed for the *Preparation of the Electoral Roll with Photographs (PERP) - BGD/07/002*. This project assisted the BEC with the registration of more than 80 million voters from June 2007 to July 2008. The SEPB continued to serve as an umbrella project with time and cost extensions that took it through the 2008 elections and into mid 2010. A Canadian offer of funding for translucent ballot boxes to increase the transparency and reduce the opportunities for fraud resulted in the UNDP-administered project *Translucent Ballot Boxes (TBB) - BGD/08/003* funded by Canada which procured more than a quarter million translucent ballot boxes and security seals in time for the 2008 national elections. Once the rush of voter registration was completed, UNDP and the BEC focused on the issue of how the voter registry could be updated and the data base and registration equipment maintained. They developed the UNDP-administered project *Construction of Server Stations for the Electoral Database (CSSED)- BGD/09/001* funded by the GoB, Netherlands and DFID. This project intends to build more than 500 server stations at the Upazila, district and regional levels which will also house local-level electoral officials and their offices.

These projects were done within the context of **United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Bangladesh 2006 - 2010**. Given the polarized political climate, **UNDP's Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) for 2005 - 2010 identified** election support as vital. It planned for UNDP to build on the trust and confidence built from its previous project to support the legal, policy and institutional frameworks of the electoral processes, including focused support for the next national elections. Programme goals included increased transparency of the electoral system, increased availability of information within the BEC and with citizens (including easier access through the provision of e-citizen services), a more inclusive electoral process for women and marginalized groups, raised voter awareness, capacity development of election officials and the Electoral Training Institute, establishment of a

UNDP'S ELECTORAL REFORM PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Expected Outcome (UNDAF 1.2):

Electoral assistance coordinated and electorate informed of voting rights and responsibilities

Expected Outcome (UNDAF 2.1):

The legal, policy and institutional framework for free and fair elections at national and local level is enhanced

Expected Output (CPAP 1.2.1)

Improving the working of the election commission and strengthening the electoral process towards free and fair election

Indicator (CPAP 1.2.1)

Election system improved, impartial elections held

Baseline (CPAP 1.2.1)

Elections under neutral caretaker government

⁹ With some support also from AusAID, Demark and CIDA.

¹⁰ UNDP, *Preparatory Assistance Document, Support to the Electoral Process in Bangladesh - BDG/05/005*, p 2

national voter database and information management systems and expanded involvement of civil society.

2.5. The Preparation of Electoral Roll with Photographs Project

The PERP project was designed to directly support the BEC's voter registration effort. This three year (1 July 2007 – 30 June 2010) USD 78,755,547 project is jointly funded by the GoB (USD 29,400,000) and nine of its development partners (USD 50,365,359) with funding pooled through the UNDP administered project. The decision to re-do the voter registration with a voter roll with photo and to issue an ID card had already been made in March 2007 and its methodology developed and tested through a pilot programme at Sreepur Municipality, before the PERP project began. The timeline had also been announced-- 18 months with six months to prepare the project proposal, procure equipment and recruit staff and a 12-month timeline to conduct the registration in the field.

The PERP project document was signed on 27 August 2007. It is nationally executed under the supervision of the BEC and its NPD. The NPD is a Brigadier General deputed from the BAF to the BEC for this project. This deputation was to ensure the linkage between the BAF, which was doing the field logistics and operations, and the project which provided the personnel, training, and equipment. PERP is housed on two floors within the Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh building and has a staff of about 60 (3 on deputation and about 50 hired for the project with GoB funding and 6 experts contracted by UNDP). As of the end of the 3rd Quarter 2009, 75% of the time and donor funding for PERP had been expended and it had registered more than 85 million voters.

<p style="text-align: center;">PERP PROJECT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PURPOSE</p> <p>Technical requirements and infrastructure fully established and capacity built to enable the GoB to prepare a credible voter list for elections in 2008 and to maintain and update the nationwide list thereafter.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXPECTED RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A credible national electoral roll with photographs completed• Central & country-wide infrastructure for updating PVL established & maintained• Photo voter list & ICT skills capacity developed at the central and field levels <p style="text-align: center;">DONORS (USD)</p> <table><tr><td>EC: \$20,130,000</td><td>DFID: \$20,000,000</td></tr><tr><td>Netherlands: \$4,494,000</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Sweden: \$1,000,000</td><td>Norway: \$1,000,000</td></tr><tr><td>UNDP: \$3,104,300</td><td>Switzerland: \$1,000,000</td></tr><tr><td>Denmark: \$918,831</td><td>Korea: \$532,710</td></tr></table>	EC: \$20,130,000	DFID: \$20,000,000	Netherlands: \$4,494,000		Sweden: \$1,000,000	Norway: \$1,000,000	UNDP: \$3,104,300	Switzerland: \$1,000,000	Denmark: \$918,831	Korea: \$532,710
EC: \$20,130,000	DFID: \$20,000,000									
Netherlands: \$4,494,000										
Sweden: \$1,000,000	Norway: \$1,000,000									
UNDP: \$3,104,300	Switzerland: \$1,000,000									
Denmark: \$918,831	Korea: \$532,710									

2.6. PERP Evaluation

In October 2009, UNDP/Bangladesh commissioned an independent evaluation of its elections reform programme and its four projects in order to assess their performance and identify lessons learned to strengthen its support for GoB efforts to promote a free and credible electoral environment. The evaluation team was comprised of Sue Nelson, an international consultant and Senior Elections Advisor; Md Abdul Momen, a former NDI/Bangladesh Senior Advisor; and Dr. Mojibur Doftori, former Deputy Head of the civil society election observation group JANIPOP.

The team was asked to review UNDP's elections assistance at the programme and project levels. They interviewed electoral stakeholders and others in Bangladesh in October and November 2009, including the BEC, civil society groups, political actors, electors, Members of Parliament, opposition party leaders, project staff and donors (Annex 7). They visited the BEC headquarters in Dhaka and the project offices, including PERP, and observed the updating of voter registration in Dhaka. They also visited the main server database for the VLP and the warehousing of the registration laptops. The team reviewed available project/programme documentation, election observation reports and other pertinent documents (Annex 9). The team would like to thank the UNDP, BEC, donors, projects and CSOs for their gracious assistance and time which provided the essential information, context and insight needed to be able to

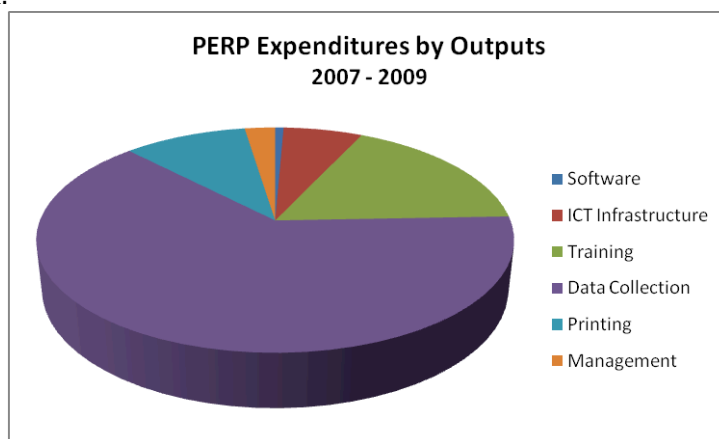
assess this large scale programme effort and impact, and in particular, the PERP NPD and his staff for arranging their field trip to observe registration centres and Thana level server stations.

