



Review Report

Mid-Term Review of the International Electoral Assistance Provided Through 2008-2012 to the Central Electoral Commission of Moldova

12 October 2013

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List of Acronyms

ACEEEO	Association of European Election Officials
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
CEC	Central Electoral Commission
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CO	Country Office
CoE	Council of Europe
CPRM	Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova
CReDO	Resource Center for Human Rights
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DP	Democracy Programme
EAD	Electoral Assistance Division
EC	European Commission
EMB	Electoral Management Body
ESM	Electoral Support to Moldova
EU	European Union
EVR	Electronic Voters Register
GOTV	get-out-the vote
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology
KII	key informant interview
LPAs	Local Public Authorities
MFAEI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration
MEACD	Moldovan Election Administration Capacity Development
META	Moldova Electoral Transparency Activity
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
n.d.	no date
OCV	Out of Country Voting
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PR	public relations
SAISE	State Automated Information System “Elections”
SE	State Enterprise
SIDA	Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency
SPDA	Strengthening Democratic Political Activism
TA	technical assistance
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	voter education
VL	voters list

I. Executive Summary

The review report for the mid-term review of the International Electoral Assistance provided through 2008-2012 to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of Moldova summarizes international electoral support to the CEC over 2008-2012 through findings from interviews and documents. The review then draws conclusions from this work around eleven questions posed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the review. The review assesses the usefulness of project/programme assistance to the CEC in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, management and coordination, change over the life of the project and the sustainability of the outcomes. The review report consists of an introduction to explain the purpose behind the review and the methodologies used by the review team, provides findings and conclusions about what international projects and programmes have done over this period to support the CEC and makes recommendations for assistance in the future for the CEC going forward, provides lessons learned from this past experience, and outlines in a matrix the support provided in the past by objective.

The review focused on the work of UNDP's Electoral Support Programme (ESP) from 2008 to 3 July 2012 and of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) through three projects funded by USAID between 2008 and July 2013: Strengthening Democratic Political Activism, Moldovan Electoral Transparency, and Moldovan Electoral Administration Capacity Development. Assistance from other providers like the Council of Europe and other donors like European Union was also reviewed as appropriate.

Findings and Conclusions

Findings and conclusions are organized by the eleven questions asked in the TOR below.

- 1. To what degree were international assistance electoral support interventions pertinent to the needs of the CEC and the Moldova electoral system, especially in response to the electoral events of 2009 and 2010?*

UNDP, USAID, IFES, and CEC documents and interviews emphasized how the design of the projects targeted important issues for the Moldovan electoral system and met important needs of the CEC. Interviews and the documentary record also demonstrate that programmes were flexible and responsive to CEC requests and needs in the three parliamentary elections in April 2009, July 2009 and November 2010, the constitutional referendum in 2010, and the June 2011 local elections. While programs were developed to target strategic goals such as capacity building and the development of electronic information systems for the CEC, both UNDP and USAID/IFES were able to work effectively with the CEC to provide targeted support for early Parliamentary elections in July 2009 and November 2010 and the referendum in September 2010. After this period, assistance was able to shift back to focus on longer-term support for capacity building as emphasized by international partners and support the development of electronic

information systems as emphasized by the CEC. This assistance was pertinent to the needs of the CEC.

- 2. Did the international assistance electoral support interventions make the best use of resources to achieve results? Were the interventions efficient?*

The documentary record and interviews on international electoral support to the CEC suggests that efficiency was one of the criteria used by project management and the CEC in an effort to maximize the benefits from assistance. There is evidence for debate and discussion about both what assistance should target and also how assistance can most efficiently target specific outputs. Shifts in assistance to support the CEC for specific elections came at some cost to the efficiency of support for capacity building and the development of electronic systems. Problems for efficiency also come from the substantial time that was sometimes required to enlist CEC support for objectives and activities that the CEC's international partners emphasized as critical, such as improving the existing VL.

- 3. To what extent were the international assistance electoral support objectives achieved? What were the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of these objectives?*

Although not an evaluation, the review of international electoral assistance to the CEC pointed to substantial increases in the CEC's management of electoral processes. Interviews and documents supported substantial capacity development in voter education and training. Both interviews and documents suggested a strong role for UNDP and IFES in these developments. UNDP support provided the CEC with hardware and software for electronic management of electoral processes, although not to the extent envisioned at the start of the project. IFES and UNDP provided support to improve the existing voters' lists and to develop pilots for electronic voter registration respectively; neither effort has managed to fully address issues in voter registration discussed in each national election and the referendum. Support for OCV was also modest, and so too was progress towards objectives for the participation of Moldovan citizens abroad in elections. Based on CEC preferences, little legal advice was provided by international projects; accordingly limited progress was made towards objectives in this area. The level of interest from the CEC and the extent of support provided by international partners greatly influenced the achievement of objectives.

- 4. How has technical assistance contributed to a more professional, independent management of electoral processes? What real difference have the international assistance electoral support interventions made to the beneficiary?*

All interviews recognized contributions of international assistance to a stronger CEC. Although not a capacity assessment, the review teams interviews and review of the reporting record from the ESM and IFES projects found important contributions of assistance to CEC capacity to administer elections, improve VR, information and communications technology (ICT), OCV, VE and public outreach, and changes to the

electoral code plus other proposed legislation for political party campaign finance. The regular appointment of new members of the Commission and changes in the members selected by CEC Commissioners to be permanent members also contributed to CEC professionalism.

5. How has the CEC managed and coordinated the assistance it has received?

The CEC has been the manager and coordinator of international assistance. This management and coordination has been both formal and informal, supplemented by ties between the two main assistance providers, UNDP and IFES. Coordination and management improved over time, most notably in VE with the strong unified 2010 efforts of the CEC, UNDP, IFES, CoE and OSCE that was commended on by many informants. Coordination and management were much more challenging in IT where the CEC lacked the capacity to coordinate and manage key processes and deliverables in the development of SAISE without an experienced IT director.

6. To what extent have the products of interventions been institutionalised to ensure establishment of durable, cost-effective democratic electoral processes and systems?

Institutionalisation refers to the extent to which the outputs of international electoral assistance have become a part of the CEC's ways of working. Interviews for the review noted important ways that changed attitudes and practices had become routinized in CEC operations. The institutionalisation of contributions from international assistance projects to the CEC varies. Areas that are institutionalized include changes to the administration of the CEC itself, including its media engagement/public relations and training capacity. Support for updating the existing voters' lists is institutionalized in CEC training programs and the CEC's work with LPAs. The CEC IT department has become capable of managing small EVR pilots with their own resources. IT development is not institutionalized, although the IT department uses modules and aspects of SAISE.

7. To what extent will the benefits of the international assistance electoral support interventions continue after donor funding will cease? What were the major factors that influenced the achievement of sustainability of the electoral support programs results?

The sustainability of international assistance project contributions to the CEC varies. Conclusions on sustainability suggest that areas that are institutionalized are sustainable and that the changes in administrative capacity, media engagement and public relations, and training are sustainable. Support for updating the existing voters' lists is also sustainable as institutionalized in CEC training programs and work with LPAs. EVR pilots are also sustainable, although the CEC does not have the capacity to manage a nationwide EVR system. IT development has sustainable modules, but the CEC does not have the systems and capacity to manage SAISE on its own or develop the additional capacity needed for a comprehensive system. CEC training programs have been built in a sustainable way, including for voters' list verification and updating.

8. *What has been the contribution of electoral technical assistance to the outcome of deepening democracy and ensuring peace and stability in Moldova?*

IFES and UNDP projects were seen by former managers and staff, key partners, and knowledgeable stakeholders as having influenced some – but not all – of the key problems and priorities for elections in Moldova. By design, assistance focused on and partnered with the CEC to improve the administration of elections. Important contributions to improving the capacity of the CEC, develop transparency and spread information contribute directly to democratic practices. Work with the CEC to institutionalize improved electoral management appears to be appreciated more within the CEC than by other stakeholders, including by the public. Interviews and outside assessments suggest that additional work on building public confidence in the CEC – beyond the CEC’s current transparency through the web site, open meetings, and outreach through the media and civil society – has the potential to have broader effects on strengthening the practice of democracy in Moldova. Even in elections, however, four of the eight main challenges identified by observer reports of 2005 and 2007 elections and enumerated in the introduction to the review are outside of the domain of the CEC. Within the CEC’s mandate, the contributions of international electoral assistance are important but more modest in improving the voters’ lists, electoral information management, the participation of citizens abroad, and electoral legislation and dispute resolution.

9. *Does the CEC Strategic Plan provide a suitable framework for planning future interventions? What could be the potential areas of international engagement in coming years?*

Taking a look back at the development of the strategic plan (SP) helps in understanding capacity building in the CEC and the key areas commissioners and staff identified for the future in late 2011. The SP provides a framework that is generally appropriate but insufficient for working with the CEC going forward. The CEC has some work to do to update the SP as the plan was finalized in 2011 and has not been updated since. CEC annual planning processes have not led to revisions. The review is not a needs assessment and no substitute for needs assessments in areas of electoral administration targeted for improvement by the CEC. The IFES final report when received may also point in detail to areas of work in need of additional support. The review of five years of experience of international electoral assistance to the CEC does suggest priority areas for further assistance to electoral processes in Moldova. Priority areas for international engagement include:

- a voters’ list audit;
- follow-up actions to address any issues identified; and
- support to develop a solid EVR, should the CEC-led interagency working group on registers reach agreement on effective ways to share and update information.

10. *What were gender mainstreaming challenges and benefits for electoral support interventions in Moldova? How did international donors ensure that women and men are equally enfranchised throughout the electoral process?*

The absence of information about gender and the administration of elections suggests the value of an explicit approach to gender and social inclusion. Past international project support to the CEC does not appear to have focused on gender; there is thus little information available about gender issues in the administration of elections. In the press of time-sensitive operational procedures in elections, gender and social inclusion may not get the attention anticipated in a gender-mainstreaming approach that does not have explicit work on gender within institutions. That appears to have been the case with past international electoral assistance to the CEC. Gender trainings were appreciated by the CEC once implemented as part of the Democracy Programme.

11. What have been the benefits and costs of adapting assistance to changing circumstances such as a number of unplanned electoral events?

The crowded electoral calendar and pervasive uncertainty on the date of future elections – and even at times the electoral system that might be used – created substantial difficulties throughout the period for the CEC and its international partners. These difficulties affected capacity development of the institution negatively, for example by delaying lessons learned workshops, and developments in technical areas, particularly in IT development and SAISE. A few positive examples came from sequencing election-specific assistance with post-election follow-up, such as the campaign finance monitoring effort that led into working groups for reform of political party financing and a new proposed law.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the CEC, Government of Moldova, and main international electoral assistance follow from the findings and conclusions of this review of past international electoral assistance to the CEC. The first set of suggestions are short-term for the period up to the 2014 Parliamentary elections. The second set take a longer-term perspective for after the 2014 elections. Recommendations focus on ensuring sustainability of both past achievements and current or planned activities after international electoral assistance ceases.

Short-term - ahead of the 2014 Parliamentary elections

The CEC should focus on and address two central challenges that have remained constants in electoral administration 2008-2012 and today that could potentially be addressed in less than a year. With increased capacity after technical assistance and support, mainly through the UNDP and IFES projects, the CEC should:

- Investigate and publicize a comprehensive random list-to-voter and voter-to-list sample that clearly investigates and resolves questions about the quality of the VL (including remedies should substantial problems be identified); and

- Develop a strong, sustained public outreach effort, particularly with political parties, to build confidence in the CEC and address concerns about the fairness of electoral administration, in preparation for the next Parliamentary elections.

Donors should particularly consider supporting this technical initiative to improve VL quality through an audit with international experience and financial support through the Democracy Programme, as well as CEC follow-up to improve list quality, if needed, based on solid empirical data from this audit. In the wake of audit evidence on list quality and any needed remedies to problems found, donors should consider supporting substantial public outreach on VL quality and the CEC's professionalism to strengthen the credibility of the CEC in the eyes of many Moldovans.

The CEC, before entering the pre-election period, should also:

- Turn the Strategic Plan into a live document through annual reviews and updates, revising the SP to make it a rolling three-year instrument for development of the institution through monitoring and evaluation.
- Develop and implement a road map to manage and finalise the development and operations of the CEC's electronic information management system, which needs full ownership from the CEC. UNDP support may assist the CEC in taking charge of their own electronic systems but should not be used as a substitute for this capacity and ownership.

UNDP is now the sole technical assistance provider to electoral administration after the departure of IFES. The DP provides an important mechanism for potential election specific support for the CEC for the 2014 Parliamentary elections. The CEC may need specific electoral support for this election. Without clarity on the future budget for elections from the Government of Moldova, it is not clear what these needs will be at present. If needs emerge, donors will need ready-made mechanism of the DP should they decide to provide support under the types of tight time frame and resource constraints that are common in elections around the world and characterized Moldovan elections over the past electoral cycle.

Reviewing the past suggests that the UNDP Country Office and Democracy Programme in Moldova should consider ways to focus technical assistance on a few priority tasks of the CEC and international community. The DP should consider supporting the CEC through the VL audit and an immediate focus on improving the current VL for 2014 and increasing public confidence in list quality. This process should begin with a voter-to-list and list-to-voter sample audit, and follow up actions as needed to improve the VL based on empirical evidence of the types of problems and their prevalence that is currently lacking. Only then should support for public relations be provided.

