

List of Considerations and Questions at the Assessment Phase

The official needs assessment process and mission conducted by DPA/EAD involves a review of some or all of the following electoral considerations. This is a non-exhaustive list and specific considerations depend on the country and its election-context.

General

- What are the key issues that may affect the success of the election and/or the performance of the electoral processes and institutions, and what type and length of support is required?
- What have been the recommendations of previous domestic and international observer missions? To what extent, if any, has there been a response to address such recommendations?

Legal framework

- Is the electoral framework consistent with provisions provided for in the constitution and other fundamental texts?
- What is the operational independence (mandate, powers, budget, appointment and dismissal) and perceived credibility of the body tasked with administering elections (be it governmental, semi-governmental, independent electoral commission, etc.)?
- What is the electoral system (method by which votes cast are translated into seats/offices won) used for the various levels of elections? Does this represent a change from previous elections?
- Is there an adequate legal framework for the resolution of election disputes? How enforced/enforceable are sanctions for electoral offences (if any)?
- What pressure, if any, exists for reform to the constitution or electoral legislation?
 - Is the political environment conducive to electoral reform (constitutional, legislative, structural)?
 - What is the level of commitment to political or electoral reform? (Such a determination is best made by engaging in dialogue with public officials.)
 - What specific political and/or electoral law reforms might improve the electoral environment?
 - To what extent might the political and institutional infrastructure support reforms to electoral processes, and what is required to internalize and sustain any reforms made?

- To what extent are the activities of political parties subject to regulation through registration, monitoring of party finances and so on? Who is responsible for the oversight of political parties?

Participation by politically disadvantaged groups

- How engaged and empowered are women in the political/electoral process? What is the proportion of women in parliament and in local elected government? Are women candidates actively sought out and supported by parties? Is the engagement of women in politics based on issues and performance?
- What are the key constraints on the political participation of minorities, indigenous and tribal peoples, women, young people, illiterate or poorly educated people, those in non-urban or remote communities and indigenous cultures, and what is required to enable their participation?
- What specific policies or electoral reforms might improve the participation of women and minorities? Are there quotas related to gender or other factors?
- Are there special measures in place to ease the participation of physically handicapped voters, such as special polling sites, home-based or alternative voting methods, support from the EMB, etc.?

Electoral management bodies

- Does the EMB have the confidence of government and citizens? What factors impact on the standing of the EMB? Has there been any history of interference by the government in the affairs of the EMB? Is the EMB perceived to be independent, impartial, accountable and efficient? Is the EMB perceived as taking decisions and operating transparently and in consultation with all electoral stakeholders?
- Is the EMB a permanent body? Are there other state bodies that have a role in the electoral preparations and process, such as the Supreme Court, electoral tribunals, others?
- Does the EMB have effective, ongoing relationships with political parties, civil society, the media, relevant government ministries, donors and other key stakeholders?
- Does the EMB have a policy of ensuring accessibility to the electoral process by people with physical disabilities?
- What is the management structure of the EMB? Is there a clear division of powers between policy makers (i.e. the commission) and implementers (i.e. the secretariat) of the EMB? To what extent are members of the electoral commission actively engaged in management versus policy development and oversight? Is their mandate long enough? Is the EMB represented in regional areas or does it rely on local government networks to act as its

agents? How are appointments to the EMB made and does the appointments process have any bearing on perceptions of independence?

- Does the EMB receive an adequate budget in a timely manner from the government?
- Does the EMB have adequate infrastructure, means and facilities to conduct its work (offices, warehouse(s), transport, communications, etc.)?
- Are staff members of the EMB permanent civil servants? Is the EMB committed to the professionalization of its staff? Are there any capacity development initiatives already in place?
- Does the EMB have an institutionalized system to retain its historical memory, election materials, know how and lessons learned so that they could be re-used and applied to future elections?
- Does the EMB have the necessary human resources and operational structures (administrative, financial, technical) to manage the electoral process?

Voter registration

- What is the voter registration system in the country?
- Is there a voters' register and if so, is it regularly updated? Is a new voters' register required? If so, why (e.g., an electronic, centralized register to replace a manually compiled one)? How secure, up-to-date and inclusive is the data on the voters' register? Is there adequate infrastructure in place to support a new voter registration initiative?
- Does reliable census data exist on which voter registration activities are based? How does voter registration relate to the number of persons eligible to vote?
- Do any reliable documents (e.g., citizenship certificate) exist and easily available to all the eligible voters in a country to make a basis of new voter roll?
- If relevant, has boundary delimitation been carried out at appropriate intervals? What criteria have been used to determine the boundaries of electoral districts? Has it been a transparent and consultative process?
- Of those registered to vote, what are the proportions of men to women? Is it possible to determine whether young people are registering as they qualify? If not, why? Are the numbers of persons registering in remote regions the same proportionately as those registering in larger cities and towns?
- What are the criteria for voter registration? What special issues need to be addressed (e.g., citizenship, ethnicity, internally displaced people, refugees, out of country registration)?

- Was enough time allocated for carrying out the necessary data gathering and processing?