This report covers the findings for the PERP project. The evaluation team also produced separate reports for each of the UNDP-administered projects and for the overall UNDP Electoral Reform Programme. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the evaluation is provided in Annex 10 and the evaluation methodology is detailed in Annex 8.

3. Findings

The PERP project was an extraordinary achievement. It brought international and GoB support together to directly achieve the registration of over 80 million Bangladeshi citizens in eleven months and developed a voter list with photograph database with an accuracy rate of 98%. This removed one of the main areas of political contention and directly contributed to the holding of a peaceful and credible parliamentary election in 2008. This achievement however, is not only due to the project, but of a remarkable partnership between project, BAF, CTG3, civil society and the citizens of Bangladesh.

PERP had only one expected output: *an electoral roll with photograph*. For evaluation report purposes, the evaluation team has also used the other two areas targeted by the project as expected results: *central and countrywide technology infrastructure for updating the photo voter list established and maintained; and photo voter list and ICT skills capacity developed at the central and field levels* to group its findings.



3.1. Expected result one: A credible national electoral roll with photographs completed

3.1.1. Design and piloting of voter registration with photograph

The design and methodology for voter registration was done before the PERP project started. Assisted by the BAF and a team of five consultants provided through SEPB, the BEC developed and tested the methodology for the VLP. This took into consideration the lessons from the past voter registration efforts in Bangladesh, international best practices and modern IT technologies. The VLP was designed to use software solutions to electronically register voter information from a pre-filled in registration form together with the voter's digital photograph, fingerprint scans and signature.

A pilot was conducted at Sreepur Municipality in Gazipur district to test the methodology, use of IT, logistics, training and recruitment for the national effort. In 30 registration areas of 22 local government polling centre areas, 145 enumerators and 60 data entry operators were recruited and trained. The enumerators received 3 days of training which included classroom training and workshop. Data entry staff received 1 week of training including classroom training and examination. Awareness-raising on voter education was conducted by involving civil society, including Imams of Mosques and local traditional religious leaders. To encourage female voters to go to the registration centres, efforts were made to have a large number of female

registration

VOTER REGISTRATION METHODOLOGY

Voter registration took place in centres instead of the previous practice of door-to-door enumeration of voters to capture voter information electronically and to maintain performance of IT equipment. Centres were open from 9 - 5 but stayed open longer if required to process all voters. Enumerators distributed centrally printed and pre-numbered registration forms to each house of the locality ahead of the registration period. They provided assistance in filling the forms if needed. A receipt with an agreed time was left with the household or the occupants to go to the Upazila data entry centre or designated registration centre for photograph and data entry. Voters went to the Upazila data entry centre the next day to the specific computer which contained their data or registration centre with their completed form at the time of their convenience and went to the first available notebook computer. The form was then verified by the enumerator for its correctness and completeness. After verification, the voter went to the data entry operator who typed the data into the computer based on key form number, name, date of birth, father's/husband's name, address, voter area, and digitally captured the photo, fingerprints and signature with the pre-entered voter information. Under both methods, data integration, verification and printing of provisional ID cards were conducted from the Upazila office. By comparing the method 1 (going to Upazila data entry centre the next day to a specific computer), and method 2 (going to registration centre at the time of convenience during the registration period), method 2 was found to be a flexible process which reduced the management requirements at both the registration centre and Upazila office and was the methodology adopted for the VLP process.

officers and volunteers. To address the religious sensitivity of certain voters, all-female registration staff and volunteers were used for the registration, when required.

The identification of elderly and disabled voters who were unable to go to registration centre was conducted by local government organizations and enumerators. Special arrangements were made to register those voters by data entry operator staff through door to door visits. Voters were motivated to go to registration centres in order to get the provisional ID card, which to many citizens of Bangladesh was a symbol of their individual 'agency', of being 'someone' and ultimately 'citizens' of the country. The EWG, with its nationwide network engaged in public awareness-raising on the voters' registration funded by TAF in cooperation with the PERP and the BEC.

3.1.2. National registration

Planned Activities: In coordination with the BAF, and other actors, PERP intended to register the eligible voters of Bangladesh estimated at around 80 million. These were citizens 18 years and older. The PERP project intended to do this using: the methodology developed during the pilot registration; the logistical support of the BAF; and the equipment (computers, fingerprint scanners, web cameras) procured by the project. It also intended to develop and implement a strategy to reach marginalized voters through door-to-door registration, including the disabled and elderly. Equipment purchased under the project was expected to form the basic infrastructure for the subsequent establishment of a nationwide BEC intranet system to be supported by SEPB.

Findings: PERP, using the methodology tested during the pilot, successfully registered more than 80 million citizens within eleven months. By December 2008, PERP had registered a total of 81.3 million voters, 51% of these were female and 49% male. To do this PERP became operational in 490 locations (City Corporations, Union Parishads, and Upazilas) during registration. It compared fingerprints using the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS)¹¹ which was one of the largest ICT activities ever done in Bangladesh. It developed a Draft Voters List (DVL), printing three copies of the DVL for posting in each of the 490 locations.¹² It finalized the list in a Final Voters List (FVL) which also required printing for each

¹¹ The VLP database is kept by districts and the capacity of the current system is comparisons of 5 million fingerprints, so the AFIS and comparisons of names were done within each district.

¹² PERP, *Annual Report, January -December 2008*, p 4

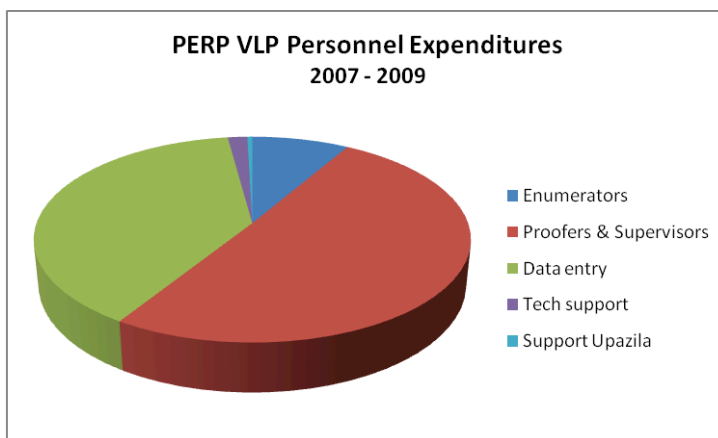
of the 490 locations. The FVL was used successfully in the August 2008 local elections,¹³ December 2008 parliamentary elections, January 2009 Upazila elections and April 2009 by-elections. It conducted an update of the VLP in 2009, without the BAF, and by November 2009 had registered another 4 million new and left out voters¹⁴ bringing the total voter roll with photos to over 85 million voters.