USAID should consider supporting these initiatives of the CEC. Monitoring may indicate that there are unmet needs in electoral processes, particularly as the elections approach, that could be met with modest USAID resources. The UNDP Development Programme could be used as a potential mechanism for providing this support. This may be particularly the case for the 2014 elections.

Longer-term - after the 2014 Parliamentary elections

The CEC should conduct a post-election review within a few months of the election as part of mapping out priorities for the future based on this experience, including those of the updated Strategic Plan. After the elections, the CEC should have the time to implement any decisions of the intergovernmental working group on registers and progress in the development of an EVR. With increased capacity after technical assistance and support, mainly through the UNDP and IFES projects, the CEC should:

- Manage stakeholders and reach accord through the working group on registers on the inter-institutional links needed to make the EVR work effectively; and
- Work to develop and thoroughly test a well-functioning, high-quality EVR connecting the relevant registers in Moldova.

The DP should consider supporting consensus-building processes on registers as well as technical support to develop an EVR, with a focus on sustainability and CEC ownership.

A broad engagement of political stakeholders in Moldova may be needed to achieve other improvements in the electoral area, such as Electoral Code reform to promote CEC independence. As was done with campaign finance reform, the donors could consider supporting a reform process that is more political than technical to address areas such as the mechanism for appointing CEC commissioners through civil society groups and political parties. More representation and accountability into democratic processes is needed, as well as increased CEC independence.

II. Introduction

The review report for the mid-term review of the International Electoral Assistance provided through 2008-2012 to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of Moldova consists of this introduction to explain the purpose behind the review and the methodologies used by the review team. The report then provides findings and conclusions about what international projects and programmes have done over this period to support the CEC and help bring the Moldovan electoral management body (EMB) to its current capacity and status. These findings and conclusions are organized by eleven questions posed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The report then makes recommendations for assistance and the CEC going forward, provides lessons learned from this past experience, and outlines in a matrix the support provided in the past by objective.

The review focuses on telling a clear story summarizing of the all of the international support to the CEC over 2008-2012, collecting findings from interviews and documents and then drawing conclusions from this work around eleven questions posed at the inception of the review, and finally making recommendations and compiling lessons learned from this review of experience.

Based the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the review and initial interviews with USAID UNDP, and the CEC, the review focused on the work of UNDP's Electoral Support Programme (ESP) from 2008 to 3 July 2012 and assistance from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). IFES implemented three projects funded by USAID between 2008 and July 2013: Strengthening Democratic Political Activism, Moldovan Electoral Transparency, and Moldovan Electoral Administration Capacity Development. The team has also examined assistance from other providers like the Council of Europe, Country Office and of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Moldova and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) as appropriate.

The review covers a time period a bit longer than 2012 for IFES projects, addresses UNDP's ESM project through its conclusion at the end of June 2012, and provides estimates of CEC capacity and processes based on the assistance provided as of September 2013. The review also covers assistance to other areas of electoral administration, primarily on the important roles of local public authorities (LPAs) structures and personnel in elections.

Context

Since independence in 1991, the Central Electoral Commission of Moldova has developed its capacity and a solid track record of administering elections. This record is a product of substantial work by the CEC and the help of donor assistance, including support from USAID through IFES via the CEPPS consortium until 2001. However international observer reports, domestic observers, and the Moldovan media noted that

the quality of elections was in decline after this period (see OSCE 2005, OSCE 2007). Problems identified in and after the 2005 parliamentary elections recurred in the 2007 local elections. These problems in electoral administration contributed to growing citizen mistrust in political processes and posed problems for governance in the country as well as Moldova's aspirations for closer integration with European structures. Concerns about this trend and the potential for further deterioration in election administration in the Parliamentary elections due by 2009 led both UNDP and USAID to consider reengaging in electoral assistance and to develop new projects/programmes to assist the CEC. The problems noted in 2005 and 2007 observer reports were the starting point for engaging needs assessment missions and then developing activities for USAID and UNDP.

The main problems identified by international and domestic observers for the 2007 local elections and the 2005 parliamentary elections were:

1. Intimidation of opposition candidates and campaign staff;
2. Unequal campaign opportunities;
3. Use of administrative (governmental) resources for parties and candidates;
4. Biased and unequal media coverage;
5. Gaps and inconsistencies in the electoral code;
6. Problems with the voters lists;
7. Issues in communications and relationships between the CEC, District Electoral Commissions (DECs), and Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs); and
8. Shortcomings in the vote count at PEBs.

Under the electoral legislation of Moldova at that time, only the last four problems were related to the CEC's responsibilities and roles, and could be addressed by strengthening the capacity of the CEC.

The five year period of the review has been a busy one for Moldova in terms of elections. As anticipated, regular Parliamentary elections were held 5 April 2009. The Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (CPRM) won the majority of seats in Parliament (60 out of 101). Significant civil unrest broke out after the release of the results, with protestors alleging fraud and claiming the numbers of voters on the register were inflated. Constitutional provisions also contributed to the polarization of the political environment after the elections. In accordance with the proportional electoral system of Moldova, the President is elected by Parliament for a four-year term by a majority of 61 votes or more. With the Parliament elected in April unable to elect a President, early parliamentary elections were called and held 29 July 2009, three months after the last election. A coalition of opposition parties, the Alliance of European Integration, won the majority of seats and formed a new government but also lacked the supermajority needed to elect a President – and were unable to elect a President. After these experiences in 2009, a referendum was held in September 2010 on whether to amend the constitution to elect the President directly. The vote for the referendum failed to reach the required turnout of 33 percent, which again led to early parliamentary elections 28 November 2010. Parties in the Alliance for European Integration won 52 and CPRM 42 seats respectively. The political deadlock and polarized politics thus remained. Local elections were held in June 2011 and were also contended on a party basis. On 16 March 2012, the parliament finally

managed to elect a president, ending three years of deadlock. The support of 62 deputies was reached through three defectors from the CPRM opposition, which had boycotted presidential votes since the July 2009 elections.

Scope

UNDP and USAID sought an independent review of the past five years of international electoral assistance to the CEC to better understand project and programme accomplishments, current CEC capacity, lessons learned, and areas that may need additional support going forward. UNDP continues to implement the Moldova Democracy Programme, which includes a component assisting the CEC, with activities currently funded until June 2014. The USAID funded IFES Moldovan Electoral Administration Capacity Development Program closed in mid-June 2013.

The UNDP Electoral Support to Moldova and the three IFES projects were not subject to independent external review. The UNDP Country Office and European Commission monitored ESP and USAID monitored IFES, which also engaged a senior IFES consultant for an internal evaluation in 2011. Some issues related to support for information technology (IT) were reviewed by OSCE-ODIHR in 2012 and the Moldovan Court of Accounts in 2013. As noted in the TOR, “the review team shall use these reports as a basis for their work and not seek to review the same elements again” (Annex 3).

USAID and UNDP agreed to conduct a joint review of multilateral electoral assistance in Moldova to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of international donor efforts. UNDP and USAID also seek to ensure that the review is useful to the CEC and its partners. The TOR did not task the team, and the team did not conduct, a capacity assessment. But understanding past assistance does shed light on the current situation and provides findings and conclusions relevant to forward-looking recommendations based on past project assistance and lessons learned.

Methodology

The review team of Lawrence Robertson, Stoyka Radeva, and Liuba Cuznetova was selected through open competition through UNDP procedures. The team started to work together in Chisinau September 2. The team drafted and discussed an inception report to guide the conduct of the review, which was accepted by UNDP. The inception report (Annex 5) proposed the methodologies and steps detailed below to produce four deliverables:

1. **Inception Report (deliverable 1)**, submitted 6 September 2013);
2. Fieldwork through document review and key informant interviews with current and past UNDP, USAID, IFES management, staff and consultants, the CEC, and donors, other partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries;
3. **PowerPoint Presentation (deliverable 2)** and discussion on the methodology, draft findings and conclusions, and preliminary recommendations to UNDP and the CEC (27 September 2013);

4. **Draft Review Report (deliverable 3)** with initial findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for comment from UNDP, USAID, and CEC management (submitted on 2 October 2013); and
5. **Final Review Report (deliverable 4)** revised after the receipt of any written comments from UNDP, USAID, and the CEC (requested by 10 October so that the team may address them and submit the final by 16 October 2013).

To review approximately five years of international electoral assistance provided to the CEC, the review team compiled and analysed UNDP, USAID, and IFES project documents (the grants/Project Documents and amendments/revisions, annual reports, quarterly reports, work plans and other reporting document such as steering committee meetings – plus the discrete planned and ad hoc products produced through these efforts) and held informal discussions with USAID, IFES, and UNDP staff to understand project activities and outcomes. Team members first agreed to and signed non-disclosure agreements as needed to use these proprietary project records.

The review team then reviewed CEC and other stakeholder materials and used semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with current and former programme/project management and staff, stakeholders, partners (first and foremost CEC commissioners and managers), and key beneficiaries to gather their perspectives on project activities and outcomes. The review team then drafted the PowerPoint briefing and this draft review report, using the questions from the TOR and the organisational schemes of both sets of projects to arrange the findings and preliminary conclusions. Findings are supported by concrete evidence from interviews and documents, and used to draw conclusions, make recommendations to USAID, UNDP, and CEC management, and gather lessons learned.

Document review examined the main planning and reporting documents of the projects to understand the analysis behind the development of these projects, what the project's planned, the activities implemented (or not implemented) by the projects and their partners, and the kinds of outcomes that have been achieved to date through these interventions. CEC and other GOM documents and materials have also been used to examine project activities and CEC developments.

Key informant interviews were conducted in person or via Skype through general, open-questions to allow interviewees to say whatever is on their mind about project activities and outcomes. All data collection instruments are included in Annex 6. The review team began all KIIs with a brief statement outlining the mission of the report and assuring interviewees that none of their remarks or opinions would be directly associated with them in the presentation, drafting, and finalisation of the report. Follow-up questions about initial answers were used to elicit additional specificity and to ask about earlier activities or areas that did not come up immediately.

The review considered the design of these activities in 2008 and earlier in the context of Moldovan politics, UNDP and USAID policies and procedures, and the evolution of these designs in the aftermath of the April 2009 election violence and the crowded electoral calendar (early parliamentary elections in July 2009, the constitutional

referendum in September 2010, early parliamentary elections in November 2010, and local elections in June 2011). The review team assessed project and programme management and implementation, including the partnerships developed, focusing on criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability. The review assessed the usefulness of project/programme assistance to the CEC in terms of:

1. effectively meeting project objectives,
2. change over the life of the project (when possible from baselines);
3. efficiency, management, and coordination; and
4. management, staff, partner, stakeholder, and beneficiary perceptions of outcomes and the sustainability of these outcomes.

After a brief review of the development, organization, evolution, and activities of the main projects and programs, the report reviews assistance activities, draws findings, and reaches conclusions through ten specific questions from the TOR, plus an additional one developed during the inception report.

1. To what degree were international assistance electoral support interventions pertinent to the needs of the CEC and the Moldova electoral system, especially in response to the electoral events of 2009 and 2010?
2. Did the international assistance electoral support interventions make the best use of resources to achieve results? Were the interventions efficient?
3. To what extent were the international assistance electoral support objectives achieved? What were the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of these objectives?
4. How has technical assistance contributed to a more professional, independent management of electoral processes? What real difference have the international assistance electoral support interventions made to the beneficiary?
5. How has the CEC managed and coordinated the assistance it has received?
6. To what extent have the products of interventions been institutionalised to ensure establishment of durable, cost-effective democratic electoral processes and systems?
7. To what extent will the benefits of the international assistance electoral support interventions continue after donor funding will cease? What were the major factors that influenced the achievement of sustainability of the electoral support programs results?
8. What has been the contribution of electoral technical assistance to the outcome of deepening democracy and ensuring peace and stability in Moldova?
9. Does the CEC Strategic Plan provide a suitable framework for planning future interventions? What could be the potential areas of international engagement in coming years?
10. What were gender mainstreaming challenges and benefits for electoral support interventions in Moldova? How did international donors ensure that women and men are equally enfranchised throughout the electoral process?
11. What have been the benefits and costs of adapting assistance to changing circumstances such as a number of unplanned electoral events?

Limitations

The review team has been able to successfully implement the fieldwork plan outlined in the inception report. The team has been able to overcome challenges in organizing the information on the ESM project; although some gaps remain in documents, these lacunae appear to be immaterial to reviewing objectives, outputs, and outcomes of the project. Reporting and information on out-of-country voting (OCV) is particularly thin. Delays in signing contractual agreements between USAID and UNDP on the review slowed the transmission of documents on the IFES projects and led to a slower start on this part of the review.

The universe of direct participants in technical assistance to the CEC is very small. We have not found interviews with stakeholders outside of this group to be informative about technical assistance to the CEC, although their insights into outside perceptions of the projects and CEC have been valuable. The team has been able to successfully identify, find contact information, reach, and interview past staff and management, including back to 2008. The team has not been able to interview some past CEC members and staff on pension or maternity leave, but do not believe that this has had a substantial impact on the findings, conclusions, or recommendations of the review.