Voting operations and compilation of results

- How effective is logistics management for the election process at the various levels, the timely and accurate dissemination of materials, and the level of knowledge and training of polling officials? (Such questions can help determine what areas in the EMB may require input and support.)
- Is the process of voting manual or electronic? Where are the votes counted (at polling station level or regionally)? Are the counting and results transmission processes transparent? Do political parties receive a copy of the preliminary vote count?
- What are the impediments, if any, to rapid collation and announcement of results? Is there a centralized process of results announcement and ready access to information by media?
- Is there a well-trained, easily mobilized domestic observation force? Do the domestic observer groups collaborate effectively (if at all)?

Civil society

- Are there enduring civil society structures and umbrella bodies? How well represented is civil society in non-urban centres? Has a mapping exercise been done to identify the demographic groups served by and issues addressed by civil society? What are the strengths and weaknesses of civil society? To what extent is civil society politicized and/or partisan?
- To what extent is the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector controlled by government regulation? Is the impact of civil society at all measurable? How engaged is civil society in civic and voter education, and domestic observation?

Political parties

- Is the political system party-based? Which are the main political parties and what is the balance of parties in the parliament? Has the proportion of opposition parties/members risen or fallen in recent elections? How many parties do not have representation in the parliament? If not represented, why?
- Are parties based around leaders or ethnic/regional groupings, or are parties differentiated in terms of ideology, policy and platform? What is the proportion of 'briefcase' parties to parties that represent a significant sector of society? How many parties have nationwide representation and how many are regionally based?
- Do parties receive funding from government? Do parties receive funding from international bodies? What are the requirements for the reporting of funding and expenditure by the parties?

- Is there a code of conduct for political parties? Are party nomination processes transparent or subject to any scrutiny?
- Does the electoral law allow independent candidates? Are there some kinds of elections (e.g., local elections) that political parties are not allowed to contest?

Media

- What is the balance between state-owned versus independent media? What proportion of media is owned by political parties or politicians?
- Have there been previous media monitoring exercises in terms of qualitative and quantitative election coverage? What is the general standard of journalism training and practice, and of investigative, independent, fair, accurate, impartial and balanced reporting?
- Is equitable or equal access to the media provided to all parties? Is there a code of conduct for media governing the election period?
- Does the NGO sector utilize media as a tool of education? To what extent do media owners and editors assume some responsibility for voter education?

Security

- Have previous elections been marred by violence? If so, has this been generalized and widespread or focused in particular areas? Is election-related violence a top-down or grassroots-up phenomenon? Is enforcement of election and campaign laws applied equally to government and opposition parties?
- What has been the role of police in controlling or indirectly encouraging election-related violence? How effective is the relationship and the coordination between the EMB and the police? Are police officers and other law enforcement authorities aware of their specific election-related responsibilities?
- What is the role, if any, of private security forces, however informal?

Coordination

- Who are the key stakeholders (domestic and international), and what is required to optimize their participation?
- What is the view of donors towards (i) a common 'basket' approach to election funding; (ii) their commitment to participate in an electoral support project; (iii) programming priorities; and (iv) funding modalities?

- In light of the expressed priorities, how many and what kind of specialized staff might be needed to achieve a successful project?
- In light of probable donor commitments, what are the most appropriate management structures for the project? Who might take the role of lead donor/organization?

While the **needs assessment process should identify the range and scale of needs and possible areas of intervention**, the eventual UNDP project document is required to provide measurable **indicators** of success. Such indicators will be scrutinized in any eventual evaluation, particularly those involving donors to the project, and will be used to judge the success of the project. Therefore it is important to carefully craft indicators that demonstrate progress but that are also measurable and for which data sources exist. For some donors as well, provision of baseline data, targets and indicators in acceptable formats is a precondition of the release of funding tranches and is required within specific timeframes of the signing of financial agreements.

Indicators of success typically comprise a blend of the quantitative (e.g., numbers of persons registered to vote compared with numbers eligible to register, numbers of publications disseminated, attendees at events, number of informal or incorrect votes compared with previous election, etc.) and qualitative (which reflect changes of perception, understanding, and attitude or levels of public confidence in the electoral process).

It is useful to note at this early stage that mitigating against risk¹ means being alert to the criteria under which a project will be evaluated and ensuring that activities are geared towards the attainment of pre-determined objectives. Depending upon the original goals of the electoral assistance, an evaluation may look at the following elements:

- Completeness of the design and planning processes.
- Efficiency of the project vis-à-vis the quality of the results achieved. This can be determined by evaluating the appropriateness of management structures and the fluidity with which management responsibilities were conducted both at the Programme Management Unit (PMU) and UNDP levels.
- Effectiveness of project components.
- Impact of the project on the wider environment and its contribution to wider democratic governance objectives, such as inclusive participation and acceptance of the democratic process.
- Sustainability of the results achieved with particular reference to the development of national institutional capacity; to socio-cultural, legal, economical and financial factors; to gender-related issues; and to geographical factors vis-à-vis the appropriateness of

¹ It is obligatory to have a risk log in accordance with the users' guide. The assessment mission can be utilized to identify risks and mitigating measures. Absence of a risk log, particularly if in a direct execution (DEX) project, reflects badly on the UNDP Country Office when the (DEX) audit is being done.

technology used. In this context, the following should be examined: evidence of the increased institutional capacity of the EMB to function effectively without continuing technical assistance; evidence of developed long-term partnerships with civil society; and evidence that ICT and technological inputs are safeguarded by adequately trained personnel, back-up systems and legal ownership.

- Appropriateness of the project in terms of setting objectives in line with the overall democratic development goal of the recipient country.