To achieve results of this magnitude in the face of so many challenges in such a short period of time is quite remarkable. It required great leadership, vision, commitment and funding, as well as a very well organized, trained, managed and equipped project and operations. It also required great cooperation, coordination and partnerships from every part of society. PERP and the VLP process had these.

The scope of the challenge was daunting. Reaching more than 80 million people in a developing country such as Bangladesh, with difficult terrain and off shore islands, limited infrastructure (including roads and a lack of electricity in some places), and an illiteracy rate of 46.5%¹⁵ was one area of challenge. Bangladesh was also hit by two major cyclones during the registration period that destroyed communications systems, and further complicated the process and its operations. Another challenging area was developing the specialized software and systems to handle this large registration effort and database. Yet another was procuring all of the equipment and software and hiring and training the more than half million workers within the very tight timeline.

Some of these challenges and PERP's response included:

- Human resources:** The registration effort required large numbers of trained personnel. This included 15,000 members of the BAF, 2,500 BEC staff, 482,880 enumerators and 104,025 data entry operators, proof readers, supervisors hired by PERP.¹⁶ Finding qualified IT personnel throughout Bangladesh proved to be a major challenge and resulted in a continuous need for IT-related training. PERP also had a proactive approach to ensuring gender equity and hired a large number of women computer operators and assistants to help make the female citizens more comfortable in coming out to the registration centres, standing in line and having their photos taken, especially for women wearing *hijab*. There were also different organizational cultures and human resource management styles involved between the BEC and the BAF. The NPD and Deputy NPDs served as a bridge which proved invaluable when the BAF was doing the logistics and training of personnel for the main registration drive.



¹³ 4 City Corporations and 9 municipalities.

¹⁴ New voters are those who turned 18 since the initial registration. Left out voters are the voters who missed the first registration drive.

¹⁵ UNDP *Human Development Report, 2009*

¹⁶ Eicher, *Turning Failure into Success Draft*, p 75

Equipment: A voter registration effort on this scale required considerable amounts of equipment, consumables and software. Among the equipment used were: 10,050 lap top computers;¹⁷ 12,000 fingerprint scanners; 3,290 generators; 634 printers; 9,004 web cameras; 590 desk top computers to serve as servers; 693 printers, 218,496 signature pens, and 800 computer mouse.

Once the nationwide registration drive was completed, PERP intended to retain 4,843 laptops for its continued use to update and maintain the VLP. It intended to distribute the remaining equipment to the BEC at the central and field levels, to other ministries in order to further e-governance initiatives throughout Bangladesh and to assist other educational needs. This distribution was approved by the Project Steering Committee meeting in August 2008. The distribution plan for the 3,657 laptops was:

- 665 computers for the Secretary and e-Governance focal point in 60 Ministries/Divisions and the deputy commissioners in 64 districts and 481 Upazila Nirbahi Officers with their maintenance to be done by the IT team at the Prime Ministers' Office;
- 1,078 computers to Union Parishads and mobile training units in support of the nationwide birth registration with maintenance to be provided through UNICEF technical assistance;
- 1,414 laptops to 646 schools to assist 75,000 students and 12,000 teachers including 14 teacher training institutes. Maintenance would be under the Total Quality Improvement project;
- 500 laptops to the Bangladesh Army Combined Military Hospitals which would be maintained by them.

CONSUMABLES PROCURED
A small sample of the huge quantities of supplies and consumables required:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,170 key boards • 1,650 USB pen drives • 24,953 color toners • 18,890 monochrome laser toners • 1,650 heavy duty toners • 10,500 multi plugs • 400 fuser unit for HP laserjet • 3,800 mouse, • 450 sim-cards, • 9,874 set cable with plugs • 91,500,000 lamination pouches, • 71,888 blank DVDs • 45,492 toners

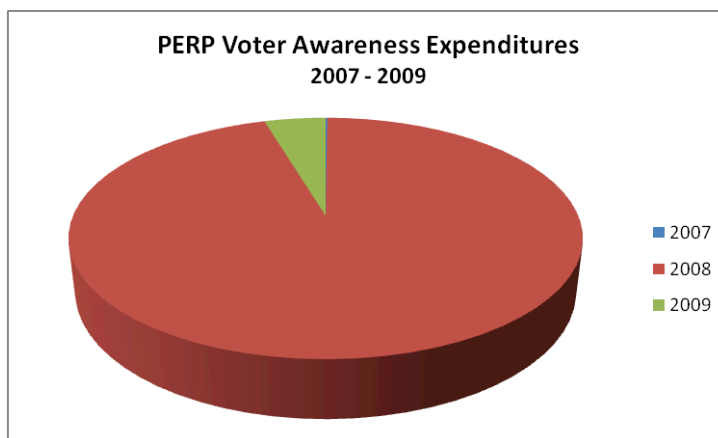
Several practical and extremely useful decisions were made regarding equipment. One was the decision to purchase external keyboards to use instead of the laptop key board. This effectively extended the life of the laptops and avoided breakdowns under the hard use during registration. Another was the type of service contracts procured by UNDP with the equipment. As one example described by the NPD, the computer firm Dell deployed with the army.

Logistics: PERP benefited from a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)¹⁸ signed between the BEC and the Central Control Cell (c/o Bangladesh Army) for the provision of support services and for the voter roll operations. In this MOU, the Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Navy agreed to provide logistical and other support to the BEC in preparation for the electoral roll under the PERP project. This included transportation, procurement and maintenance of urgently needed additional equipment (such as power boards, fuel for generators, AFIS software), training of data entry operators, technical expert services, etc., and printing and binding of the final voters list. Their effort included 700 helicopter flying hours in inaccessible areas. Without the support of the BAF, voter registration could not have taken place within the time frame nor reached as many citizens as it did.

¹⁷ 8,500 procured by PERP and the remainder loaned or donated by the private sector and others to jump start registration efforts.

¹⁸ MOU signed 20 May 2008. The MOU also included provisions that the software purchased under the MOU be licensed under the BEC name, and that all goods and equipment purchased under the MOU remained the property of UNDP until UNDP handed over the property to the Implementing Partner.

Public Awareness: In order to reach every voter, PERP needed to implement a large-scale voter awareness programme. This was the first time voters would have to make the effort to come into a registration centre. Previously, the enumerator would go door-to-door but to make the computerized process viable, citizens would have to make the effort to go to a centre, stand in a line and give personal information, be photographed and have their fingerprints taken. In addition, local officials and polling staff needed information on how to use the new VLP which was organized by voter number. This was especially needed after the confusion found during the first test of the VLP in the August 2008 Municipality elections.



PERP had a Communications Team consisting of a Communications Manager under UNDP contract and a Communications Officer and a Communications Assistant under GoB funding. In coordination with the BEC, they developed a multimedia outreach strategy. This included developing and publishing advertisements in the daily newspapers on the registration process, providing progress on registration including maps, milestones achieved and contact numbers of election officials. They held regular meetings with the editors of national dailies and produced documentaries of the process, including several videos marking milestones and the full completion of the national registration drive. They also created photo albums of the process and opened a call-in information centre. For the elections, they produced an election theme song and a media spot on the “No Vote” option¹⁹ on the ballot. The PERP efforts were complemented by a BEC MOU with the EWG to undertake additional voter awareness campaign about registration using the TAF NED project funding.