III. Findings and Conclusions

This section first outlines the origins of the main assistance projects, their specific objectives, and briefly summarizes their main activities towards these objectives. Findings and conclusions from the review team's fieldwork are then arrayed to address the eleven questions from the TOR and initial discussions, using a reformulation of the main objectives of international electoral assistance to the CEC into six categories. The six categories used to organise the review are:

- Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections
- Improved voter registration
- Improved electoral information management
- Enhanced participation of citizen abroad
- Increased information transparency of the electoral process
- Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

Objectives and Activities: UNDP Electoral Support to Moldova Programme

The Electoral Support to Moldova (ESM) Project originated a request from the Government of Moldova for electoral assistance to the United Nations (UN). The UN sent two Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs) to Moldova. The January 2008 mission from Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), with the of the European Commission (EC)-UNDP Task Force on Electoral

Assistance, led EAD/DPA to recommend that the United Nations should provide electoral assistance to Moldova not only for the 2009 parliamentary elections but also to provide longer-term support throughout the entire electoral cycle expected to end in 2013. A second NAM was later carried out by the Joint EC-UNDP Task Force on Electoral Assistance and a representative of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) at the request of the UNDP Country Office in Moldova. UNDP/Moldova then brought an international consultant to Moldova to work with stakeholders and elaborate a draft Project Document (ProDoc) for approval by the GOM and UNDP as well as to consult with donors on potential funding. Over three months in the summer of 2008, the ProDoc was drafted under the electoral cycle approach and approved with six objectives.

The Electoral Support to Moldova (ESM) Project was developed for the period 2008-2013. Initial funding came from UNDP, UN Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, and Government of Moldova. Start-up of the project, both in hiring staff and beginning activities, was slowed by the absence of other funding. With the support of the EU-UNDP Joint Task Force, UNDP and the CEC anticipated gaining EU funding for the project.

The Electoral Support to Moldova project was funded mainly by EU, with USD 3.6 million committed for the period to mid-2010, which was later extended 6 months at no cost. The total ESM budget thus reached USD 4.5 million, including 3 million Moldovan lei from the Government of Moldova; the ESM continued until the development and funding of the new UNDP programme, “Improving the quality of Moldovan democracy through parliamentary and electoral support” - the Democracy Programme (DP) in 2012. The project initially was not able to focus on capacity building as the electoral calendar and CEC led to a focus on elections. UNDP requested and received a 6 month no cost extension from the EU in mid-2010 to extend the ESM programme until the end of the year. At that time, the components of the projects were revised from six to five to reflect the shift from long-term institutional building by dropping the material support objective. Increasingly after the expenditure of the EU funds, from 2012 ESM provided also technical assistance on human right and gender issues along with strengthening the institutional and functional capacity of CEC. The five final ESM objectives were:

1. Improved voter registration and handling of electoral information (Electoral Information Management System – voter register, results and beyond)
2. Enhanced participation of citizen abroad through improved consular services
3. Increased capacity of the Central Electoral Commission to better manage elections
4. Increased transparency of the electoral process – media and voter education
5. Improved electoral legislation and judicial issues

ESM organised the following types of activities towards these objectives:

1. Supported the design and development an Electoral Management System (SAIS “Elections” or SAISE); equipped the CEC server room; purchased and provided servers for SAISE; and developed and piloted an electronic voter

- register in parliamentary (September and November 2010) and partial local elections (May and November 2009, ;
2. Encouraged Out-of Country Voting by supplying ballot boxes to consular offices abroad, training MFAEI staff, and logistics support for OCV through IOM;
 3. Improved the capacity of the CEC through the provision of BRIDGE training and operational support to the CEC in five elections, as well as support for post-election reviews and the development of the CEC Strategic Plan for 2012 -2015;
 4. Developed and implemented a media and PR strategy during the period 2009 – 2010 that increased transparency in CEC operations and recognition of the CEC; organised three voter information campaigns around the parliamentary elections in 2009-2010; and developed and promoted voter education (VE) in the renovated and enlarged Media Centre in 2010; and
 5. Provided legal support through international and national consultants for electoral code reform and other legal support.

ESM also leads international coordination of assistance to electoral processes through organizing and leading donor coordination meetings.

Objectives and Activities: USAID IFES Projects

With increasing concerns with the quality of electoral processes in Moldova, USAID awarded the Strengthening Democratic Political Activism (SDPA) grant in June 2008 through the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS). As a grant, USAID's substantial involvement once awarded is limited to review and approval of implementation plans and key personnel. The SPDA grant added to current work in Moldova with IRI and NDI to improve political competition by bringing IFES back to the country to improve the electoral system, awarding \$1 million to IFES for a 14 month program. The project was extended later through April 2010, making the length of project 20 months.

The original cooperative agreement outlined seven program objectives - to:

1. Strengthen the CEC's supervision of and communication with DEC's and PEB's;
2. Develop manuals for DEC and PEB staff and impart training;
3. Improve the quality and integrity of the voter registry and voter lists;
4. Provide expert advice and assistance on the legal framework for elections;
5. Improve public outreach activities by CEC and DEC's;
6. Develop a political finance reporting and monitoring regime for the CEC; and
7. Improve the election dispute resolution process.

IFES worked towards these objectives through activities that:

1. Led the CEC to recognize the need for support for DEC's and PEB's to conduct their responsibilities for the voters list (VL), and supported mechanisms for working collaboratively;

2. Reviewed CEC materials and training methods and developed and produced new training manuals, videos, and cascade training methods which the CEC used to train some 21,000 polling officials for the April 2009 polls;
3. Reviewed the voter registration (VR) system, advised the CEC on reform, and undertook a modest VL verification campaign;
4. Provided some legal advice as part of supervising DEC and PEB through training for them in legal aspects of elections, and dispute resolution;
5. Reviewed the CEC's public outreach strategy, worked with the CEC to develop a new PR strategy, collaborated with UNDP that led in support to this area, and developed and printed targeted materials to get-out-the vote (GOTV);
6. Organized two conferences with the CoE on campaign finance reforms, developed a manual for regulation, and trained CEC staff in campaign finance monitoring and reporting;¹ and
7. Reviewed the dispute resolution process and recommended changes which were adopted by the CEC.

With immediate, additional unexpected needs from the repeat Parliamentary elections in July 2009, USAID modified the CEPPS grant in June 2009 to add the Moldova Electoral Transparency Activity (META) and approximately \$425 thousand to each member of the CEPPS consortium. IFES's work was also extended through September 2009. IFES had two objectives under this second program - to:

1. Foster public trust and participation in electoral processes through targeted voter education initiatives; and
2. Improve electoral administration through targeted assistance to PEBs and DECs.

In the brief period in the run-up to the July 29 Parliamentary elections and afterwards, IFES:

1. Created with the CEC another voter education campaign, including printing materials; and
2. Developed and produced new training manuals, videos, and cascade training methods which the CEC used to train approximately 21,000 polling officials for the July 2009 election.

After the two parliamentary elections in 2009, recognizing that these interventions that focused on meeting urgent needs and specific electoral events had not addressed the systemic issues apparent in elections in Moldova, USAID developed and awarded a third \$1.6 million activity to IFES – the Moldovan Election Administration Capacity Development (MEACD) project. The program started in May 2010 and focused on providing technical assistance to the CEC to improve electoral management and promote citizen understanding and participation in electoral process. IFES's four objectives in MEACD were to:

1. Strengthen the systems for the creation of the voter registry;
2. Build administrative, operational and management capacity of election officials;

¹ These activities concluded in November 2008. See SDPA Final Report (CEPPS IFES Moldova 121-A-00-080-702 Final report.docx), p.18.

3. Assist the CEC in developing continuous training capacity; and
4. Foster public trust in electoral processes through targeted voter education initiatives.

MEACD was modified through a one-year extension from May 2012-April 2013 and to increase the budget to \$2.5 million. A short, final no-cost extension to extend the project and close-out until June 15, 2013 concluded IFES's reengagement in Moldova.

Under the MEACD project, IFES worked closely with the CEC and:

1. Developed and implemented a training program through the CEC (and then CTC) for LPA secretaries to compile and update VLs, as well as to evaluate the training, plus develop a web-based VL application;
2. Supported the development of the first CEC strategic plan, developed DEC and PEB guides, produced and distributed these manuals and videos, and supported seminars for CEC training using these materials;
3. Assisted with the development of improved CEC training materials and tools for the 2010 Referendum, November 2010 early parliamentary elections and June 2011 local elections, assisted in the development of the continuous training center, trained LPA secretaries in 2012 and 2013 on updating the VL; and
4. Helped the CEC organized a united VE campaign of all international assistance projects for the 2010 parliamentary elections and the June 2011 Local Elections; produced posters, billboards, and Public Service Announcements; funded PSA broadcasts; finalized the CE database; and assessed progress in SP implementation in PR.

Under MEACD, IFES also provided advice and support to the CEC and other electoral stakeholders on legal reform and potential changes to the electoral system, and supported an effort to revise political party finance legislation with civil society and the CEC.

Review Questions

1. **To what degree were international assistance electoral support interventions pertinent to the needs of the CEC and the Moldova electoral system, especially in response to the electoral events of 2009 and 2010?**

Conclusions

UNDP, USAID, IFES, and CEC documents and interviews emphasized how the design of the projects targeted important issues for the Moldovan electoral system and met important needs of the CEC. Interviews and the documentary record also demonstrate that programmes were flexible and responsive to CEC requests and needs in the three parliamentary elections in April 2009, July 2009 and November 2010, the constitutional referendum in 2010, and the June 2011 local elections. While programs were developed to target strategic goals such as capacity building and the development of electronic information systems for the CEC, both UNDP and USAID were able to work effectively with the CEC to adjust to provide targeted support for unanticipated early Parliamentary elections in July 2009 and November 2010 and the referendum in September 2010. After

this period, assistance was able to shift back to focus on longer-term support for capacity building, support the development of electronic information systems, and other reforms.

International assistance providers collaborated closely with the CEC in the design of objectives and appropriate activities that would contribute towards reaching these objectives. This collaboration was especially close for UNDP since with national implementation, the CEC was the implementing partner and agreed in writing to the approaches, objectives, and activities in the ProDoc and subsequent workplans. As IFES was the implementer of the USAID cooperative agreement, IFES had to discuss and reach agreement with the CEC and other partners on activities. UNDP adjusted programme activities through annual workplans and the steering committee. Adjustments were needed due to the electoral calendar, requests of the CEC, and the receipt and use of funding from the EU and its aftermath. IFES projects were shorter in duration and were modified by USAID through workplans and new awards through CEPPS, resulting in additional time, money, and objectives.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

Both IFES and UNDP proposed and implemented numerous activities to build the CEC's capacity to better manage elections. While able to conduct elections successfully without external technical assistance in 2005 and 2007, the CEC recognized that the organization could benefit from capacity development and international partners. This recognition was formal in the CEC's agreement to the ProDoc and informal in agreeing to work with IFES on the activities proposed by IFES. The CEC was willing to embrace the electoral cycle approach, with capacity development at its core, and work with both assistance providers to build organizational capacity in a wide range of areas. The immediate needs for the four electoral events in 2009 and 2010 lead to a delay in most capacity building activities due to the focus of the CEC on operational responsibilities for elections. Both projects respond to CEC and donor requests to assist processes and materials for these elections and the referendum. This operational emphasis and the development of a division of labor with IFES leads to substantial change in project staffing for UNDP, which did not recruit an international training advisor as envisioned in the ProDoc; IFES did recruit an international and take the lead in the training area, with contributions from UNDP. As anticipated in the ProDoc, ESM designed and supported numerous BRIDGE trainings for the CEC and other key electoral stakeholders.

Improved voter registration

Questions about the completeness and accuracy of the voters' lists were central in complaints about the quality of elections in Moldova by civil society and some political parties. Issues with the voters' lists are also prominent in international observer organization reports on Moldovan elections in 2005 and 2007. Substantial changes were introduced to the Electoral Code in 2008, which among other things streamlined the voter list preparation process and proposed to make one institution - the CEC - responsible for voter lists from 2012 (now postponed until 2015). Some interviews emphasized that neither UNDP nor IFES were able to enlist as much support for work in the voters' lists as sought, for reasons that were never clear. ESM took the lead in this area through work

on an electronic voters' list; IFES interviewees and reports noted no support for their engagement with voters' lists at the start of their project.

