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Mid-Term Review of the Electoral Support Project (ESP) to Nepal

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Review has two principal reference points. The first of these is the impact of the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal on the 25th April that resulted in substantial damage to the current Election Commission Building rendering the office unusable and more importantly dangerous. This review takes this new parameter under consideration and while acknowledging that there are now new emerging priorities for the country and development partners, **the project and its objectives hold the same relevance and importance as prior to the earthquake and thus continued support to the ECN is essential.**

The second reference point, is given the fragile political context that the project works under, the project to date has only supported one national election and thus renders it difficult to judge its performance against as ESP did not have the opportunity to provide essential mentoring and build continual on-the-job capacity as the majority of UNDP election projects do.

The primary objective of the Mid Term Review is to conduct a comprehensive appraisal of the ESP Phase II and to make recommendations for future action. The key issues of the Review are to assess the overall performance of the project with respect to its strategy, objectives and quantitative and qualitative indicators defined in the project document. The ESP II project builds upon ESP I, which began work in August 2008, although it formally started in January 2009 and ended in November 2012 when ESP II commenced its activities. It is currently due to come to an end in the first quarter of 2016. The project officially commenced in November 2012¹ and the calling of Constituent Assembly Elections followed in the subsequent months and therefore meant that 2013 was solely dedicated to supporting the elections in the first year of its implementation. Much of 2014 was spent developing the strategic plan and conducting assessments and lessons learned on the elections held in 2013.

The Methodology of this Review included a qualitative and quantitative approach with an exhaustive desk review, direct interviews with direct beneficiaries of the project and staff of ECN and ESP and various focus groups with other stakeholders. The Team also developed a questionnaire on the overall performance of the project.

The original ProDoc, although considered ambitious, correctly identified the long term challenges affecting the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) and the electoral process in general. Support towards enhancing democratic participation is channelled through the projects work to the ECN.

Given the political uncertainty in the country and the ambiguity of an established timeline for elections, ESP has managed the changing political environment well and reacted effectively and efficiently to the short notice given to conduct elections in 2013. The project was extremely successful at ensuring their support to the ECN and promoted a smooth transition through elections at a politically sensitive time in Nepal's transition. The broader positive political consequences of this achievement through technical processes cannot be overstated.

The government of Nepal provides a generous (prior to the Earthquake) budget to the ECN especially during the election years, however it is recognized that there are still some gaps in the electoral commission that necessitate external technical assistance. Future contributions to the ECN from the government in light of the earthquake is unclear.

ESP II has lent support to ECB during the last 18 months, and to date has achieved 58% of its activities with the remaining 32% being partially achieved. Approximately 61% of its finances have been spent. The weakest output is the overall support to strengthen the capacity of the ECN, whereby a piecemeal approach towards training and capacity building has been adopted rather than building a

comprehensive joint strategy with ECN which could have the potential of enhancing the institutional capacity as well as individual capacity. It should be further noted, that this particularly activity has spent less than half of its budget. The retention of staff from one election to the next is an issue, as is the political climate in which ECN has to work. Since ESP's inception, the ECN have only conducted one national electoral event and will need to be accompanied throughout the transitional period in order to achieve the standard of elections that have been achieved with ESPs support. **The current budget will be able to sustain the project beyond February 2016 and many of the original outcomes envisaged in the ProDoc can be achieved, however the project will need more time to implement these activities. To this end, support to the ECN will need to extend beyond 2016.**

The management of the project is effective and has been able to deal well with the changing political landscape. Nevertheless due to an overly ambitious ProDoc, many of the originally foreseen key activities were not able to be realised and in some cases such as addressing the overall issue of staff retention, procurement and financial control as well as the Electoral Dispute Resolution, were out of the scope of a project of this genre. Reporting was effective and the project kept the flow of information fluid. The lack of a definitive monitoring and evaluation framework at the beginning of the project and then its subsequent revision were not utilised to their full potential and lacked adequate indicators and targets. Risk management for operational issues and progress of established activity results and targets were as a result not fully tracked. Annual reports and PEB meetings tended to report on activities and do not illustrate the extent to which the project has achieved or is on track to achieve its overall objectives. To this end, in line with the changes made to the latest 2014 annual report, the Review **encourages the project to ensure a more results based management approach in line with the monitoring and evaluation framework in future reporting.**