The evaluation found that the voter awareness activities undertaken during the process were effective and well-done. Citizens who wanted to register had the information needed to register and the understanding of why they were registering. In fact, the PERP project is finding that it has more demand than anticipated for its current updating of the rolls. The key motivation in this process has proven to be the national ID card that comes with voter registration.

ID card. Although the ID cards were initially seen as a by-product of the registration process, they served as the primary motivating factor for voter participation in the registration drive. During evaluation interviews, several donors said that they originally thought the cards added unnecessary costs and complications to this already costly and complicated process. However, the decision taken by the CTG3 and the BEC to issue the cards proved to be a good one. The cards turned out to be one of the key factors for registration’s success which directly contributed to a credible roll and improved elections. In addition, its secondary benefits are already proving to be substantial. For instance, it has given marginalized segments of society, including women and the poor, a sense of national identity. It is being used by banks and other institutions to verify identity, including some foreign embassies when issuing visas. Because of the time and funding factors, the cards were printed on paper and then laminated. They are easy to copy and PERP and the BEC are already finding that counterfeit ID cards being produced. The PERP project is already looking forward into how a more durable card could be produced that would meet international standards. It anticipates starting these activities with savings made

¹⁹ No Vote option was a new element including on the ballot for voters who did not want to vote for any candidate.

from its equipment procurements through UNDP, and the BEC has already requested PERP donors to extend the project and to use the remaining funds for this purpose. Current PERP systems at the central level do not track the distribution of cards so it could not tell the evaluation team how many cards remained from 2008 to be distributed. This is an area that requires strengthening.

Updating of the voter list: Updating of the registration process was underway during the evaluation. Updating was done in 4 phases, with the Upazila level done in the first three phases and Phase 4 for the six City Corporations. The evaluation team observed one of the centers under Phase 4 being done in at the registration centre in Katasur, Mohammadpur Thana in Ward Number 46, Dhaka City Corporation and at the Thana level server station at Teigaon Thana, Dhaka. The updating seemed to be going smoothly. The BAF had put systems into place and the workers were following the systems. The bugs seemed to have been worked out and the workers appeared well trained. They were working quickly and efficiently and the error rate found at the Thana proof reading station was miniscule. As an example, one proof checker said he had found four errors out of 120 forms. Another had one error out of a hundred forms. They have developed procedures at this level and another proofing at the next level to protect against inadvertent duplicate entries by data entry personnel.

The team interviewed some of the computer operators as well as the data entry and server operators. They seemed to know their work and were interested in the process. The entire operation was quite impressive and in speaking to random people waiting in line to be processed, they also thought the process was going smoothly and that the workers knew what they were doing. A few of the computer operators said their biggest problem was the dirty fingers as this made it difficult to capture the voter's fingerprint on the scanner. They had rags nearby to use in this event. Workers were being paid more than during the initial registration as there were not as many voters to process. They are paid by the entry²⁰ which probably accounts for the very efficient processing. One voter was barely getting out of his/her seat before the next one had already sat down ready for his/her photo to be captured.

There is no scope to use the PERP laptops for personal use by the computer operators. There is access to the normal programmes found on a computer for supervisors, but there is no access to anything other than the voter registration programme for the data entry personnel and other people working at that level on the computers. The Upazila server area observed was clean and well guarded.

The biggest registration problem identified by the PERP Deputy Project Director (Operations) was the unexpectedly high demand for registration during the updating. They had expected a 3% increase in registration but in the enumeration for Phases 1 - 3 found around 4.8% increase and in Phase 4 enumeration the increase was over 7%. In some industrial areas it was up to 10%. PERP investigate cases over 7% and is finding that although there were more left-out voters than they had thought, most of the excess is due to migration and under-aged factory workers looking for the ID card to prove to an employer that they are 18.

3.2. Expected result two: Central and country-wide technology infrastructure for updating the voter list established and maintained.

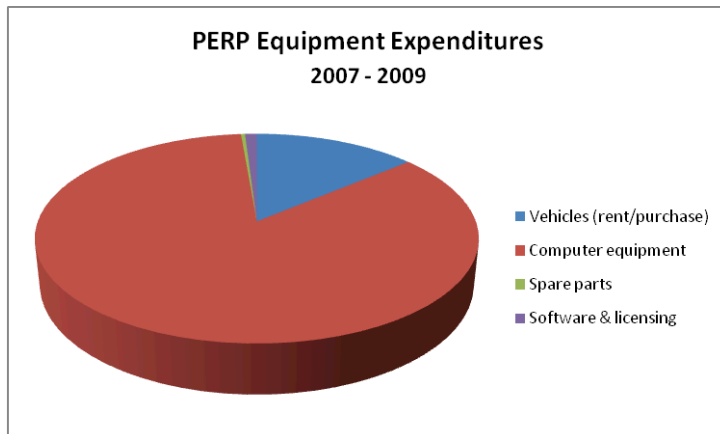
Planned activities. PERP intended to develop the necessary ICT infrastructure at the central, district and Upazila levels for data collection and maintenance of the photo voter list. This was expected to include the procurement of laptops, printers and other equipment needed to implement and maintain the voter roll. PERP expected its IT staff at the centre level to be engaged and funded from the SEPB project which would also develop and support PERP's

²⁰ They are paid BDT 15/00 per entry now, BDT 5/00 per entry before.

computer software needs including data entry, Upazila data integration, voter list updating and central server software.

Findings: The equipment purchased under the project formed the basis of the ICT infrastructure. The evaluation found that PERP successfully took over responsibility for the ICT infrastructure system and its maintenance from the BAF and so far has been updating and maintaining the database without significant problems. This ICT system also provides the infrastructure for the BEC's intranet which the evaluation found functioning and extremely useful for election administration and management purposes as well as for VLP use.

When the project was designed, it focused directly on what needed to be done to implement the methodology adopted after the Sreepur pilot so that the VLP could be completed on time and avoid delaying the elections any further.