ESM supported the CEC's electronic compilation of lists received from local authorities and production of an aggregated preliminary roll for July 2009. The project worked with the CEC to: extract the preliminary voter list information provided to the CEC and place this information into a database; assist the CEC in running integrity tests; and to return issues found to LPAs for action. In the wake of controversies over the April 2009 voters' lists, ESM provided grants to the Institute of Human Rights (IDOM) and Association of Legal Clinics to monitor and report on issues related to compilation and verification of voters' lists. The ESM ProDoc proposed to provide technical and financial support to assist the CEC in the transition to a centralized electronic voter register by 2009. This proved overambitious and the ESM project worked with the CEC to develop pilot electronic registry tests. With the support of UNDP, the CEC piloted an electronic voter register in a June 2009 local election and in subsequent Parliamentary, nationwide local, and other local elections. The CEC was initially due to assume full responsibility for the list in 2012. As it became clear that the CEC would not have the capacity to manage this responsibility, the CEC requested and was granted a postponement of this responsibility until 2015. Although outside of pilots, existing VLs rather than the electronic VL remained in used, IFES did not find the CEC interested in IFES' support to improve this system of voter registration. IFES continued to try to gain the CEC's support for an effort to assess the quality of existing lists and then address any issues found. Repeated discussions in 2009 and 2010, including after an IFES assessment of the VL in January 2010, did not find CEC support for work in this area. IFES commissioned another VL database assessment at the end of 2011 and then was able to work with the CEC on training and systems for LPA secretaries to reduce "obvious errors" in the lists.²

Improved electoral information management

The CEC particularly sought international project support for information management for elections. Parliament in 2006 passed a resolution in favor of the automatization of elections. The CEC in October 2006 resolved "to launch the creation of the State Automated Information System 'Elections' (SAISE)" and proposed a concept to do so. Parliament in May 2008 then adopted Law 101 which described SAISE, mandated that the CEC develop the system, and suggested seeking international donor funding to co-finance its development. The CEC's concept was the base for the CEC's and GOM's first appeal to the UN - for planning and implementation of Moldova's National Strategy and Action Plan to create an e-voting system and the task of developing a reliable voter's register. The NAM missions and ProDoc recognize that e-voting is a more distant potential prospect rather than an area for immediate assistance. UNDP was willing to work with the CEC and GOM to help meet the demanding and detailed obligations of Law 101 through a comprehensive electoral support programme that included support for information technology (IT). The NAMs and ProDoc recognized the needs for supporting the transmission and tabulation process. USAID and IFES, while in favor of the CEC having improved information and management systems, were not willing or able to

² "Obvious errors" include misspellings of names and duplicate names, incomplete ID data, for example.

support large-scale technical equipment purchases and software development that would be needed to support the e-voting part of implementing Law 101.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

OCV has been an important issue for Moldova. Official statistical data presented by the Central Electoral Commission before the 5 April 2009 elections stated that approximately 628 thousand Moldovan citizens are out of the country; most are believed to have emigrated in search of employment which means they retain the right to vote. This figure is approximately 25 percent of the citizens registered on voter lists.³ However the number and distribution by country of Moldovan's working abroad is not known precisely, which makes voter education and services difficult to provide – as does Moldovan legislation. Efforts to improve voter services for Moldovans abroad were also included in Law 101. The NAM missions and ProDoc recognize that work in this area would be challenging and that there are political as well as technical issues in this area. The CEC agreed to the ProDoc which was explicit that IOM would deliver this component through collaboration with MFAEI and not focus on the distant prospect of e-voting. Interviewees noted CEC unhappiness with this modality as it did not work closely with the CEC. Work on OCV was not a focus of the IFES projects. IOM made a policy decision not to work on OCV for the 2010 referendum as the measure was not supported by all of the main political parties in Moldova. To substitute for IOM, CoE support was enlisted to provide OCV support to the MFAEI for the referendum.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

The CEC was criticized in domestic and international observer reports in 2005 and 2007 for a lack of transparency and the magnitude of voter education efforts, which were seen to be too small. The CEC recognized that support from international projects for voter education and working with the media would be beneficial. The ESM ProDoc focused attention to this area, as did the IFES grant. UNDP took the lead in this area through an international public relations and elections expert and worked closely with the CEC in the development of messages for VE, VE planning, and the production and distribution of materials. IFES also produced promotional materials for the CEC. Both projects focused in targeted ways through strategies that were increasingly joint and coordinated by the CEC for VE for the four electoral events in 2009 and 2010. Following these events, as part of the general focus on institutional capacity building that was then possible, VE and media work was also able to take a more capacity-building approach with the CEC apparatus.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

Domestic and international criticism of Moldovan elections also noted that the legal framework was in need of improvement. Assistance to the CEC for legal support, including potential reform of the electoral code and policies and procedures for the resolution of electoral disputes was a component of the NAMs, ESM ProDoc and the initial IFES grant. Although not explicitly an objective of later IFES awards, legal advice

³ Sergiu Lipcean, "Free and Fair Elections," in Veaceslav Berbeca, et. al., eds., *The Audit of the Democratic System of the Republic of Moldova: Anthology of Analysis on Governance*. Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul" 2011.

and support remained a part of IFES' work. ESM planned to provide an international legal advisor to take the lead in this area. Reports suggested that the CEC felt that they instead needed more specific assistance that would better be delivered through national legal advisors. Two national legal advisors were provided, and savings from not providing an international legal advisor were used at the CEC's request for SAISE development. IFES supported work on dispute resolution and complaints through an international advisor in 2008, and began a targeted effort in 2010 on political party campaign finance. IFES focused on campaign finance reform with the CEC through their work and with CSO partners. Most IFES legal assistance support came in the last year of IFES' projects to the CSO that led this effort.

2. Did the international assistance electoral support interventions make the best use of resources to achieve results? Were the interventions efficient?

Conclusions

The documentary record and interviews on international electoral support to the CEC suggests that efficiency was one of the criteria used by project management and the CEC in an effort to maximize the benefits from assistance. There is evidence for debate and discussion about both what assistance should target and also how assistance can most efficiently target specific outputs. Shifts in assistance to support the CEC for specific elections came at some cost to the efficiency of support for capacity building and the development of electronic systems. Problems for efficiency also come from the substantial time that was sometimes required to enlist CEC support for objectives and activities that the CEC's international partners emphasized as critical, such as improving the existing VL.

Efficiency is examined here by considering whether there is debate and discussion about not only objectives and activities of assistance, but also the most efficient way of providing assistance. These are ways to consider and decide on the best use of resources towards outputs. Challenges of the crowded electoral calendar and capacity constraints of the CEC led to moving into operational support for elections rather than capacity building first as intended and sometimes appeared to have inhibited the consideration of alternatives. Adjusting plans and shifting from an anticipated focus on longer-term capacity building comes a cost to efficiency, institutionalization, and sustainability because of the shifts in programming. Past managers noted the benefits that the longer-term timeframe that UNDP and IFES was able to operate under had. Technical assistance and advice in areas that initially did not find receptive partners in the CEC sometimes did later when delivered again after a time lag. Interviewees from both main international assistance providers were sometimes able to build understanding over the longer term and support CEC action when the time was later "ripe" for assistance in these areas. While not as efficient as starting immediately, having a sustained presence and repeatedly raising issues and prospective solutions with the CEC was seen as critical to the results of international electoral assistance by past project management. The UNDP project was hampered by frequent staff turnover, particularly of CTAs; each new CTA must take the

time to build relationships and assess the situation in Moldova, at a cost to the speed of delivery and continuity of the project.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

IFES and ESM share support to capacity building for the CEC, as both adapt BRIDGE modules for the CEC and other stakeholders. ESM contracts with an International IDEA specialist for the capacity assessment designed to provide the basis for which BRIDGE trainings to procure. This assessment does not appear to have assessed CEC capacity as anticipated, but rather focused on what BRIDGE could do with the CEC. The CEC is small; staff have been trained efficiently in small groups through the best practice, professional education methods of BRIDGE.

Improved voter registration

A comprehensive review or audit of the voters' lists has been an aspiration of both the ESM and IFES projects since 2008; neither has been able to successfully conduct this kind of a review. Interviews and documents suggest that the absence of support for a comprehensive review from the CEC has limited successes from this effort. ESM provided grants to two CSOs to monitor and verify procedures and gather more concrete data on list quality for the July 2009 elections. While not a monetarily costly effort, controversies over this CSO monitoring become a public and then legal matter, which some interviewees felt made the CEC less rather than more willing to support further initiatives to investigate list quality in a comprehensive way. IFES conducted studies in 2010 and 2011, and was eventually able to enlist CEC support for training for the CEC and LPAs to address "obvious" errors in the existing lists.

Improved electoral information management

One of the goals of a better information management system for the CEC is to make electoral management more efficient. The ESM project sought to support the CEC's objectives in this area which were to automatize the electoral processes in order to exclude manual work, to ensure better performance of the elections and create conditions for the participation of more voters, including those who are out of the country. IFES projects were not engaged in this area. In 2008 ESM worked with the CEC to procure the desired system for SAISE through standard UNDP Moldova procurement methods. ESM and the CEC were not satisfied with the bids under the TOR and decided to procure a hardware system and an international specialist and develop bespoke software separately. Interviewees noted that this decision appeared to be efficient based on understanding at that time. However this choice led to a cycle of IT specialist procurements as the CEC and ESM have to continue to procure IT expertise to understand the system that has been developed (SAISE), develop additional software modules to meet CEC needs, and develop and execute plans for improved electoral information management for the CEC going forward. OSCE ODHIR conducted one mission in 2012 to gather information and make recommendations in this area to the CEC and international partners. In a period when ESM operated with only UNDP funds and had no additional donor support, it was efficient to enlist additional resources to help increase understanding in this important area for the CEC and ESM. Some IT and management interviews suggested that may not be efficient to continue to support the underlying SAISE system as its technical

parameters are not well understood and may be somewhat outdated. Other interviewees felt that the system worked and could continue to work through the addition of modules over time. IT has also developed substantially since 2009 when development of the SAISE system started and new alternatives may be more efficient, perhaps in conjunction with existing modules developed through ESM that are used by the CEC.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

The design of the ESM project focused attention on supporting opportunities for Moldovans abroad to exercise their democratic rights. The design of the project incorporated IOM as the implementer of activities towards this objective. Some interviewees emphasized that the CEC continued to debate the participation of IOM, and argued that the CEC should be the provider of training, voter education, and supplies to MFAEI through funding from the ESM project. When IOM declined to support the 2010 referendum as it not supported by all political parties in the country, the CEC did provide support in with the help of the CoE. IOM suggested that their prior relationships with the MFAEI through other technical assistance projects and contacts with Moldovan diaspora groups and networks facilitated start up as well as provided a more efficient mechanism for VE and other information dissemination that would otherwise be conducted by the MFAEI.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

UNDP took the lead in this area with an international PR and Media Advisor on staff. Efficiency in stronger VE and other outreach of the CEC can be considered to be measures that reach more Moldovans with accurate, useful information in a timely manner. Interviews and the documentary record suggest that as the CEC gained international support for VE and outreach, the CEC was able to use the advice, funding, and technical equipment to reach more Moldovans with accurate information – and increasingly with the same information as the CEC, UNDP, and IFES developed and implemented a common VE campaign for the November 2010 Parliamentary elections.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

ESM project documents and interviews noted that the CEC made their preferences for less legal assistance and national rather than international legal consultants at ESM steering committee meetings in 2008 and 2009. The CEC argued that these measures were more efficient as changes to the legal code are specific to the Romanian-language legislation, and ESM was willing to adjust and provided national legal consultants as requested. Efforts by IFES to engage in legal reform also do not find much receptivity in 2008, although an international consultant was able to work with the CEC to modify some complaints processes. The competitive award to CReDO to monitor campaign financing in the November 2010 election campaign led to IFES support for a broader process of discussing and developing campaign finance regulation and legislation. Interviewees felt this effort was efficient in drafting and discussing a proposal with broad stakeholder engagement through a Moldovan organisation.

3. To what extent were the international assistance electoral support objectives achieved? What were the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of these objectives?

Conclusions

Although not an evaluation, the review of international electoral assistance to the CEC pointed to substantial increases in the CEC's management of electoral processes. Interviews and documents supported substantial capacity development in voter education and training. Both interviews and documents suggested a strong role for UNDP and IFES in these developments. UNDP support provided the CEC with hardware and software for electronic management of electoral processes, although not to the extent envisioned at the start of the project. IFES and UNDP provided support to improve the existing voters' lists and to develop pilots for electronic voter registration respectively; neither effort has managed to fully address issues in voter registration discussed in each national election and the referendum. Support for OCV was also modest, and so too was progress towards objectives for the participation of Moldovan citizens abroad in elections. Based on CEC preferences, little legal advice was provided by international projects; accordingly limited progress was made towards objectives in this area. The level of interest from the CEC and the extent of support provided by international partners greatly influenced the achievement of objectives.

Tracing international assistance project histories and experiences through the documentary record leads to reports of achievements, which the review team has also discussed with past and current CEC and partner staff. Discussions with other stakeholders also noted some of these developments, but in a more general manner. Few interviewees remembered concrete details about activities and outputs, especially those of more than a year ago. The methodologies of the review are able to shed some light on achievements towards objectives and the reasons for this progress or lack of progress.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

Project and CEC documents as well as interviews all suggested that there has been substantial CEC capacity built with the support of international electoral assistance over the past five years. Capacity building support was especially noted after 2010, when the pace of electoral events slowed and the CEC and its international partners were able to shift from support to electoral events to capacity building. From the outset, UNDP envisioned supporting lessons learned and following up on them with the CEC after the first election. Controversies over the April 2009 election and the call for early parliamentary elections afterwards did not allow for this lessons learned process or permit the anticipated start of capacity building. UNDP and IFES worked together with the CEC to conduct post-election reviews after July 2009 and November 2010 that were seen as useful for developing lessons learned and considering areas for capacity building in the wake of elections. The development of the first CEC Strategic Plan in the fall of 2011 with the support of IFES and UNDP was seen as another significant step in capacity building, and a way to guide further development.

Improved voter registration

Over the five year period, UNDP and IFES have been able to work with the CEC and LPAs to improve the voters' lists used by LPAs. On the one hand, these developments are seen as significant improvements; IFES support has encouraged the CEC to take responsibility for training LPA secretaries for their annual update work, developed training programs for updating, and developed systems to reduce "obvious" errors in the lists. Without a clear understanding of the overall quality of the voters' lists through an audit of the list, it is not possible to judge the significance of these improvements. On the other hand, the envisioned automated SRV has not been developed. The development of the SRV has faced both technical and institutional challenges over the entire period of assistance. The main issues from 2008 remain the central challenges in 2013. Proper functioning of the SVR depends on data from the State Register of the Population, Cadastre, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health, which are not yet able to provide good quality data. SAISE is not now able to include all the different forms of qualitative data from these different registers. The connections between registers that are needed for an electronic SRV do not yet work properly. The CEC continues to work on these issues through an inter-institutional working group.