One of the key successes of the project include the development of the permanent voters register, however in the light of the earthquake, it is recommended that this is reviewed and a strategic plan is adopted in order to examine how best to proceed. It is essential that replacement equipment is purchased to continue with the registration and that technical support is provided to ensure that ECN is able to use and roll out the new software to the districts.

Other successes include the inclusion of Geographic Information System (GIS) which has had a positive impact not only on logistical arrangements but also security and even in the light of the earthquake, essential data was used. Given the possible impact of the earthquake on polling locations, GIS maps can now be used to update information on the situation in all the districts. Despite the use of this technology, ECN does not own GIS and more technical know how needs to be built in order to ensure its use in the future.

Public outreach although successful still needs to be strengthened and the lack of a foreseen election should be taken advantage of, and the ECN should already be looking at devising civic and voter education campaigns for the future. In order to ensure more enhanced democratic participation, ECN should build on the good work already achieved in the areas of gender and other vulnerable groups, and continue to mainstream these two areas in all of their work.

In line with ensuring institutional memory, ECN, should be provided with more research skills and archiving skills, and support provided to the Election Dispute Resolution (EDR) should be extended to a more electoral cyclical approach, whereby the legal section is supported in creating a database for all of the complaints received in the prior elections, and a general database both for cases at the headquarters and districts levels should be developed to ensure proper treatment in the next bout of elections.

The ECN should also be provided with support to digitalize important data including about political parties and should enhance and strengthen their resolve to work with all electoral stakeholders to mitigate possible conflicts and to ensure more transparent elections for the future.

The 2013 CA Elections are not considered the last step in the peace process but a step towards the continuation of “democratic state building”.² Elections are anticipated in the short to medium-term future, and until these are conducted, ECN will need support to ensure that future elections comply with international standards. While the lack of an established election timetable limits a project of this genre to fully capacitate the ECN, it also provides a window of opportunity to allow the ECN strive towards adopting a potential electoral cycle approach to all aspects of its work. To this end, it is essential that the Project ensures the efficient implementation of the strategic plan and the respective sections within ECN align their work plans thereto. ESP will need to support ECN in this endeavour. Once procedures and generic work plans are in place as well as the documentation of the ECN is digitalised, the ECN will be way on their way to ensure their future sustainability providing the Government continues to provide the same resources they have prior to the earthquake.

Any UNDP Project foresees an exit strategy and ESP II is no exception. Continuing its support beyond February 2016 will ensure that the activities expressed in the ProDoc are achieved and a reduction in support can then be commenced and more strategic interventions can commence. The project should review its human resources with the aim of reducing the number of staff by the end of its current mandate. A gradual decline in the number of consultants afforded technical support has been achieved and a further decrease in provision of specific technical advice should be envisioned. To date provisions have supported technical issues such as the voter registration and GIS, and this support is being phased out slowly whereby in voter registration at least, the ECN takes full ownership of this activity and only needs support in technical improvements which are currently being carried out. With regards to financial resources, it should be noted that the majority of financial support was utilised to implement the elections, in the guise of voter registration, public outreach and operations and provision of advisors in the regions (as well as provision of certain procurement items). These will need to be phased out slowly, and ideally, with generic plans and improvements in voter education, fewer resources will be needed. The necessity to have presence of internationals in the regions for a new electoral cycle should also be discouraged, especially given the regional support that the project is currently providing. Synergies should also be sought with other UNDP projects. Finally, given the strong relationship that the current ECN has built with regional election management bodies, the usage of more south-to-south expertise should be utilised.