One of the issues noted early on in project implementation was that the project document had not adequately addressed the issue of sustainability and what would happen to the ICT infrastructure once the main voter registration drive ended. The new voter registration ordinance required yearly updating which would

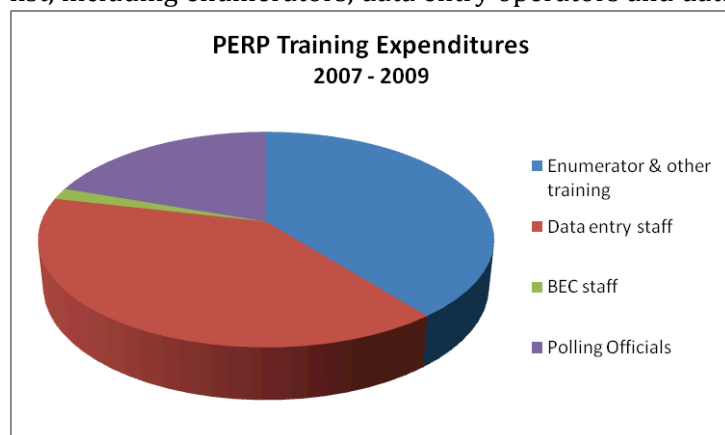
require the maintenance of the equipment and internet connectivity at the Upazila election office level. During registration, the BEC officials used the rooms earmarked for the Upazila Parishad Chairperson. But once the elections for those offices were held (ultimately done in January 2009), the continued use of this office space was not assured. To maintain the ICT infrastructure, permanent ECS field offices would be needed at the Upazila and district levels. This led to the BEC-UNDP decision to develop the CCSSED project in order to construct the server stations needed at these levels. CCSSED intends to build server stations in 483 Upazilas, 16 districts, 5 regional centres and planned additional 4 regional centres.²¹ This construction is expected to start in early 2010. Until this construction is completed, the ICT structure is being maintained in the local Upazila offices, where the ECS Secretary said they still had space available for their use after the January elections.

The completion of the server stations will help to ensure the long term sustainability of the list and its equipment. In the meantime, PERP has purchased and used the ICT equipment and system effectively in the national voter registration drive; completed the installation of its Central Data Centre (CDC) with SAN storage in its Dhaka office and a backup data centre in the Election Commission premises; and has dedicated IT personnel working on data uploading, system operations and maintenance. The evaluation team visited the CDC and found it fully functional and the centre busy uploading and checking the data that was being collected in the updating of registration in Dhaka. It had 2 IT persons on UNDP service contracts, 2 Bangladeshi UNVs, 7 GoB funded staff plus short term help hired for the updating. The central server is in a locked air conditioned room within the PERP offices with private security guards stationed at the entry to the IT section. The server has a five hour battery backup and the building has a generator and a fire extinguisher system that takes 10 seconds to come on. The data is backed up on an external hard drive and on tapes that are locked in a safe. There is no backup server and PERP has requested donor approval to purchase one. This is a very good idea and should be done as soon as possible.

²¹ These 4 additional regional centres were not planned at the time of preparing the project document.

3.3. Photo voter list and ICT skills capacity developed at the central and field levels.

Planned activities: PERP intended to train field workers for the creation of the photo voter list, including enumerators, data entry operators and data collection officers. It also intended to



train BEC staff, and develop the ICT capacity of the Upazila Election Offices (UEO) nationwide. All UEO staff was to receive basic computer operations and maintenance training when the computers were installed and a skilled operator was to be employed by the project in each office until the staff was sufficiently skilled. The intent was for the four computer staff assigned to each Upazila during the data collection period to train the UEO

staff in simple database update techniques so they were capable of maintaining the voter list database. PERP also intended to have a central training team of three (a Training Manager under UNDP contract, a training officer and a training assistant under GoB funding). The training team was to be responsible for the development of curriculum, and training scheduling, coordination and quality control of the master trainers and their training. Initially, the master trainers were trained by the Bangladesh Army, funded by SEPB.

Findings: PERP, with ETI and BAF assistance, provided training to large numbers of registration personnel during the nationwide registration drive, and continued training, either with ETI as a venue or on their own through the updating period. Familiarizing the large number of personnel and operational staff at all levels with the use and maintenance of the modern ICT equipment was an enormous challenge. PERP created a committee with experienced officials from the BEC, ETI and SEPB to identify the ICT capacity building needs and develop course objectives and curricula at the central and field levels.

During their visit to the PERP project office, the evaluation team found the UNDP contracted National Training Manager on his last day with PERP, having been hired by the UNMIS (UN Mission in Sudan) as a Training Officer. He was anxious to share his experiences there. He said the biggest challenge for VLP training was its scale and nationwide reach, limited time and small number of PERP training staff. A team of three did seem bare bones to coordinate the scale of this effort and apparently the initial training staff had left after the first year. Project reporting indicates that the ETI capacity to implement the

TRAININGS

A sample of the scale of training undertaken:

Data enumerator training: (ETI)

- 496 for TOT from senior BEC officials
- 291 for TOT from ECS (national, district, Upazila and Thana levels)
- 59,500 Enumerators & Supervisors
- 482,880 Enumerators, Supervisors and Asst. Registration Officers

Data entry

- 104,025 Data Entry Operators, Team Leaders & Proof Readers (BAF)
- 1,720 Data Entry Operator, Team Leader & Proof Reader (PERP)

Core training

- 63 IT personnel from BEC at national, district and Upazila level (BAF)

Upazila server maintenance (PERP)

- 950 BEC officials at district, Upazila & Thana levels
- 167 TOT for Technical Experts & Technical support for VLP & Server Maintenance Course

Capacity building:

- 6 capacity building workshops for 925 different levels of participants (BEC, local reps, reps of different ministries and media personnel (PERP))

Use of VLP

- 262,000 Presiding Officers & others;
- 443,402 Polling Officers & others;
- 705,402 poll related officials on conducting free, fair and transparent national elections

training with PERP was weak and caused more work than anticipated. Nevertheless, the results of the registration process indicate that the registration-related workers were well enough trained and motivated that they were able to produce the list in record time and with a minimum degree of error.

One of the concerns was if the project would be able to take over the operations from the BAF. The evaluation found that this was successfully done in 2008 although the NPD thought the staff needed more training to improve their quality of work. The issue is now to have the BEC take over the management of VLP operations and ICT maintenance from the project. The BEC expects to hire an additional 400 people once its institutional reorganization is authorized. Many of these posts are intended to fill the positions within the server stations and to serve as permanent local election officials. This will exponentially increase the training requirements and these training efforts will need strengthening-- either indirectly through the SEPB capacity building of the ETI to implement the training, or to directly strengthen PERPs own training unit, which now needs a new Training Manager. Finding a dynamic person with the appropriate expertise will be a challenge. Given the success with which the BAF deputed staff to PERP are having in their jobs, seconding an experienced BAF training manager is an option that should be considered.

3.4. Programme Management and Design

3.4.1. Design

The project was developed by the IT team of experts hired under the SEPB project in coordination with the BEC and BAF which were already testing the VLP methodology with the help of SEPB. The design incorporated the methodology, activity flows and lessons of the VLP pilot and the different roles played by each actor in the process. The BEC was responsible for implementing the project, managed by a national project director. The Bangladesh Army was to contribute management and technical support services in strategic areas as well as provide logistical support and ad-hoc surge staffing. It was expected that a high ranking Army official would be posted as the NPD on deputation. The Bangladesh Army's experience in UN peacekeeping missions was seen as an asset. In these missions they had participated in complex electoral operations in countries such as Cambodia, Liberia and Mozambique. SEPB was seen as a companion project that would continue to provide IT and other support as UNDP's contribution to PERP.

The project document is comprehensive and the PERP project's objectives are clear and straight forward. The logical framework is reasonable and its indicators are easily tracked. There were many risks inherent in the design's assumptions, any one of which could have easily derailed this project and its results. Among other things, it assumed good weather, full participation of all stakeholders, quick availability of equipment, and a stable political environment.²² The context justified the risk, but it is a testament to all involved that the project was able to meet its objectives given the practical constraints, political environment, timeframe and even inclement weather it encountered.