Improved electoral information management

Reviewing five years of project products and reports on the development of SAISE and interviews with past and present ESM and CEC IT management, staff, and consultants present a mixed picture. Substantial ESM support, particularly in 2009 and 2010 through the EU funding, targeted the ambitious objectives of the ProDoc and CEC. But at the end of ESM in June 2012, the CEC did not have an electoral information system that they could manage that met these objectives or the larger aspirations of Law 101. This appears to be the case at present as well even with support of the DP. UNDP has competitively procured many IT specialists to help the CEC and UNDP understand the challenges of IT development in elections in Moldova, and the SAISE system that has been developed as well as the additional modules developed separately to meet some of the needs not met by the SAISE architecture. The most recent assessment concludes that six out of 16 functions of SAISE function properly and are used.⁴

Many review interviews suggested that the goals of the ProDoc, CEC, and SAISE were too ambitious for the project and country.⁵ On the other hand, the original designers of the SAISE system felt that the concept and its implementation was not overly ambitious and could have been completed with more time and without the pressure of working to meet the needs of specific elections in 2009. Without a strong nationwide base in IT and detailed technical knowledge of IT development in ESM staff in 2008, the project and CEC found it challenging to procure a software system, and the initial procurement was not successful. ESM and the CEC then found it difficult to procure IT specialists to develop a software system, but ultimately provided an international IT specialist to work with the CEC IT department. The CEC then reportedly pushed for rapid development of IT systems which they sought to use in the April 2009 elections. This time pressure and the lack of specialized knowledge on IT in the project and CEC contributed to the CEC

⁴ In addition, five other functions work properly but are not used. See Diaconu, p. 45.

⁵ This is a broadly held consensus. But it is not shared by the original designers of the SAISE concept, ProDoc, and SAISE system from 2008.

and ESM not conducting a comprehensive feasibility study for SAISE. This time pressure reportedly contributed to SAISE developers not producing adequate documentation to explain their work to subsequent developers, which has inhibited sustainability. Although there were some promising contacts, ESM and the CEC were not able to effectively work out the institutional relationships to import the data needed for SAISE from other Moldovan registers, such as the State Register of Population (SRP) administered by State Enterprise (SE) Registru, register of addresses administered by SE Cadastru, as well as other registers held by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. These challenges did not lead to amending the concept of SAISE for greater realism and to take these constraints into account.

The support of the ESM project was instrumental in IT progress for the CEC. This progress came through the provision of computers and internal hardware for communicating electronically within the CEC and to develop Results Tabulation System for the CEC, rather than having this critical dimension of elections outsourced to a private company as was done in 2009. ESM has supported the development of additional modules since 2010 to help the CEC manage aspects of elections.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

IOM was able to develop methods and systems for working with the MFAEI to support their roles and responsibilities in elections outside of Moldova. While relations were reportedly difficult and many of the ambitious goals outlined in IOM's initial workplan were not attempted as consensus could not be built, IOM was able to revise the approaches to OCV, execute these revised efforts, and support the MFAEI's work on OCV. Outreach through IOM and voting services to Moldovan citizens abroad were perceived to have improved by informed interviewees. The number of OCV voters increased over each election during this period of work; the increase was substantial in November 2010 and the total number of voters abroad exceeded 64,000 citizens. However, the percentage of the out-of-country Moldovans that have voted in even this election was a small percentage of the estimated 600,000 to 700,000 Moldovans abroad.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

UNDP worked closely with the CEC to develop and implement a plan for increasing the visibility and openness of the CEC through the international Media and PR advisor. Reports and interviews suggested that having a dedicated international staff member focused on this area increased coordination and the quality and quantity of information provided, even relatively quickly. Funding challenges affected the roles of projects in this area. In early 2009, when ESM had the advisor but lacked the funds to support VE, the project was not able to have as much influence on the campaign as subsequently. The result was that the CoE produced three PSA spots and the CEC and ADEPT produced one each; ESM was reportedly more effective in 2010, when the project had EU funds and was able to collaborate with IFES to produce a unified media strategy and campaign. The project had greater influence in the institutional development side through support for web site redevelopment and the establishment of the media center.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

As the CEC leadership argued that since the Commission adopts only regulations and instructions and that since complaints about CEC procedures, regulations, and instructions had not been a part of legal arguments after the two Parliamentary elections in 2009, most of the resources planned for this component under ESM were reallocated to support technological development. Achievements were correspondingly modest; the CEC contributed to the revision of the electoral code and other legislation through the support of ESM-provided national consultants in 2009 and 2010. The IFES supported initially CReDO-led effort to campaign finance and subsequently revised political party financing legislation and regulations. IFEW was able to support the CEC's work to conduct stakeholder meetings, discussion, and complete draft legislation for consideration by Parliament to revise the campaign finance system. Interviews suggested that this legislation was likely to be made law, although some amendments were expected.

4. How has technical assistance contributed to a more professional, independent management of electoral processes? What real difference have the international assistance electoral support interventions made to the beneficiary?

Conclusions

All interviews recognized contributions of international assistance to a stronger CEC. Although not a capacity assessment, the review teams interviews and review of the reporting record from the ESM and IFES projects found important contributions of assistance to CEC capacity to administer elections, improve VR, information and communications technology (ICT), OCV, VE and public outreach, and changes to the electoral code plus other proposed legislation for political party finance. These Electoral Code changes have not changed the way the CEC is formed or funded to increase CEC independence from Parliament and parties. The regular appointment of new members of the Commission and changes in the members selected by CEC Commissioners to be permanent members also contributed to CEC professionalism.

Baseline data for CEC professionalism, independence, and management is not available for 2008, nor measured and collected today, with the exception of a few areas. Upcoming elections at the start of activities reportedly impeded the development of assessments that could have been used for baselines. The review team thus relied on interviews and evidence for change from the documents of ESM, IFES, and other organisations that worked with the CEC. CEC interviews emphasized that they had benefitted from being the focus of the two technical assistance projects in recent years and appreciated this support for the development of their capacity, the institution, and electoral processes in Moldova. Providers and stakeholders concurred with this assessment and felt that the CEC was technically improved as a result of international assistance.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

Interviews with assistance providers, CEC staff and commissioners, and international and domestic stakeholders emphasized how the Commission had improved over the past five years with international assistance. Assistance, as was often noted, was central to

“changing mind-sets” about what could and should be done in electoral administration, as well as to supporting new systems and capacity in the CEC. CEC interviews emphasised how engagement with experts from the projects or through project-supported events provided exposure and increased interest in various reforms, skills, or knowledge. Then UNDP and IFES were able to provide concrete assistance to support the CEC’s development of these areas.

Improved voter registration

Although the system of voters lists has not transitioned to an electronic voter registry as anticipated, international assistance project documents and interviews with the CEC and project staff noted both ways that the existing system had been improved and progress in the development and testing of pilot systems for EVR. However, stakeholders, IFES, and UNDP interviewees were not satisfied with the modest improvements to the existing voters’ lists through assistance. While appreciative of assistance, some CEC interviewees noted that assistance had not led to the full-scale development of an EVR as anticipated. The continued lack of concrete, reliable ways to share data among GOM registers as needed for EVR was particularly noted as an unaddressed problem by both IFES and ESM.⁶ ESM was able, through consultants, to work with the CEC to pilot EVRs, as part of the project’s broader engagement with the CEC. UNDP provided support for more than development. As part of developing an overall communications plan and strategy for the CEC, a SWOT analysis was conducted for EVR. Based on this analysis, UNDP undertook a substantial effort with the CEC to educate voters for the EVR pilot in the Center sector of Chisinau in 2010. UNDP also commissioned a beneficiary survey that provided important information about perceptions of EVR from the urban population. These processes supported EVR, and also modelled general best practices in an important way for the CEC.

Improved electoral information management

The CEC was able to manage elections in a largely manual, paper-based system prior to the reengagement of international assistance. However the system was not viewed by the CEC, key stakeholders, or the international community as efficient and suspicions about the quality of elections and electoral processes were seen as detrimental to the development of democracy in Moldova. The CEC had to outsource key functions including the management and reporting of results. With substantial support from ESM, the CEC now has substantial capacity to manage electoral information, including results reporting, through modules that the CEC can manage.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

Vote data demonstrated a large increase in OCV from the July 2009 to the November 2010 elections, and a modest increase from April 2009 to July 2009. Interviewees suggested the increase was due to a number of factors, including the IOM effort with MFAEI and the joint VE/GOTV effort conducted in Moldova that targeted Moldovans abroad. The MFAEI’s improved outreach to voters, an expanded number of polling places, and procedures that supported increased turnout – developed with IOM support – were thought to have increased turnout. The MFAEI was reported to have been more

⁶ The current interagency working group is working on issues of sharing data across registers.

professional in this last Parliamentary election in the ways support for OCV was viewed as a professional responsibility of consular officers. Decisions about the management of electoral challenges, such as larger numbers of voters than ballots in some polling stations abroad, were reportedly managed with an emphasis on the right of Moldovans abroad to vote; while this resulted in ballots that were sometimes improvised as some polling stations ran out of official ones, the underlying behaviour by MFAEI staff reflected professional recognition of their roles in elections and citizens' rights.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

CEC, partner, and stakeholder interviews emphasized that the CEC was now transparent and open. This openness was contrasted the orientation of the CEC in the past. Increased information from the CEC comes from practices of open meetings, collaboration with stakeholders, general outreach efforts, and publicizing events and decisions through the CEC web site. Many sources attributed increase in CECs openness due to change of CEC commissioners in 2011. Different attitudes from a new leadership were then supported by UNDP and IFES through project assistance to effectively implement processes and mechanisms to support transparency, such as web site development through ESM.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

Assistance from UNDP and IFES focused on improving electoral administration and transparency in order to reduce electoral disputes more than the management of disputes themselves. Most electoral disputes are decided in court. The CEC worked with the National Institute of Justice and the East-European Foundation to train judges in the enforcement of electoral legislation prior to the June 2011 local elections. IFES produced information on CEC's dispute resolution mechanisms for use in the 2011 local election VE and public information campaign. When UNDP, IFES, and the CoE supported workshops that brought all stakeholders in local election administration together to reflect on the June 2011 elections, the CoE and CEC took the lead in efforts to strengthen dispute resolution, including with the Moldovan Judiciary. IFES worked, initially through CReDO and then through the WG led by the CEC to support the development of options, discussion, and drafting of additional roles and responsibilities for the CEC and others in the proposed political party campaign finance legislation. These improvements, if passed by Parliament, will require additional CEC capacity to adjudicate claims of campaign finance violations.

5. How has the CEC managed and coordinated the assistance it has received?

Conclusions

The CEC has been the manager and coordinator of international assistance. This management and coordination has been both formal and informal, supplemented by ties between the two main assistance providers, UNDP and IFES. Coordination and management improved over time, most notably in VE with the strong unified 2010 efforts of the CEC, UNDP, IFES, CoE and OSCE that was commended on by many informants. Coordination and management were much more challenging in IT where the CEC lacked the capacity to coordinate and manage key processes and deliverables in the development of SAISE when without an experienced IT director.

The structure of the ESM project placed the national coordinator, the secretary of the CEC, explicitly in charge of coordinating assistance. This structural relationship was used in the development of the ProDoc and in managing ESM assistance throughout the project. Without this structure, IFES nevertheless turned to the Secretary to manage the assistance and coordinate with other projects. The management of the IFES and ESM projects also coordinated personally, although the closeness of coordination varies over time. The CEC also used operationally-focused working groups in the main areas of its competence during election periods to coordinate the activities of CEC offices and assistance to them. With the urging of ESM and IFES management, the CEC developed a number of working groups in areas like EVR to serve both as action bodies and to coordinate with international and national counterparts. In and after its development, the CEC strategic plan (developed with ESM and IFES assistance) was also used to coordinate responsibilities and plans to provide assistance to the CEC.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

Coordination in operational areas was initially reported by international interviewees to be difficult. There was not much transparency in the operational side of how the CEC managed and administered elections in 2009 and 2010. Coordination however was reportedly better in media and public relations for ESM and in training for IFES during this period – and improved more after the press of elections. With continued urging from ESM and IFES, the projects were able to develop and support post-election lessons’ learned exercises with the CEC after the July 2009 elections and subsequent election events that work to improve coordination, among other areas. IFES and ESM also coordinated activities to encourage the CEC to develop the first Strategic Plan, as well as coordinated support to its development. The plan then assisted in coordinating capacity building assistance.

Improved voter registration

Initially, assistance in VR was limited to the CEC’s priorities, which were to develop EVR. ESM was the sole provider of support as the CEC was reportedly not receptive to IFES’ proposals to investigate the quality of the VL and support subsequent efforts to improve the existing VR. The institutional links in the Moldovan system for compiling and managing the VL, which require cooperation and coordination between the civil registry, CEC, and LPAs, were coordinated by the CEC. IFES’s work with the CEC in

developing a system to address errors in the existing VL through training for LPA secretaries relied on CEC coordination as LPAs did not have this responsibility clearly specified in “their” LPA legislation – only in the Electoral Code. The CEC also coordinated the clean-up “computerized audit” exercises led by IFES in 2012.