² EUEOM Preliminary Statement to the Constituent Assembly Elections 2013 – Kathmandu 21st November 2013

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APF	Armed Police Force
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
CAP	Contract, Asset and Procurement Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEX	Direct Execution
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPA	Delegated Procurement Authority
ECA	Electoral Cycle Approach
ECN	Election Commission of Nepal
EDR	Electoral Dispute Resolution
EEIC	Electoral Education and Information Centre
EEW	Electoral Education Workers
EMB	Election Management Body
EU	European Union
EUEOM	European Union Election Observation Mission
ESP	Election Support Project
EVM	Electronic Voting Machines
FPTP	First Past the Post
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIS	Geographic Information and Electoral Mapping System
GPS	Global Positioning System
HM	Home Ministry
IC	Interim Constitution
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
JEOC	Joint Election Operation Centre
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Programme
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	Nepal Army
NC	Nepali Congress
NEX	National Execution
NID	Nepal Investigation Department
NIM	National Implementing Model
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PM	Project Manager
PR	Proportional Representation
PRODOC	Project Document
PSAs	Public Service Announcements
PSO	Procurement Services Offices
PWDs	Persons Living with Disabilities
RBM	Result Based Management
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound

SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UK	United Kingdom
UML	United Marxist-Leninist Party
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPSO	United Nations Procurement Support Office
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEV	Voting Education Volunteer

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Scope of the Review

The Review has two principal reference points. The first of these is the impact of the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal on 25th April and its subsequent aftershocks, which damaged the infrastructure of the Election Commission. As such the Mid Term Review frames its recommendations with these new parameters in mind. While acknowledging that the country and indeed development partners as a result of the earthquake may have new and emerging priorities, the project and its objectives hold the same relevance and importance as before and thus it is essential that support continues to the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) and the recommendations herein are taken into consideration.

In addition, the fragile political context that existed prior to the earthquake is even more precarious³ and as a result this election cycle project still has no electoral cycle to pin itself to. This special circumstance means that to date it only has one national election (and five local by-elections) to judge its performance against, and more limited opportunities to engage and mentor the ECN to learn on-the-job as many capacity building exercises in electoral support do.

To this end the primary objective of this Mid Term Review is to conduct a comprehensive appraisal of the Election Support Project (ESP) Phase II results and achievements to date and to make recommendations for future action. The key issues of the Review are to assess the overall performance of the project with respect to its strategy, objectives and quantitative and qualitative indicators defined in the project document. It will also look into the final review of ESP Phase I to ascertain how many of the recommendations have been incorporated into the implementation of ESP II. The overall scope of the project is to ensure that the ECN becomes more accountable, effective, efficient and inclusive,⁴ and as such the Review will examine the overall support provided to the ECN both at Headquarters and the regions.

The Review will also undertake the assessment of the project with the five standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC)⁵ criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability and analyse any underlying factors beyond UNDPs control that affect the achievement of its results. The Review will conclude with the way forward and provide recommendations to key project stakeholders for follow up activities.

2.2 Challenges to the conduct of the Evaluation

The Mid Term Review suffered numerous challenges, however these pale in comparison to the issues that were faced by the team, the ECN and the project, as well as the country, subsequent to the earthquake. To this end the Review Team would simply like to acknowledge the efforts by all members of the ECN, the CTA, ESP Staff and UNDP to gather the information needed to produce and finalise this report despite undergoing their own personal hardships in such dire circumstances.

2.3 Methodology

The Review utilised a mixed approach using qualitative and quantitative indicators. The Team conducted a comprehensive desk review of all pertinent documents and then structured open-ended interview questions and met with over 80 persons involved in the project. This included members of the ECN, ESP, Development Partners (DP) and members of civil society involved in the project. The

³ Nevertheless, there are rumours that local elections will be called in the near future

⁴ UNDAF Outcome 5.1.1

⁵ When evaluating programmes and projects it is useful to consider the following criteria. The criteria were first laid out in the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance and later defined in the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.

team also designed a number of questionnaires on the performance of the project, these were to go to both the ECN and ESP. Unfortunately due to time constraints, the questionnaire was only sent to all members of the project. The Team received over 50% of the questionnaires back (see annex V!).