The design process had clearly thought through the voter registration effort and the steps the project would need to take in order to accomplish this within a year. This included the need to develop the IT capacity of local election officers to handle the VLP process and to develop a technology infrastructure with country-wide reach so that it could register and maintain the VLP. It also included provisions to ensure that project activities could start before the project

²² *PERP Project Document, Annex 3, Logical Framework. P 27*

document was signed by using SEPB for some immediate procurement and by making provisions that the GoB could be reimbursed for procurements made before signing.

The design's focus, however, was on meeting the immediate need to register voters so that the 9th parliamentary elections could be held in 2008. This is evident in the project's Annual Work Plan Monitoring Tool.²³ It has one output --the VLP -- and planned activities relate only to its development through to its printing and distribution. The design did not address the longer-term issues of how this system and its structures would be integrated into the election administration system and its management structures once the project was over. This is a direct result of the crisis atmosphere and context at the time but it also reflects the lack of integrating EMB expertise into the design. At the time, the SEPB was without a senior EMB advisor and the PERP design was done primarily by IT experts and others. An experienced elections administration expert could have helped conceptualize the VLP within the broader elections administration system and framework so that these sustainability issues could have been more directly addressed by the project during its implementation.

This issue was noted early on in the project and ultimately resulted in the UNDP and BEC developing a complementary project (CSSED) and finding additional donor funding, to ensure there would be permanent sites to keep the IT infrastructure country wide. The CSSED project design had similar issues. It underestimated the potential use for these buildings in elections administration and management outside of updating the roll. As a result, CSSED redesigned some of the buildings to be more functional for election management purposes which is now requiring additional time and funding to complete.

The main issue for PERP now is that it is scheduled to end in June 2010. The infrastructure and persons needed to hand over its project activities and equipment will probably not all be in place or adequately trained by then. To ensure continuity and to sustain the IT infrastructure and the VLP, the PERP project will require a time extension which the BEC is currently requesting of the donors.

3.4.2. Implementation

Implementation of the PERP project was not easy. As discussed, it was a massive logistical and operational undertaking done under difficult circumstances in a very compressed period of time. PERP had to deliver a credible voter list within a year or it meant that the BEC's *electoral roadmap* could not be met and the 9th parliamentary elections could not be held before the end of 2008. This placed an enormous amount of pressure on everyone assisting or implementing the project. For its first year or more, PERP operated in perpetual crisis mode.

Some of the myriad of implementation challenges included:

- **Compressed time for start up.** The project document start date was 1 July 2007 but it was not signed until 27 August 2007, when the GoB approved the Development Project Proposal (DPP). PERP activities had actually started in June using borrowed or donated equipment and assistance through the SEPB project. This resulted in differences between the Project Document and the DPP, especially in terms of budget line items. The August signing also meant donor funding would not be available until later. To expedite the process, UNDP advanced USD 5.1 million of its own funds from TRAC to PERP so that procurement of essential equipment could begin without delay.

²³ Annex 5, PERP Project Document, p 29

- **Immediate need for large scale procurement** much of which was not available off-the-shelf. Procurement was complicated by rapidly changing technologies and cumbersome GoB procurement regulations. The GoB has a lengthy open tender process that was not compatible with the extremely time-sensitive and specific nature of some of the procurement. This was alleviated by the UNDP Country Office’s emergency procurement of much of the equipment through its pre-competed mechanisms and arrangements with regional suppliers.
- **Inaccurate budget estimates** for goods and services which the project found out of date and usually more costly through the open tender process. This was an issue for the GoB procurement process as it required the budget amounts to match those in the DPP line items and amending the DPP was a lengthy process which could only be done twice. This complicated and compounded the difficulties for procurement. In the end, the inaccurate budget estimates were compensated for by UNDP’s ability to shift allocations between line items by amending the project work plans, and through the cost-savings it was able to realize for the project by its direct procurement.
- **Differences between the GoB DPP and the UNDP-BEC project document.** As the process unfolded, UNDP was able to update its document and reallocate funds based on a simple revision of its work plan. However, the DPP remained unchanged which created additional administrative burdens for the project and a lack of coherence in its reporting. The DPP also has additional objectives which the UNDP Project Document does not have, such as the objective of reallocating computer equipment (laptops) to other government ministries after the initial registration drive was over.
- **Weather.** There were two devastating cyclones during voter registration which directly impacted project implementation, especially for the BAF which also needed to respond to the humanitarian crisis.

A note on procurement which was a particular challenge. Normally in a NEX project, procurement is done by the GoB through the government procurement systems. But in this case, it could not respond in time with the exact standard or quantity needed for some of the equipment such as the fingerprint scanners that had to meet AFIS standards or laptops which had to withstand hard use and handling. The NPD requested UNDP assistance for direct procurement for some purchases and the UNDP Country Office and its Operations Department quickly responded. With a substantial mobilization of its national, regional and international offices, UNDP was able to respond quickly and cost-effectively to PERP’s emergency procurement requests. It was able to get the product needed in time and at a reduced cost due to its pre-existing arrangements with regional suppliers and through its office in Copenhagen that specializes in the procurement of electoral commodities and knows sources and can buy in bulk.

EQUIPMENT PROCURED
Some of the equipment purchased for VLP:
• 8,990 laptop computers (8,500 PERP procurement and 490 from SEPB)
• 693 computer printers
• 9,004 webcams
• 10,000 finger print scanners
• 3,040 generators
• 690 desktops computers
• 10 heavy duty printers
• 550 monochrome laser printers
• 114 color printers
• 744 UPS
• 400 cutter devices
• 301 USB edge modems
• 513 USB mobile hard drives(160 GB)
• 4 mobile hard drives(200GB)
• 20 USB mobile hard drives(1TB)

Key factors of success

Despite the difficulties it faced, PERP was able to deliver an accurate, inclusive and credible voter roll with photographs on schedule and under-budget.