Improved electoral information management

ESM was the only project to work in this area, the top priority for the CEC. The CEC faced the same challenges as ESM in the development and operation of IT; the complex problems and technical hardware and software for the electronic management of electoral information was difficult for non-specialists to understand, coordinate, and manage. The head of the CEC IT department coordinated as well as collaborated in the development of IT for the CEC, but left the CEC for another position in 2009. The CEC has not been able to identify and hire a suitable replacement since that time. The CEC was a part of ESM decision making on the drafting of TORs and evaluation of bids for IT. The CEC also worked with ESM-funded and managed IT consultants. The former IT director coordinated efforts when ESM provided an international consultant to develop the software in 2009; after his departure coordination of national IT consultants became the responsibility of the rest of the IT department. Department staff and the international consultant reportedly found communication and collaboration difficult after the departure of the IT director. IT department staff coordinated and worked with the national IT consultants supported by the project in 2011 and 2012; interviews suggested this coordination was closer due to shared language and common background in Moldovan IT practices. Interviewees noted that collaboration on IT development with the rest of the CEC apparatus, particularly the Management of Elections Division, was often lacking. The CEC also accepted the handover of IT systems developed and procured by ESM. The CEC has not had an established practice of quality assurance or software testing in its IT operations.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

Assistance in this component was provided by IOM to the MFAEI under ESM. IOM and UNDP have had other projects with the MFAEI and coordinated their activities with this broader technical assistance to capacity building. IOM appeared to find the MFAEI a difficult partner, particularly in the early stages of the project. Initial IOM plans to develop a more technological approach to OCV were reportedly not supported within the MFAEI and had a difficult time enlisting MFAEI support for OCV training. The CEC had a role coordinating in this area through ESM steering committee meetings and the work plan, but interviews and documents suggest the CEC was sometimes not satisfied – or not in favour – of the management of this assistance, as the CEC felt they should be the recipients of support in this area and provide support to MFAEI. The ProDoc however was clear that IOM would work on this area based on its ongoing work with the Ministry and connections to networks of Moldovans abroad.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

IFES and ESM both supported VE, media, and transparency initiatives under the coordination of the CEC. This coordination was through the ESM national program coordinator at the CEC, working groups, informal direct coordination between the

projects, and the strategic plan. CEC, ESM, IFES, and stakeholder interviews and documents note that coordination increased dramatically, with notably stronger results in VE, for the 2010 election based on having more time to coordinate and the experience of the two 2009 elections. IFES interviewees noted that as the record of working together grew, coordination strengthened in general.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

The CEC coordinated legal assistance from national consultants. The IFES-supported work on campaign finance reform, through technical assistance to the CEC and a grant to CReDO, involved the direct collaboration of ESM, IFES, the CEC, and other stakeholders which was coordinated through the working group on political party finance. Although aspects of political party campaign finance reform are outside of the CEC's roles in administering elections, the Commission was able to work within the working group to promote the process. The CEC also does not have the right to initiate legal reform.

6. To what extent have the products of interventions been institutionalised to ensure establishment of durable, cost-effective democratic electoral processes and systems?

Conclusions

Institutionalisation refers to the extent to which the outputs of international electoral assistance have become a part of the CEC's ways of working. Interviews for the review noted important ways that changed attitudes and practices had become routinized in CEC operations. The institutionalisation of contributions from international assistance projects to the CEC varies. Areas that are institutionalized include changes to the administration of the CEC itself, including its media engagement/public relations and training capacity. Support for updating the existing voters' lists is institutionalized in CEC training programs and the CEC's work with LPAs. The CEC IT department has become capable of managing small EVR pilots with their own resources. IT development is not institutionalized, although the IT department uses modules and aspects of SAISE.

Institutionalisation – the incorporation of new practices and equipment into policies and procedures of an organization - is a key component of sustainability. The UNDP ProDoc and IFES awards noted the importance of institutional development. This particularly leads to the focus on capacity development. However, the pressing election calendar and immediate operational needs of the CEC in many areas in 2009 and 2010 distracted from this focus. Embedding newly developed and reinforced policies, procedures, and practices in the CEC was expected to lead to lasting, efficient practices for elections that better support the development of democracy in Moldova. Interviews and documents suggest - unsurprisingly - that some assistance has had more lasting and notable effects on the administration of elections and broader democratic practices (which are substantially outside of the mandate of the CEC). Some of the changes to CEC practices for the administration of elections have been institutionalised into the CEC.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

The documentary record from ESM and IFES projects – and all interviews – noted not only that there is more capacity in the CEC as a result of international electoral assistance but also that products and practices introduced and developed with the support of international electoral assistance were embedded in the policies and procedures of the CEC. This is the case, for example, in Human Resources Management, where the CEC operates through new GOM regulations, new CEC policies, and new staff. A larger area of institutionalisation is in training, where the CTC has taken the adult-learning, small group training techniques from international electoral projects and incorporated them into their methodologies for training going forward. The Management of Elections Division asserted that the CEC had the capacity to administer elections should they be called immediately.

Improved voter registration

Interviews and documents noted that the Moldovan VR system is poorly institutionalized because to date no single institution has had the mandate and capacity to effectively manage the system. The UNDP project supported CEC pilots for EVR over successive elections. Each large-scale pilot required additional resources as the CEC did not have the equipment or personnel of its own for substantial EVR initiatives. Now successive pilots have led to institutionalisation of the pilot program capacity; the CEC can manage pilot EVRs on their own. The training program and methodologies for working with LPAs to address obvious errors in the annual production of the voters list had become a part of the annual CEC training, had been conducted over two years, and can be considered institutionalised in the CEC. Interviewees suggested that LPA secretaries change relatively frequently; institutionalisation of the checking was thus with the CEC rather than in LPAs.

Improved electoral information management

Project support has developed the SAISE system and additional IT modules for needed tasks in elections management. To be institutionalised, the CEC would have to have the capacity as well as well-developed processes and procedures for its use. The CEC has an IT department of four people plus the vacant office direction position that would need to be the locus of institutionalization. Interviews noted that the SAISE system and other modules were developed without much involvement of the department which has been seen to lack the capacity to do development. Development through consultants sometimes led to inadequate institutionalization in that the CEC IT staff was not incorporated into the design and development process. Some interviews emphasized that the lack of involvement came from the IT staff not having the capacity to understand the SAISE system while others noted that initial choices in software development by consultants were not made in ways that could be institutionalised effectively in the CEC. IT interviewees also reported that the development of software by consultants was sometimes not accompanied by enough documentation to enable CEC IT staff to understand and operate these systems. Interviews in other departments found little knowledge and information about SAISE and other IT modules as would be expected if the use of these systems was institutionalised.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

Support for OCV, by the design of the ESM ProDoc, was provided through IOM to the MFAEI. IOM supported the institutionalisation of electoral management in Moldovan consulates abroad by training MFAEI staff in the particular processes needed for each parliamentary election. This effort contributed to the MFAEI's recognizing that OCV is an important functional responsibility of their institution. No documents or interviews suggested that this effort had institutionalised rules, policies, and procedures for OCV to in the MFAEI or CEC.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

Interviews and documents suggested that the substantial work of UNDP and IFES with the CEC on VE and transparency have fundamentally changed the approaches and operations of the CEC. Interviewees that emphasized transparency noted the willingness of the CEC leadership to engage with citizens and civil society organisations. Media outreach was viewed as a routine aspect of the CEC's work. The CEC IT department routinely makes additions to the web site to publicize CEC plans, deliberations, and actions relevant to the public and stakeholders.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

Changes in the Electoral Code and other legislative acts focus on the first step in institutionalisation. Interviews and documents continue to note that inconsistencies in legislative acts impede progress. Without legal clarity, it is more difficult to develop, train, and institutionalise important processes, such as the work of LPA secretaries in the annual update of voters' lists. Good practices in this area have now been developed and practiced over two annual cycles, but the legislative changes to secure this in law have not been achieved. The CEC has been criticized for making changes to rules, regulations, and policies close to the period of elections, which impedes the institutionalisation of electoral processes. Interviewees that focused on CEC legal processes and dispute resolution felt that the CEC had not developed clear enough rules and procedures for guiding CEC processes, and that this made it more difficult to increase confidence in the CEC as independent. Transparent and well elaborated dispute resolution processes are especially important for building confidence in CEC independence. Campaign finance legislation now under consideration in Parliament will place additional emphasis on CEC dispute resolution.

- 7. To what extent will the benefits of the international assistance electoral support interventions continue after donor funding will cease? What were the major factors that influenced the achievement of sustainability of the electoral support programs results?**

Conclusions

The sustainability of international assistance project contributions to the CEC varies. Conclusions on sustainability suggest that areas that are institutionalized are sustainable and that the changes in administrative capacity, media engagement and public relations,

and training are sustainable. Support for updating the existing voters' lists is also sustainable as institutionalized in CEC training programs and work with LPAs. EVR pilots are also sustainable, although the CEC does not have the capacity to manage a nationwide EVR system. IT development has sustainable modules, but the CEC does not have the systems and capacity to manage SAISE on its own or develop the additional capacity needed for a comprehensive system. CEC training programs have been built in a sustainable way, including for voters' list verification and updating.

Institutionalization promotes sustainability. But sustainability is broader, and refers to whether the CEC and GOM will continue these practices without ESM support. Sustainability has other dimensions in electoral processes in Moldova, including important constraints on human and financial resources. The focus is also on the CEC's ability to continue to benefit from the results of assistance and its development.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

The sustainability of activities and interventions in this area has been notable. Interviews and documents noted that even many interventions that focused on direct support to the electoral events of 2009 and 2010 had elements of sustainability as the CEC repeated engaged with the same partners in similar processes that built capacity together. International assistance that focused on increasing CEC capacity to better manage elections under both the UNDP and IFES projects after the intensive electoral period, particularly after the June 2011 local elections, has emphasized supporting the development of sustainable capacity within the CEC and LPAs. Activities designed and implemented during this period that focused more on sustainability are reported to have more ownership of partners and beneficiaries.

Improved voter registration

The current VR system, although lacking in a number of important respects, is sustainable as it has been used for many years. The modest improvements to the paper list system through IFES' work with the CEC to support the annual updates through LPAs is also sustainable. The CEC's training program and methodologies for working with LPAs to address obvious errors in the annual production of the voters list have incorporated the results of IFES' work. After support from ESM, the CEC can now pilot small scale EVR as the CEC does have the equipment, personnel, and training to work at this level on EVR. These pilots have been conducted several times by the CEC.

Improved electoral information management

Interviews suggested that the SAISE system was developed in ways that only the CEC IT department head and the consultant that designed the system fully understood it. Documents and interviews noted that subsequent consultants and the CEC IT department staff, since they have not been able to understand the complex architecture of the SAISE system, were not able to manage and maintain the system. This especially inhibited modifying the SAISE system. New modules have been developed for needed functions that were not included or completed in SAISE. These more recently developed modules are reportedly understood. They are linked together as well as connected to SAISE and

are used by the IT department. Without strong understanding of SAISE, the system is not sustainable; at present no one has the understanding and capacity to work with the complicated system if there is a problem. This has been recognized to not be sustainable.

Enhanced participation of citizens abroad

Assistance on OCV through the ESM project has been limited. The electoral code prescribes what is possible and issues of OCV are politically sensitive in ways that have limited legal and operational changes to increasing OCV. IOM training for MFAEI consular affairs staff focused appropriately on both on the general importance and act of voting plus the policies and procedures for administering the election abroad particular to each ballot under the electoral code at that time. As procedures and the ballot differ in each election, refresher training will be needed for any election. Support for travel to increase staffing for voting was specific to elections as well and not sustainable. General voting equipment provided for OCV may be reusable; as with electoral equipment in the country, decentralized management and storage increases risks that the equipment can not be reused.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

Interviews emphasized that the CEC has developed new attitudes that favour transparency and openness that are at variance with the lack of information from the CEC that was available prior to the engagement of international electoral assistance projects in 2008. These attitudes and approaches may be embedded more in the individuals at the CEC than in policies and practices however. The development of a modern web site for the CEC with the support of the UNDP project was lauded;⁷ the web site has been seen as sustainable as it is used and maintained by the IT department. The development of successive VE campaigns for each electoral event was seen to have led to sustainable capacity development in public relations as the CEC and department worked in an increasingly collaborative way with all international partners. Documents and interviews emphasized that this was a substantial change that has been made sustainable in how the CEC pursues media and public relations.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

Changes to the electoral code have been a part of legislative development after each election or set of elections in Moldova. These adjustments have not fundamentally changed the system of administering elections in the country, although there have been proposals to do just that from some political parties. Interviews suggested that the CEC legal department has sustainable capacity to manage the current legal needs of the CEC. Should campaign finance law change, the CEC would need additional capacity to sustainably manage what is expected to be additional management and cases.

8. What has been the contribution of electoral technical assistance to the outcome of deepening democracy and ensuring peace and stability in Moldova?

Conclusions

⁷ www.cec.md.

IFES and UNDP projects were seen by former managers and staff, key partners, and knowledgeable stakeholders as having influenced some – but not all – of the key problems and priorities for elections in Moldova. By design, assistance focused on and partnered with the CEC to improve the administration of elections. Important contributions to improving the capacity of the CEC, develop transparency and spread information contribute directly to democratic practices. Work with the CEC to institutionalize improved electoral management appears to be appreciated more within the CEC than by other stakeholders, including by the public. Interviews and outside assessments suggest that additional work on building public confidence in the CEC – beyond the CEC’s current transparency through the web site, open meetings, and outreach through the media and civil society – has the potential to have broader effects on strengthening the practice of democracy in Moldova. Even in elections, however, four of the eight main challenges identified by observer reports of 2005 and 2007 elections and enumerated in the introduction to the review are outside of the domain of the CEC. Within the CEC’s mandate, the contributions of international electoral assistance are important but more modest in improving the voters’ lists, electoral information management, the participation of citizens abroad, and electoral legislation and dispute resolution.