3 THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The ESP II project builds upon ESP I, which began work in August 2008, although it formally started in January 2009, to strengthen the institutional development and build the capacity of the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN or “The Commission”) after the Constituent Assembly Election, which took place in 2008. ESP I ended in November 2012 when ESP II commenced its activities. It is currently due to come to an end in the first quarter of 2016.

In terms of the expected United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Country Programme outcomes, the Project gauged its support to achieve specific outcomes outlined in the ProDoc. Ambitious in their outreach, as the increased capacity of an election management body (EMB) alone will not necessarily result in a more credible, inclusive and transparent elections. Other environmental factors need to exist. Furthermore, the project works towards providing capacity in an electoral cycle context, however to date only one election has taken place and thus valuable “on-the-job” learning has not been guaranteed.

The ProDoc, although considered ambitious, correctly identified the long-term challenges affecting ECN and the electoral process in general. It especially highlighted the ECNs reactive approach to electoral events instead of its ability to plan and adopt an electoral cycle approach towards all aspects of its work. It emphasized the need for the ECN to develop a more broader and cogent process driven strategy focussing on a multi year planning and for the capacities of its staff to be strengthened and to enable the transfer of institutional knowledge from one election to the next. Nevertheless, although one important aspect of the project is to enhance democratic participation, the ProDoc does not cast a wide enough net in order to ensure that all groups are included, and any support towards enhancing democratic participation is channelled through the project’s work to the ECN. While it is imperative to ensure that the ECN strengthens its relationship with civil society, the project then works within the constraints of the extent to which the Election Management Body (EMB) works with civil society and is unable to exert its influence outside of the parameters of its assistance to the EMB.

Finally, there are various issues within the ProDoc which are outside of the remit of an election project, these include the issues of staff retention, and enhanced procurement skills to promote the use of local procurement procedures. Both these issues affect the long-term sustainability of the ECN, however these are issues which cannot be tackled by a single project, as they are issues that affect all ministries and thus require strategic interventions at a higher level. To this end, although the project document is relevant, some of its interventions fall outside the scope of such a project and in addition a weak strategic approach to address some of these key structural issues has limited the project in fulfilling its overall objectives.

3.1 Political Background

Following 10 years of internal armed conflict, in November 2006, the seven political parties and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists reached the “Comprehensive Peace Agreement”. An Interim Constitution replaced the 1990 Constitution and was formally approved by the Parliament in January 2007. A Constituent Assembly (CA) election was held on 1st April 2008 to elect a unicameral body of 601 members tasked with writing a new constitution, and acting as the interim legislature. Following the failure of this assembly to agree on and pass a new constitution; in 2013 the second Constituent Assembly Elections were held to elect 601 new members. The country is still governed by an interim

constitution approved by the reinstated parliament in January 2007 that also establishes the ECN as a legally entrusted body responsible for the preparing, administering and supervision of CA elections.

A fluid political environment has always accompanied the CA terms. In the seven years since its first creation, Nepal has had six Prime Ministers. The second CA elections did not see many benefits of incumbency for sitting members possibly reflecting dissatisfaction by the public with the process, with roughly 80% of the members being newly elected and the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) losing its majority to the Nepali Congress (NC). None of the 31 political parties represented in the CA secured a majority and the Nepali Congress currently rule in a coalition with the United Marxist-Leninist Party (UML) and other minor parties.