There were several key factors that contributed to this success:

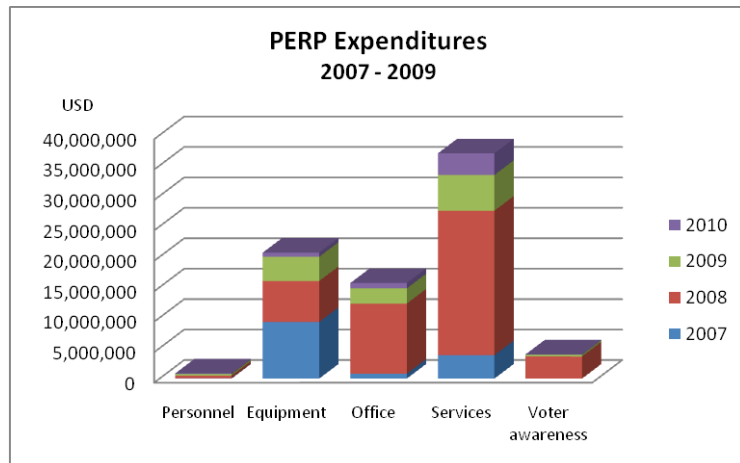
- ✓ **Government ownership and commitment.** Decision makers had the political will and agenda for a credible voters list and holding free and fair election within the timeframe. With such strong government commitment, everyone on the project strived to meet their goals.
- ✓ **Leadership and dedication.** The heads of all the institutions involved were personally and substantially involved in making the PERP project work and provided outstanding leadership for the project and its activities. Each one became personally involved in making sure their aspect of the process worked so that PERP could deliver its product on time. Each one excelled at crisis management and mobilizing staff and resources, and each had dedicated teams and effective partnerships.
- ✓ **Partnerships and synergies.** PERP's objective could not have been met without the partnerships it developed-- with the Election Commissioners, SEPB and UNDP to implement the project; with the BAF for voter registration; with the media, EWG and other civil society groups and individuals for voter information and awareness; with the private sector for its advice and donating/loaning the start-up computers; and with the CSSED for the ultimate sustainability of its technology infrastructure. The relationship with the BAF in particular showed **good civil-military relations** and the constructive role of each.
- ✓ **Role of the Bangladesh Army.** The Bangladesh Army had experience in UN peacekeeping operations and elections abroad as well as in the management of large and complex projects. The BAF was involved with the project right from the start of the planning process to the distribution of the national ID cards and the printing of the VLP lists. The BAF provided the logistical and operational capacity needed to for PERP to be able to do the registration. It trained data entry operators nationwide; managed the hardware, software, registration centres and backroom operations at the server centres. Without the BAF assistance, PERP would not have achieved its objectives.
- ✓ **Risk taking.** The PERP objective never would have been achieved if the participants were not willing to take risks. As illustrated in the project's log frame, the entire project was a gigantic risk. The persons associated with the project also had to take calculated risks along the way to get the work done. For example, the NPD took a risk that UNDP could procure the equipment on time, rather than staying with GoB procurement. UNDP took a risk accepting the responsibility for the emergency procurements which, if it could not deliver, could derail the entire process.
- ✓ **Incentives.** There were two main incentives that made the project work. One was the scenario of what would happen if the registration did not take place as planned or was not credible. This motivated the institutions and organizations within the PERP partnerships to make PERP work. The other was the national ID card that motivated citizens to come out and get registered which helped ensure that eligible voters were reached and the list was inclusive and accurate.

3.4.3. Management

PERP is nationally executed with provisions for direct UNDP country office support for some services, such as procurement with the BEC as the executing agency. The National Project Director is on deputation from the Bangladesh Army and the two Deputy Project Directors are seconded from the civil service. They had worked on voter registration with the BAF in the June

2007 pilot. The office is organized by teams according to the project document, with the Deputy Project Director for Operations managing the training; operations and IT teams, while the Deputy Project Director for Support Services manages the finance, administration and legal teams. Attached to the NPD's office are the communications and monitoring teams. PERP has two floors of offices in the Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh building in Dhaka. Most of the team works on one floor, with the other floor housing the main server station and databank computers.

PERP and the voter registration process seemed to be very well managed given the immensity of the operations and numbers of personnel and voters involved. It never could have met its objectives without being well led, well organized and well run. The NPD and Deputy Directors provided these qualities as well as the leadership and direction provided by the Election Commissioners. The project is a model example for a project with joint ownership and



partnerships at every level. It involved good civil-military relations, good government-citizen/CSO/private sector relations, good project-government relations, good project to donor relations; good project to international community relations and so on. The staff of PERP was also extremely dedicated and motivated in their work.

There are a few issues that PERP will need to address. One is filling its vacant posts that resulted after the staff from the initial voter registration effort moved on to other posts. Another is maintaining the level of IT expertise as staff members change. The big issue is ensuring the maintenance and management of the lists after the end of the Project which is an issue that still needs to be addressed.

PERP has a large number of assets. This includes laptops, printers, computers, fingerprint scanners, and project vehicles which are scattered across the country and which moved frequently during voter registration. Delivering, tracking and maintaining these assets is a large task. All of the project assets were recuperated from the BAF in 2008 and the inventories reconciled. Assets are tracked on an excel spread sheet which according to the Asset Manager is better than the software programme purchased by PERP for inventory control. Maintaining the proper control and tracking of these expensive assets scattered nationwide should be a priority and it is too much for an excel spread sheet. The evaluation team recommends the project purchase an appropriate programme for inventory control purposes.

On the UNDP side, PERP is managed within the UNDP/Bangladesh Office of Governance by a full-time international Election Specialist (ES). The first Election Specialist had project management experience and helped UNDP to develop and manage PERP as well as to backstop the large direct UNDP procurements for PERP. She left in September 2008 and the current Election Specialist, with NDI/Bangladesh election-project management experience, started in December 2008. The national Elections Project Officer joined in late 2007 and provided continuity for UNDP-administration in the project. The UNDP/Bangladesh country team was also active in ensuring the project's needs were met on the UNDP side. Procurement and recruitment are handled by the UNDP's Operation Division which worked overtime during 2007 and 2008 to make sure SEPB's and the other UNDP-administered ERP projects' procurement needs were met. The average procurement budget handled by Operations had been \$40-45

million a year. But in 2008 it was \$100 million; primarily because of the election commodities and the cyclone disaster needs which hit in the middle of the year. The Operations Division said it had “turned-inside out” in order to meet all of these emergency needs.

UNDP made an extraordinary effort with PERP. In addition to coordinating the PERP donors and undertaking emergency procurements on its behalf, UNDP jump started the PERP project activities by authorizing the temporary transfer of USD5.1 million from TRAC into the PERP project to fund the procurement of urgently needed equipment while waiting for the arrival of PERP donor funds. This was authorized by the UNDP Resident Coordinator because any delays in purchasing the essential equipment for registration could have derailed the implementation of the project and thus threaten the electoral timetable and the return to democratic governance. This loan was reimbursed in February 2008 after the arrival of the other donor funding. In addition, UNDP increased SEPB funding by USD 3 million in July 2007 to purchase equipment urgently needed to pilot and initiate the photo voter roll. Of this USD 2.3 million was spent on equipment later reimbursed by PERP in February 2008.²⁴

3.4.4. Monitoring and Reporting

The PERP project and its activities were extremely high profile and generated substantial levels of interest among the donors and participants. As a result the project was followed closely by everyone, both national and international. This generated a substantial level of reporting for a wide range of audiences in addition to what a project would normally produce.

In terms of meeting the requirements of the project document, the evaluation found that the BEC, PERP and UNDP were diligent in their monitoring and reporting on project performance. PERP produced the required quarterly and annual progress and financial reports. In addition, it extensively documented the project’s progress, lessons learned and experiences on paper, on film and on video.

The Project Board/Steering Committee (PB/SC) made of up the GoB, BEC, PERP donors, UNDP and BEC representatives met several times at the start of the project, but less frequently after. It recently met when the BEC asked the donors to extend the time frame for the project so that it could use its remaining funds to purchase a VLP back-up server and start the initial work for the NID. A working paper was prepared before every meeting which provided the PB/SC with updated information on PERP’s performance and issues.