As technical assistance projects, working closely with and supporting an EMB with the mandate and responsibility for the administration of elections for Moldovan citizens, the main directions of UNDP, IFES, and other assistance to the CEC has been technical and focused on CEC processes. The assumption has been that improved electoral administration deepens democracy and leads to peace and stability in Moldova.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

Moldovan and international stakeholders recognized in interviews and noted in reports the increased capacity of the CEC to deliver and administer elections, and attribute variously some and a lot of this improvement to international assistance. Increased capacity has been recognized by international observer reports, domestic observation, and by interviewees. However, once discussion shifts to the overall quality of democracy in Moldova, concerns about other issues in the development of democracy remain.

Improved voter registration

While CEC and assistance provider informants were knowledgeable about efforts, activities, and outcomes in improving voter registration, there was less knowledge about either the voter registration efforts or the improvements outside of the CEC. Very few interviewees outside of IFES, UNDP, and the CEC knew of the work that has been done on addressing “obvious” errors or piloting the electronic VR. Transparency and public relations activities around voter list improvement have not managed to address concerns in the public and parties that there are substantial problems with the VL. These public concerns have been a constant issue – neither substantiated by evidence nor refuted through factual data. Leaving these commonly held suspicions unaddressed is problematic for the development of democratic elections in the country.

Improved electoral information management

CEC commissioners and assistance project management recognized in interviews and documents that electoral stakeholders – citizens, parties, CSOs, and international organisations – do not have adequate information about the envisioned electronic systems for elections in Moldova. Civil society organization interviews noted issues of a general lack of trust among both the public and political elites towards the CEC. Without tackling issues of trust head on, implementation of SAISE may increase doubts about the fairness of electoral administration rather than deepen democracy.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

Interviewees and project reporting noted progress in OCV. But no one interviewed was satisfied that issues of OCV – either political questions that are outside the mandate of the CEC or technical questions about the administration of OCV that are within the mandate of the CEC – had been addressed adequately in a comprehensive way. The unresolved dispute with Transnistria remains unaddressed, and was little noted in interviews or in project reporting. Neither IFES nor UNDP focused on issues with the potential voting population on the other bank of the Nistru River. CEC efforts to support voting, in particular in the sensitive town of Corjova in local elections, came at some risk to local stability.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

UNDP and IFES support to the CEC focused on VE at the time of elections; CEC and partner staff, as well as project, OSCE and CoE reports, note improved VE campaigns over time. However, continued political controversies over VLs and the overall administration of elections result in periodic calls for the resignation of the CEC by opposition parties. Civil society interviews noted that the CEC faces continued challenges with credibility; Credibility issues remain due to the appointments process for Commissioners. Perceptions about the lack of/weaknesses in independence remain despite the CEC's improved transparency and active outreach to parties, civil society, and the public through permanent CEC members. The absence of fundamental reform in the way the voters' lists are compiled, through EVR or otherwise, was seen as a problem that the CEC had not managed to address by civil society leaders.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

There have been changes to the electoral code after most elections. However these changes have not sought to address what are reported to be the main issues for the CEC's credibility – the method of selecting CEC commissioners through parties and party-dominated institutions. Public opinion polls continue to report that political parties are the least trusted institutions in Moldova. The CReDO and CEC effort to reform political party campaign finance law and regulation has the potential to have broader effects on the practice of democracy in Moldova. If passed as written by the working group, additional responsibilities of the CEC will need support to develop clear, fair procedures for administering the new political party finance system. Perceptions that a party-based CEC may not be fair to one or another party will need to be addressed or these additional roles and responsibilities could increase perceptions that the CEC is not politically neutral and increase mistrust.

9. Does the CEC Strategic Plan provide a suitable framework for planning future interventions? What could be the potential areas of international engagement in coming years?

Conclusions

Taking a look back at the development of the strategic plan (SP) helps in understanding capacity building in the CEC and the key areas commissioners and staff identified for the future in late 2011. The SP provides a framework that is generally appropriate but insufficient for working with the CEC going forward. The CEC has some work to do to update the SP as the plan was finalized in 2011 and has not been updated since. CEC annual planning processes have not led to revisions. The review is not a needs assessment and no substitute for needs assessments in areas of electoral administration targeted for improvement by the CEC. The IFES final report when received may also point in detail to areas of work in need of additional support. The review of five years of experience of international electoral assistance to the CEC does suggest priority areas for further assistance to electoral processes in Moldova. Priority areas for international engagement include: a voters' list audit and follow-up actions to address any issues identified and potential support to implement measures from in the CEC-led interagency working group on registers should they reach agreement and be able to work together to develop a solid EVR.

The development of the CEC's first strategic plan in the fall of 2011 was noted by interviewees and documents alike as a landmark in the development of a modern, professional CEC in Moldova. The CEC Strategic Plan for the period 2012 -2015 resulted from the joint efforts of a working group created specifically for this purpose in 2011. The working group included the CEC Commissioners and the CEC Apparatus staff, IFES and UNDP representatives within the Project. Apart from its meetings, Strategic planning workshop was later held supported by the development partners of the working group and the Council of Europe.

The Strategic Plan was a comprehensive document which describes the CEC mission, vision and values. It gave an overview of the current situation in Moldova and provided a brief SWOT analysis based on it. The Strategic Plan outlined the CEC strategic directions and defined specific objectives for achievement of these priorities. Based on it, the CEC drafted its annual activity plans and budgets. The document also envisaged the creation of an Implementation working group headed by the Chief of Apparatus and a Monitoring and Evaluation working group including the 3 permanent, 3 non-permanent members and the Chief of Apparatus.

The four strategic directions identified in the first CEC Strategic Plan were:

- A modern, efficient and accessible electoral process;
- Trustworthy election results;

- Conscious and informed voters; and
- Consolidated institutional capacities.

These strategic directions were further broken down into 10 objectives and activities to achieve the objectives, including strengthening the institutional capacities of the CEC, SAISE implementation, improvement of voter registration, the electoral framework and the campaign finance transparency, getting financial and logistic autonomy within CEC, enhancement of the CEC's image and transparency on CEC activities, proactive cooperation with the other stakeholders involved in the electoral process, improving the communication tools used between electoral bodies and citizens, and increasing the information flow on electoral system and procedures.

However, the SP alone does not provide sufficient specificity to guide future assistance to the CEC. Key activities under many objectives are additional studies, which are then to be followed up upon. While interviewees noted that there are annual plans by department within the CEC, the objectives from 2011 and activities suggested under them do not appear to have been updated in a unified fashion as of September 2013. Subsequent work from ESM and IFES provides a stronger basis of knowledge and needs for assistance. IFES may also still clarify lessons learned in their final project report and outline potential objectives and activities where, based on their experience, future support to the CEC might be warranted.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

After the development of the SP, the CEC reorganized the structure of the apparatus. The first objective of the SP was capacity building and restructuring in a variety of areas, including through an institutional development plan (IDP). An IDP was subsequently developed through an international consultant by UNDP. While monitoring and evaluation of the SP is warranted, monitoring and evaluation for the IDP is a stronger avenue to build capacity in the CEC.

Improved voter registration

Rather than the 2012 SP, the documentary record, time lag, and interviews suggested that future assistance should examine and consider the results of the ongoing WG on VR (as envisioned by the SP) for the development of potential assistance activities, if desired, to support the CEC in this area.

Improved electoral information management

SP Objective 2 calls for full implementation and usage of SAISE by 2015 (except for e-voting). Reviewing past support provides some explanations for how SAISE has been developed. The review methods do not enable the team to draw clear findings and conclusions adequate to make projections in this area based on the SP. The review team can only identify from the SP the need for further, detailed assessment and a comprehensive roadmap for IT development. The forthcoming ISO evaluation at the end of 2013 / beginning of 2014 has potential promise in clarifying to all stakeholders any issues in data protection and the system for the management of information, as well as ways of addressing them, in SAISE.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

Accessibility, not only but including for Moldovan’s abroad, was explicitly noted as an important issue for the CEC in the SP. However the SP does not develop an objective in this area or activities. The SP committed the CEC to developing “diverse voting forms” to reach out to all special categories of voters but does not develop this commitment further.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

The SP anticipated additional procedures, staff, training, and civic education on campaign finance transparency. This will be even more important should the proposed changes in the political party law be approved, these also impacting campaign finance regulations.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

The Strategic Plan mentioned three activities in this area: to carry out a thorough analysis on the electoral legislation in key areas in order to identify deficiencies, drafting proposed amendments in agreement with other relevant institutions and promoting legal drafts, and encouraging broad public discussions before submitting legal proposals for approval. The SP did not anticipate what the CEC’s needs are for legal and legislative work, instead the SP called for a thorough analysis to be followed up with a plan. It is not clear whether this analysis has been done. The SP envisioned additional work in campaign finance but did not develop objectives or activities in dispute resolution that will be needed to implement any changed legislation, should the current CEC or alternative proposal be passed into law. Dispute resolution is a notable lacunae, especially as there will be additional regulatory and quasi-judicial demands on the CEC should the campaign finance system be changed.

10. What were gender mainstreaming challenges and benefits for electoral support interventions in Moldova? How did international donors ensure that women and men are equally enfranchised throughout the electoral process?

Conclusions

The absence of information about gender and the administration of elections suggests the value of an explicit approach to gender and social inclusion. Past international project support to the CEC does not appear to have focused on gender; there is thus little information available about gender issues in the administration of elections. In the press of time-sensitive operational procedures in elections, gender and social inclusion may not get the attention anticipated in a gender-mainstreaming approach that does not have explicit work on gender within institutions. That appears to have been the case with past international electoral assistance to the CEC. Gender trainings were appreciated by the CEC once implemented as part of the Democracy Programme.

Gender mainstreaming was not an explicit objective of the ESM or IFES projects. However, as development professionals accustomed to mainstreaming gender, considering how activities affect men and women was noted and made a part of planning

and delivery of assistance. ESM's focused on supporting fair and equitable access of all voters included special consideration to vulnerable and marginalized groups; i.e. people from rural areas, minorities, youths, elderly, women, and disabled. When not explicit, however, some issues were not addressed that are important for advancing gender equity. The new Democratic Programme (DP) approach addresses gender as a specific objective in ways that were appreciated by many interviewees from the CEC.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

With the support of the IFES and ESM projects, the CEC built internal capacity and HR systems. Key leadership positions in the staff were held by women. However, both the old commission and the commission appointed in 2011 have only one female member. The ESM CTA led several trainings on gender topics in 2011 and 2012 and encouraged the establishment of working group on gender issues within the CEC. CEC representatives also attended GPECS Gender and Election BRIDGE training in 2012 in Georgia. The trainings were much appreciated by the CEC staff. Both projects include awareness of gender issues in capacity building efforts through BRIDGE, which has been developed with a gender lens. ESM built CEC interest in and support for additional work in gender over 2012 and the first half of 2013 and developed gender and social inclusion as a key component of the DP programme, with the support of the CEC coordinator, and successfully enlist SIDA as the main donor for the programme.

Improved voter registration

Absent detailed information about the VL, there is no concrete information available about whether issues with voters' lists affect men and women – or any other categories of citizens – differently. Speculation about gender has not been a feature of the unsupported complaints of voter fraud.

Improved electoral information management

Improved information is a core part of improved elections management, and the CEC with the support of ESM has pushed to implement SAISE and other modules in this effort. These information systems need to include fields for gender – which some modules reportedly did not. This was noted for the “candidate” module. Without this field, the CEC cannot efficiently report on key questions in gender equity, such as the number of candidates and percentage of candidates that are women. The National Program for Ensuring Gender Equality during the period 2010-2015 was adopted by the GOM. The Action plan for the Program's implementation envisaged increasing gender equality; one measure to be used would be the political participation of women. One of the tasks of the CEC working group on gender was to provide ideas how to use gender aspects to improve the presentation of the election results, and the development of the “candidate” IT module should envision the creation of fields for gender.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

Available data on the participation of Moldovan's abroad in project reporting was not disaggregated by gender. It is not clear how IOM and MFAEI approached issues of gender or social inclusion in outreach, training, provision of equipment, and logistics in OCV in 2009 and 2010.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

Under ESM, developing the first VE campaign before April 2009 considered gender as part of assessing different audiences in Moldova. UNDP and IFES work developing relations between the media and the CEC did not appear to have actively considered gender.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

International assistance has not provided substantial support in this area. Interviews did not note IFES or UNDP considerations of gender in their work on legal reform or dispute resolution.

11. What have been the benefits and costs of adapting assistance to changing circumstances such as a number of unplanned electoral events?

Conclusions

The crowded electoral calendar and pervasive uncertainty on the date of future elections – and even at times the electoral system that might be used – created substantial difficulties throughout the period for the CEC and its international partners. These difficulties affected capacity development of the institution negatively, for example by delaying lessons learned workshops, and developments in technical areas, particularly in IT development and SAISE. A few positive examples came from sequencing election-specific assistance with post-election follow-up, such as the campaign finance monitoring effort that led into working groups for reform of political party financing and a new proposed law.

Project reports and interviews noted how pressing needs to support the five electoral events between April 2009 and June 2011 are on the one hand a good experience and provide important opportunities for capacity building, working together, and learning by doing by the CEC and its international partners. On the other hand, the three unplanned electoral events (July 2009 Early Parliamentary elections, September 2010 Constitutional Referendum, and November 2010 Early Parliamentary Elections) and the way the April 2009 Parliamentary Elections had to be prepared for early in the projects prevented the full use of the electoral cycle approach and inhibited approaching assistance to the CEC in more systematic ways. These effects are notable in all areas of assistance and CEC development.