The second CA on inauguration promised that they would deliver the Constitution within one year, but at least two issues stand in the way of that being realized. The first is that debates and agreements in the first CA related to *State Restructuring, Governance System, Election System* and the *Judiciary system*. The differences have been narrowed but the issue on *state restructuring* has been implicated by 'identity', and it is difficult to foresee political agreement over this concept as long as the two issues are merged. The 25th April earthquake measuring 7.8⁶ on the Richter scale which hit Nepal could also impact on the passing of the Constitution. The earthquake devastated many areas including Kathmandu, left over 8,600⁷ dead and millions of Nepali's negatively affected with the suffering of injuries, loss of homes and displacement. The poorest in the country, with access to the lowest amount of resources, will suffer the most, and many will likely fall back below the government's national poverty line of NRs 19,261 per person per year (average 2010-11 prices). Overall, 25% of the population in Nepal lives below the poverty line, however this is particularly acute in the rural areas, where it is as high as 27.4% of the population.

As such the political negotiations in Kathmandu over the Constitution are likely to take a back seat as humanitarian and recovery dominate during the foreseeable future. From an election side the earthquake has seriously damaged the ECN building in Kathmandu, the regional Babar Mahal office and some District Election Offices across the country, as well as some ECN vehicles and equipment in the districts. The current UNDP Electoral Support Project was intended to support the ECN in a non-disaster context, and now that context has changed. Infrastructure is damaged, people displaced and as a result the accuracy of the voter roll may be affected once elections are called. Thrown into this mix have been fresh calls for local elections, with the local response to the earthquake highlighting deficiencies in the Nepal's system of local governance. To this end, the project with the approval of the members of the Executive Project Board should consider adapting the AWP in line with the outputs and activities to react to the current situation.

Whatever happens regarding elections, the earthquake and its many aftershocks have seriously changed the landscape that politics and elections were being played out against pre-April 25, 2015. Continual support to the ECN will be necessary to ensure that Nepal's democratic transition continues its trajectory.

4 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Project Implementation Approach

4.1.1 Project Adaption to changing conditions

Given the political uncertainty in the country and the ambiguity of an established timeline for elections, ESP has managed the changing political environment well and reacted effectively and efficiently to the short notice given to conduct elections in 2013. The design of the project does follow an electoral cycle approach, however, the absence of a clear election timetable did affect the

⁶ The second earthquake which struck on 12th May resulted in approximately 100 deaths

⁷ This includes figures for both the 25th April and 12th May Earthquakes – Source www.bbc.co.uk

ECNs ability to plan early, which in turn affected project activities and timelines.⁸ This is also exacerbated by the fact that the decision-making process within the ECN is cumbersome which ultimately delays the approval of policy and implementation of key activities affecting the project.

The project officially commenced in November 2012⁹ and the calling of Constituent Assembly Elections followed in the subsequent months and therefore meant that 2013 was solely dedicated to supporting the elections and thus temporarily distracted the ESPs capacity to provide long-term institutional support. Much of 2014 was spent developing the strategic plan and conducting assessments and lessons learned on the elections held in 2013. The organisation and holding of local elections still looms over the project, however it is unclear as to when they will be called. It has been a recent legacy in Nepal that local elections are thrown into the political dialogue but never realized. However, since the earthquake the lack of an effective local government to respond to the disaster has renewed more vigorously the call for the installation of local governments through elections.

ESP in cohorts with the ECN stand ready to implement the elections should they be called at short notice. Such readiness is also implied in the preparation of parallel budgets and work plans to ensure that the project is easily able to adapt should the political situation change suddenly. Nonetheless, the recent earthquake may have an impact on this readiness, as the building that housed ECN in Kathmandu was severely damaged and thus is hampering the ECN to carry out their work.

4.1.2 Changes in project design and work plan

In order to pragmatically manage expectations emanating from the ProDoc, all subsequent annual work plans (AWP) were streamlined and the sub-activities outlined in the ProDoc were largely replaced with more tangible activities which were adapted in line with the needs of the ECN, and subsequently approved by the Project Executive Board. These changes reflected a more realistic approach towards achieving the overall goals expressed in the Project. The activity outcomes and results were nevertheless maintained.