UNDP senior managers, including the UNDP Resident Coordinator, actively followed the progress of the project and monitored the effectiveness and implementation of its activities and operations. In addition, UNDP hired an international Elections Support Officer in 2007-2008 who, with other UNDP/Bangladesh staff, undertook field visits during the registration process to assess project performance, difficulties encountered and areas that needed attention. A field visit report was written after every trip.

The project underwent a financial and compliance audit for 2008 by the Foreign Aided Projects Audit Directorate. It covered all of the substantive financial, custodial and personal accountabilities assumed by the project to ensure the UNDP provided funds were being administered in accordance with the UNDP Project Document and the NEX manual. It found:

General compliance with the provisions of the NEX manual and GOB rules and procedures in implementing project activities on a timely basis. The UNDP services were provided at the appropriate time in line with project document, work plan, approved budget and LOA.

²⁴ Meeting Minutes for Preparation of Electoral Roll with Photographs (PERP) Project, UNDP

The project progress was observed satisfactory in terms of timely implementation of planned activities, achieving objectives with effectiveness, efficiency and economy and delivering target outputs in the appropriate manner.... A review of the relevant documents revealed that satisfactory project management system is fully functional. All the project reports were appropriately prepared and submitted to UNDP and other relevant authorities on a timely manner... . The project author submits monthly performance reports to the ministry and quarterly progress report (physical and financial) to IMED (a monitoring wing of the Planning Commission)... Records and reports of monitoring visits by IMED, UNDP and project staff revealed a system of satisfactory level of monitoring, evaluation and reporting practice in the project.²⁵

UNDP coordinates the nine PERP donors. Given the level of interest generated by the VLP, the number of donors and their different expectations for information, this became management intensive for UNDP, and especially the UNDP Resident Representative, Country Director and Deputy Country Directors. But this spared the BEC and PERP from having to deal with nine different donors and their reporting expectations. One of the initial issues with the PB/SC was that the donors were so interested in the process that the political level representatives came to the meetings, which turned them into policy discussions rather than technical implementation meetings. As a result, UNDP and the BEC shifted the consultations to holding more frequent but lower technical-level meetings which could then focus directly on implementation issues. These Project Implementation Committee meetings took place on a regular basis.

4. Lessons learned

- ✓ The different parts of an election cannot be seen in isolation from the larger context of elections administration and management or the part assisted and its product may not be sustainable after the election event is achieved.
- ✓ Projects need to have specific objectives but with enough flexibility allowed for implementation (and budgeting) so that they can easily and effectively respond to unforeseen challenges and windows of opportunities. This is particularly critical in a time-sensitive endeavor with many unknowns.
- ✓ All sections of society wanted to help and participate in this endeavor. Incorporating a role for them and their activities into the design of the project, and ensuring synergies with other donor-funded projects and GoB-funded activities, helped ensure this project was a success.
- ✓ Success in a risky endeavor requires political will and the willingness for all concerned to take risks and to step up and do their part. If only a few had been willing to take a risk or commit to this project, it would not have worked.
- ✓ In such a massive operation, good communications, both internal and external, and a good communications plan were essential.
- ✓ Permanent counterpart staff is needed to ensure sustainability of project activities and equipment, and institutionalization of its knowledge and skills.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

²⁵ *Local Inspection Report on the Accounts of "Preparation of Electoral Roll with Photographs and facilitating the issuance of National ID card project" financed under UNDP grant no BGD/07/002 for the year 2008,*

The PERP project had one main objective: *the development of a credible electoral roll with photographs in order to facilitate the preparations for free and fair elections*. The evaluation found that this objective was met and surpassed. **Not only did it develop a credible roll within the tight timeframe and against enormous challenges, it came in on time and under budget.** Through PERP, the BEC has successfully taken over administration of the VLP from the BAF and is almost finished with its first updating. It has a nationwide technological infrastructure in place and functioning that has placed the BEC in the forefront of e-governance within Bangladesh.

The project has already been evaluated by the EC and DFID. Their evaluations were extremely positive with their main concerns focusing on the sustainability of the project activities without the BAF and PERP²⁶. This evaluation found that PERP had already taken over the process from the BAF but that the BEC is still not in the position to be able to maintain the quality of the process and roll without the project and its human resources and management systems. It is unlikely that all of the server stations to be constructed under CSSED will be ready to accept the equipment and/or has all of the permanent and trained staff needed to accept the equipment and its responsibilities. Capacity building for the ECS' permanent structures still needs to take place along with its hiring and training of an additional 400 permanent staff.

There is also the issue of what to do with the national data base and ID card. Current thinking during the evaluation was that this would remain with the BEC in order not to create two separate operations and because the BEC, through PERP, had proven itself in the VLP. There are a multitude of decisions that will need to be made about the NID, including its use, protections, and linkages with other ministries among others. As PERP has remaining funding, the question also arises as to whether to continue this support through PERP or to start a separate NID project.

As a result of the evaluation findings and the remaining issues, **the evaluation recommends:**

- ✓ A time extension of at least six month time for PERP in order to give the BEC time to have the ECS reorganization completed and for its additional staff to be hired and trained. UNDP should use the technical expertise available through its SEPB project to support this development of the ECS's institutional capacity, including BEC's capacity to monitor and maintain the VLP equipment and voter roll. This is an indispensable element for sustaining the PERP investment and in the continuing accuracy and credibility of the VLP. A hand over plan also needs to be developed between PERP and the BEC which includes establishing the responsibilities for maintaining the equipment and continued in-service training of personnel to handle the equipment and databases.
- ✓ A separate project be developed for the national ID card but closely coordinated with the PERP project. Developing a NID database and its uses and linkages with the civil registry and other GoB databases, is a very different endeavor from registering voters and updating a voter roll and requires different skills, expertise and vision. The potential size of such a project would also dwarf and sideline the continuing effort to strengthening of the electoral process and BEC's institutional capacity.
- ✓ Continued close monitoring of the voter roll process and voter database by parties, civil society and international community to ensure the continuing integrity of the roll. The list currently has a high accuracy rate and enjoys a high perception of credibility and trust among the voters, parties and civil society. This needs to be maintained and perpetuated. The active monitoring of the list, its storage and upkeep can help ensure this is being done

²⁶ Status of DFID and EC recommendations are provided in Annex A.

as Bangladesh moves towards the future and perhaps towards a different political climate.

- ✓ Development of a comprehensive, multi-year communications plan to ensure continued visibility of the roll and messages of its integrity in the interim periods between registration and elections to maintain high level of trust and confidence in the VLP. This plan should be part of the larger BEC communications plan and voter education process. It should also reinforce good governance principles. For example, letting voters know the who-does-what and procedures to follow, as well as the fees, if any, for the process.
- ✓ UNDP and the BEC should also ensure synergies with decentralization and good governance projects being done at the local level to help reinforce its messages and develop linkages at the local levels. The PERP project is rich with experience and management skills which should be leveraged in its remaining time to train local electoral officials and to share best practices to others related to the process.