

## ANNEX I

# Cost of Registration and Elections in Afghanistan

BY STAFFAN DARNOLF

### I. Summary

In countries where elections have not been held for several decades, EMBs are often forced to spend a significant amount of money on re-creating the election authority's own infrastructure in addition to civic and voter education to strengthen the electorate's understanding of a democratic electoral process.

Furthermore, preparing and organizing elections in a post-conflict environment has unique financial considerations stemming, in part, from the deterioration or destruction of the country's physical infrastructure, as well as the displacement of large segments of the population.

The election authority charged with organizing the 2004 presidential poll in Afghanistan was faced with an electorate that had not seen an attempt to hold democratic elections in four decades. Instead, over 25 years of violence had dominated the political landscape and colored the political climate in that country. Needless to say, the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) tasked with organizing the election was faced with significant challenges; its task was helped, however, by a relatively large amount of resources at its disposal.

### II. Electoral costs

Afghanistan had never had a dedicated election authority prior to August 2003, and it had not held credible and transparent elections in four decades. As a result, comparing the 2004 electoral process costs with previous Afghan elections is futile. Furthermore, the fact that the voter registration exercise and the election were designed and partially implemented by the UNAMA had huge cost implications.

However, the direct costs of the election do not represent the complete package of expenses that were required for the election to be conducted. For example, many of the costs covered by the UN will not be posted until they are expensed through the UN system. There are also costs for support agencies such as Global Risk Security, the private firm that provided the electoral commission with field staff who served in both electoral and security capacities.

The election process also benefited from support from other Afghan ministries, including police protection provided by the Ministry of Interior. The costs covered by such ministries are not reflected in the initial estimates. Moreover, the security costs of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are not reflected in preliminary election cost total.

Finally, bilateral donors provided indirect support of the electoral process through such organizations as IFES, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Asia Foundation and Swiss Peace. These costs are not included in the direct election expenses.

### About the author

Staffan Darnolf is a Swedish election administration specialist who has worked for over a decade as an advisor to election authorities in post-conflict societies and emerging democracies, including Kosovo, the Baltic States, and western and southern African countries. He has also served as an election expert for the European Union and IFES in South Asia. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Gothenburg University in Sweden.