Annual Work Plans are consulted with the ECN (Commissioners, Secretary, Under Secretaries etc) and AWP are then designed accordingly. The final document is then approved by the PEB.¹⁰ In 2013, the AWP suffered some changes due to the new priorities of conducting an electoral event. Development partners would like to see more reflection on past lessons learned and for these to be integrated into the design of the AWP. AWP should be designed in conjunction with the monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that the holding of individual activities will guide the project and allow it to achieve its overall targets and outcomes.

4.1.3 Effective partnerships and resourcing in the implementation of the project

ESP works mainly with two partners, International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA). IFES is ESPs main partner, whereby they conduct BRIDGE trainings and the trainings of the Social Study Teachers of the secondary schools of the country. It is acknowledged that IFES and IIDEA do not have access to the same amount of resources as ESP and thus work is shared between them whereby they collaborate and work together to ensure there is no duplication in their work. Periodic Bridge Working Group meetings are held in the presence of ECN, ESP, IIDEA and IFES in order to plan effectively, and the Bridge Coordination Committee (a higher policy level meeting) is held twice a year in order to identify what is needed and to ensure that BRIGE is customised to the country's context and the needs of the ECN.

⁸ UNDP Support to the 2013 Nepal Constituent Assembly Elections: Lessons Learnt – September 2014

⁹ With the signing of the ProDoc on 7th November 2012

¹⁰ It should be noted that all budget requests and changes to AWP are subsequently approved by PEB, and therefore no official change can take place without the express permission of the members of the PEB, including the ECN.

The collegial relationship between the partners and the project promotes a harmonious partnership and enables them to share the workload according to the individual institution's area of expertise. This not only maximises the gains for the ECN but also avoids unnecessary duplication of work between the key partnering institutions. In the past, the ECN has tended to submit requests at the same time for the same area of work to the various implementing institutions. ECN is nevertheless now gearing towards filtering these requests to ensure that each partnering institution concentrates on their particular field of expertise.

4.1.4 Project's ability to work with other stakeholders

The Project not only works with IFES and IIDEA but has worked with UN Women during the 2013 Elections to conduct awareness raising events among women and disadvantaged communities at regional level. This had a positive outcome and more women and persons emanating from disadvantaged communities participated in the elections as a result.

The coordination both at headquarters and in the regions has been rated very highly by the ESP staff with 73.1% of contestants rating the coordination as very good and 15.4% as excellent. The ESP and their ECN counterparts have regular meetings and share information on programme activities. This is especially pertinent at the district level, as it contributes to the ECN with the support of ESP affording services to the District Election Officers including training and provision of services in relation to Information Technology (IT). Fluid Relationships at the regional/ district levels has meant that joint planning has taken place with the DEO and the Regional ECN hub and ensures that district activities are relative to the local context and needs.

4.1.5 Stakeholder Participation

"Efforts to increase country ownership of the development process is a central pillar of the aid effectiveness agenda"¹¹ and principles of *alignment and harmonisation* support the principle of *ownership* in the Paris Framework, enabling donor and partner countries to effectively operationalize and support enhanced ownership.

Furthermore, projects such as these form part of the wider democratic development of the partner country, in accordance with the five key principles of "ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability" that inform the 2005 Paris and 2008 Accra Declarations on Aid Effectiveness.

ECN as the Senior Beneficiary should in principle take complete ownership of the project, and be involved at all levels of decision making from the Highest Level Project Board meetings to the design of the Annual Work Plans. Generally this has been the case. Given the co-location¹² of the ESP and ECN, it allows for a fluid relationship between the two entities and promotes a project that is demand driven and based on the immediate and long-term needs of the ECN.

The development of the new Five-Year Strategic Plan is a start in formalizing a longer-term strategy, but extra efforts should be made to ensure that processes are set up by the project to better manage ad-hoc requests which are submitted by the ECN in addition to already existent activities envisaged in the AWP.

¹¹ "The Democratic Dimension of Aid Prospects for democracy building within the contemporary international architecture of development cooperation". *Literature Review for International IDEA* (paper) by Lisa Horner and Greg Power, Global Partners and Associates, March 2009.