Increased capacity of the CEC to better manage elections

There is a tension between capacity substitution and capacity building; nowhere is this more apparent than in project designs that put capacity building efforts first, but then in practice are compelled to support specific elections first due to the operational needs of their partners. Both IFES and UNDP did not have much time to build relationships and start with capacity building efforts before Parliamentary Elections in April 2009. Continued elections through mid-2011 and the need to be prepared in case of another

early parliamentary election with the high levels of political uncertainty and polarization that has been a constant factor over the entire period has inhibited longer-term capacity building. Interviews noted that while assistance for planned capacity building was sometimes delayed by this focus, in other ways the experience of working together on the elections built relationships and allowed for activities, such as the strategic planning process, when the time was more “ripe” when there were no immediate electoral time pressures.

Improved voter registration

The CEC has not had the capacity to work on structural reform and elections at the same time; each election was a three month window of campaign period, election, and results reporting/finalisation that has not allowed for other work. VL maintenance is an annual winter task, conducted with the LPAs whether or not the CEC is developing EVR. Some interviewees saw the ways some pilots in EVR were implemented as detracting from elections; technical problems, operator errors, and operators not emphasizing that the electronic pilot was optional were observed to slow rather than facilitate voting in some cases in the pilots.

Improved electoral information management

The ambitious ProDoc emphasis on the development of technological solutions for information management was seen to have demanding timelines in the best case. After the initial procurement was not successful in fall 2008, there was little time to develop the system through international consultants and in-house work by the CEC’s IT department. The pressure to develop a system to work on the April 2009 elections led to rapidly developing some components by the consultant and the head of the CEC IT department. The pressure to develop SAISE quickly came a cost to documenting the system’s development. Rapid development in this time period focused on a system to meet immediate needs for April 2009, then July 2009, and then the two events of 2010. Development did not focus on the outlines and law for SAISE from 2008; the SAISE concept, as developed in 2006 and made into law 101 in 2008 was already recognized to be outdated in 2009. SAISE development was reportedly done with the CEC making decisions that the Commission needed this aspect or they did not need another function anymore - but neither the concept nor the law were officially amended. The pressure of time and these rapid adjustments led to a lack of information and documentation on SAISE that has been a problem ever since the departure of the international consultant and the resignation of the CEC IT director in 2009.

Enhanced participation of citizen abroad

As in other areas, the pressure of two rapid elections in 2009 did not make it possible to make substantial changes to the approaches in IOM’s work or in how the MFAEI approaches OCV over successive elections. IOM, due to concerns about the political nature of the September referendum, did not support OCV for this event. More substantial changes in the longer period between the July 2009 election and November 2010 one allowed for learning, more outreach, and an expanded effort from MFAEI that contributed to a large but uneven increase in the number of Moldovan votes from abroad.

Increased information transparency of the electoral process

CEC VE efforts reportedly improved over each electoral event as the CEC's own experience and their engagement with the UNDP and IFES projects grew increasingly close and was better coordinated.

Improved electoral legislation and dispute resolution

Revision of legislation, policies, and procedures in Moldova was both stimulated by electoral events and inhibited by them. By Moldovan law, there are not supposed to be "major" changes in the electoral code within six months of an election. It is also a good global practice to not change policies and procedures relevant to elections in the immediate run up to election day. This is a best practice worldwide because it can help avoid perceptions of bias in election administration by limiting actions that could be seen as having been developed to favour or disfavour one or another candidate, party, or position. In an environment where the Moldovan Electoral Code has continued to be at variance with other important legislative acts and other legislation (such as the law on LPAs), legal reform can be important in improving electoral administration. But in an environment where an election could be called at any time, and with substantial period of time in the six month pre-election period or in actual campaigns, there have been few opportunities for improving electoral legislation, particularly in the administration of elections that is the CEC's remit. By contrast, the campaign financing monitoring effort supported by IFES through CReDO that was based on the 2010 Parliamentary elections resulted into a larger-scale IFES initiative with the CEC after the election that eventually led to the draft law on the political party financing.

IV. Recommendations

This section develops recommendations about international electoral assistance to the main assistance providers and Moldovan authorities based on the findings about past assistance to the CEC and the conclusions that flow from this review of past experience.

Recommendations for the CEC, UNDP, USAID, and other donors from this review of past experience in Moldova are of two types. The first set are short-term for the period up to the 2014 Parliamentary elections. The second set take a longer-term perspective for after the 2014 elections. Recommendations focus on ensuring sustainability of both past achievements and current or planned activities after international electoral assistance ceases.

Short-term - ahead of the 2014 Parliamentary elections

The CEC should focus on and address two central challenges that have remained constants in electoral administration 2008-2012 and today that could potentially be addressed in less than a year's time. With increased capacity after technical assistance and support, mainly through the UNDP and IFES projects, the CEC should:

- Investigate and publicize a comprehensive random list-to-voter and voter-to-list sample that clearly investigates and resolves questions about the quality of the VL (including remedies should substantial problems be identified); and
- Develop a strong, sustained public outreach effort, particularly with political parties, to build confidence in the CEC and address concerns about the fairness of electoral administration, in preparation for the next Parliamentary elections.

Donors should particularly support this technical initiative to improve VL quality through an audit with international experience and financial support. UNDP (through the Democracy Programme), USAID, and others in the donor community should also consider supporting CEC follow up to improve list quality, if needed, based on solid empirical data from this audit. In the wake of audit evidence on list quality and any needed remedies to problems found, donors should consider supporting substantial public outreach on VL quality and the CEC's professionalism to strengthen the credibility of the CEC in the eyes of many Moldovans.

The CEC, before entering the pre-election period, should also:

- Turn the Strategic Plan into an active instrument by performing an annual review and update of the SP, using the revised plan as a rolling three-year instrument for development of the institution. Monitoring and evaluation methods need to be developed and implemented to create this system. The CEC should consider leading this exercise, or enlisting Democracy Programme support if outside facilitation is warranted.
- Develop and implement a road map to manage and finalise the development and operations of the CEC's electronic information management system. The CEC needs to be able fully own and manage their own information management system in a sustainable way with their own financial and human resources. The CEC should address the human resource capacity and systemic challenges that have left the CEC unable to own, operate, and adjust their own system. UNDP support may assist the CEC in taking charge of their own electronic systems but should not be used as a substitute for this capacity and ownership.

UNDP is now the sole technical assistance provider to electoral administration after the departure of IFES. The DP provides an important mechanism for potential election specific support for the CEC for the 2014 Parliamentary elections. The CEC may need specific electoral support for this election. Without clarity on the future budget for elections from the Government of Moldova, it is not clear what these needs will be at present. If needs emerge, donors will need ready-made mechanism of the DP should they decide to provide support under the types of tight time frame and resource constraints that are common in elections around the world and characterized Moldovan elections over the past electoral cycle.

Reviewing the past suggests that the UNDP Country Office and Democracy Programme in Moldova should consider ways to focus technical assistance on a few priority tasks of the CEC and international community. The DP should consider supporting the CEC through the VL audit and an immediate focus on improving the current VL for 2014 and

increasing public confidence in list quality. This process should begin with a voter-to-list and list-to-voter sample audit, and follow up actions as needed to improve the VL based on empirical evidence of the types of problems and their prevalence that is currently lacking. Only then should support for public relations be provided.

USAID should consider supporting these initiatives of the CEC. Monitoring may indicate that there are unmet needs in electoral processes, particularly as the elections approach, that could be met with modest USAID resources. The UNDP Development Programme could be used as a potential mechanism for providing this support. This may be particularly the case for the 2014 elections.

The OSCE Country Office, OSCE ODIHR, and Council of Europe have been and will continue to be active in Moldova, including in electoral processes. These institutions focus more on providing advice and reporting than designing and delivering technical assistance. While their convening power and advice has been and remains helpful, sustained engagement in technical cooperation such as the work of the Council of Europe with IFES on Campaign finance reform has been rare. The CEC, GOM, and international community should encourage the continued work of these institutions in electoral observation and assessment. As parties not or little connected to technical assistance, they lack the potential conflicts of interest that assistance providers have in observing the very processes that they have worked hard to assist through electoral support. They remain ideally placed to support observation, rather than assistance.

Longer-term - after the 2014 Parliamentary elections

The CEC should conduct a post-election review after the within a few months of the election as part of mapping out priorities for the future based on this experience, including those of the updated Strategic Plan. After the elections, the CEC should have the time to implement any decisions of the intergovernmental working group on registers and progress in the development of an EVR. With increased capacity after technical assistance and support, mainly through the UNDP and IFES projects, the CEC should:

- Manage stakeholders and reach accord through the working group on registers on the inter-institutional links needed to make the EVR work effectively; and
- Work to develop and thoroughly test a well-functioning, high-quality EVR connecting the relevant registers in Moldova.

The DP should consider supporting consensus-building processes on registers as well as technical support to develop an EVR, with a focus on sustainability and CEC ownership.

A broad engagement of political stakeholders in Moldova may be needed to achieve other improvements in the electoral area, such as Electoral Code reform to promote CEC independence. As was done with campaign finance reform, the donors could consider supporting a reform process that is more political than technical to address areas such as the mechanism for appointing CEC commissioners. Donors should consider potentially working with civil society groups and political parties through a series of similar

stakeholder forums to discuss and consider reforms to the electoral system and electoral laws in Moldova to help Moldovans build more representation and accountability into democratic processes. This set of discussion should consider ways to support the independence and professionalism of the CEC, through measures to change the process of appointing commissioners through parties and political institutions as well as develop financial independence for the CEC. In legal areas, the CEC and GOM should also continue to solicit legal opinions in the development of legislation from the Venice Commission.

The findings and conclusions from the review of the experience of the ESM project suggest that UNDP should consider building systemic procedures and deploying long-term staff of UNDP for integrated missions that develop assessments, formulate potential projects that address identified needs, solicit additional donor support to back UNDP's investment, and then begin implementation. Experienced UNDP staff and staff continuity over these key processes at the outset of projects could provide additional realism into the development of projects, lead to faster start-up in time-sensitive electoral projects, and increase the prospects that projects can be fully-funded from their inception.

V. Lessons learned

The review of five years of international electoral assistance to the CEC in Moldova finally generates a set of lessons learned from this experience. These lessons are consistent with many best practices of international development and not specific to electoral assistance. The review team has developed a few focused, shared lessons for the providers and recipients of international electoral assistance.

Regularly update Strategic Plans

Strategic Plans should be revised on a regular basis based in order to reflect current circumstances, needs and plans. This can be done at the end of each year by establishing an internal working group and inviting external participants as needed. The current year should be assessed critically and lessons learned extrapolated on by updating the existing two years left in the plan and adding a third year. Thus, for Moldova, the CEC would always have a three-year time horizon for considering and planning activities. The SP should be the main instrument that ensures the ability of the CEC to plan and monitor its activity and ensure sustainability after international assistance.

Expect, consider, and try to mitigate the costs of adjusting electoral assistance based on urgent needs for support for particular elections.

While particular needs are difficult to anticipate in any election, the experience of the past suggests that there will be CEC needs and may be CEC requests for assistance from international partners in the run-up to elections in Moldova. As partners, assistance projects should of course consider these needs and should do so in a comprehensive, strategic fashion. Supporting these requests may entail broader changes to planned activities; other programme activities may need adjustment to be consonant with these

changes. Assistance projects should consider broader adjustments as necessary and formalize these changes by agreement with partners and donors. This may be particularly important in an effort to retain the focus on the original objectives and goals of assistance – and to be able to remain focused on strategic objectives of assistance in the face of immediate needs and assistance support for them.

Electoral assistance activities should be preceded by detailed assessments the current situation and of the work needed to reach desired outputs.

Careful assessment is critical to not only projects and programmes, but to individual activities within them. Activity planning that has been preceded by an assessment of the area and the development of a plausible road map to reach activity goals has had stronger results in the past and should have greater promise. Evidence across the board in electoral assistance – from IT development to VE text messaging- suggests the crucial importance of these steps in planning and implementing technical assistance projects with the CEC.

Monitoring has collateral benefits

Assistance projects benefit from clear logical frameworks, processes, and outputs. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks that provide these structures contribute to clear reporting on projects in ways that make project performance and partner benefits easy to understand. These systems support collaboration between projects and partners and shared understandings of what should be done, why these are priorities, partner and assistance provider operations, outputs, and outcomes. This continuous system also facilitates communications with donors. Sharing monitoring with donors supports adjustments and additional fundraising since partner gaps and goals and funding gaps for particular objectives can be clear.

Expect and plan for management change

Both assistance providers and the CEC should anticipate that management personnel will change, and incorporate this understanding into both capacity building and particular activities. Personnel turnover is normal; new staff need to be identified, recruited, and placed quickly for continuity. Assistance and capacity building needs to focus on offices or functions rather than individuals that may depart the CEC. In addition, projects and departments need to have substantial records that make it possible for new replacement staff to understand the past situation and activities, what is being done now, and anticipated future opportunities and needs. Projects need to have the recordkeeping systems that are an institutional memory. The CEC also needs solid record keeping and archiving to create an institutional memory that helps manage both predictable and unpredictable Commissioner and staff turnover.

Maintain a wide focus

International electoral assistance has focused appropriately on many of the technical needs of the CEC for the administration of elections. Projects and the CEC should also

remain engaged in broader governance and electoral arenas. While working closely with the CEC in technical areas, it is not difficult to lose sight of the broader social and political trends and the knowledge and perceptions of electoral administration held by key stakeholders and the public. These perceptions should help focus the CEC and its partners on stakeholders the importance of transparency and outreach in electoral administration.