¹² Please note that as of 25th April, the building which housed the project and ECN has been severely damaged by the earthquake and declared unsafe. At the time of writing, neither ECN or ESP had premises to work out of.

4.1.6 Governance Arrangements

Support to Elections is usually an expensive undertaking and many transitional democracies require assistance in this regard. Nepal is no exception. While, the Nepalese Government does provide a healthy election budget, (prior to the earthquake),¹³ it is recognized that there are still some gaps in the electoral commission that necessitate external technical assistance. The implications on the future electoral budget in the aftermath of the earthquakes are still to be assessed. To this end, **support from ESP II is still essential to ensure that the ECN is able to go beyond the mere execution of elections and financial support is maintained and perhaps enhanced in light of the recent earthquakes.** It needs to strive towards strengthening its capacity and increase democratic participation in order to enable an even more credible and transparent electoral process for the future and to ensure institutional stability and sustainability for the medium term and beyond.

To facilitate the funding of the project, four Development Partners namely, European Union (EU), Department for International Development (DFID), Norway and Danish International Development Agency (Danida) established a joint basket fund totalling USD 24,630,000. The project has received approximately 72%¹⁴ of the funds as of May 2015.

The project consists of an International Chief Technical Advisor/Project Manager as its head supported by a national Deputy Project Manager. The team also comprises an international electoral expert¹⁵ and a team of national staff at both national and regional level. In addition, during the 2013 Constituent Assembly Elections, 10 international advisors and five national advisors were deployed to the regions to provide extra support. The project also employs a number of consultants both national and international when needed.¹⁶

The CTA reports directly to the Project Executive Board¹⁷ (PEB), which is the highest-level policy and oversight body for the project. The PEB has met on a quarterly basis, and is responsible for making – management decisions for the project on a consensual basis when guidance is required.

A number of other key meetings take place, including the Project Advisory Committee, which has met to date four times in 2013 and once in 2014 and other informative meetings when needed. During 2013, a total of ten International Development Partner (DP) Meetings took place, five ambassador meetings headed by the United Nations Representative Coordinator with UNDP/ESP and seven Election Working Group Meetings.¹⁸ A number of other informal donor meetings have taken place to discuss certain issues including the elections, and the presentation of various ESP/ECN reports.

PEB meetings are useful however, the pre-donor meetings are also encouraged to promote frequent interaction between the DPs and ESP in order to ensure an open and honest dialogue on challenges and priorities of the project

The project is further supported by the Operations Department of UNDP Nepal and Project assurance is carried out through a Programme Officer who supports the day-to-day work of the Project Manager/CTA. Site visits from UNDP officers also provide oversight to the activities in the regions.

¹³ It is unclear whether the Government will continue to support the Election Commission to the same extent, as it may need to redirect the money for emerging priorities emanating from the impact of the earthquake.

¹⁴ The project has received USD\$ 17,720,947

¹⁵ The international Election Experts post is currently vacant, and the deadline for a new applications is 26th May 2015

¹⁶ This number has been severely reduced in comparison to ESP 1

¹⁷ The PEB comprises the Project Executive – Deputy Country Director of UNDP Nepal; Senior Beneficiary: Representative of ECN; Senior Supplier: Representative(s) of the international donor community contributing to the Project and the Assistant Country Director of UNDP

¹⁸ In 2012 3 EWGs and in 2014 one EWG meeting took place

4.2 Efficiency

UNDP/ESP has lent support to the ECN since 2008 and as capacity has been built, ESP has been able to substantially decrease the number of internationals and national consultants affording assistance to the project. In 2012, during ESP I for example, 30 (national (18) and international (12)) consultants were employed which resulted in approximately 885 international man days being accounted for. In 2013, under ESP II this figure was cut almost in half, with approximately 470 days being attributed to the project by internationals.

The project currently has a relatively high number of persons working permanently in the project, however at present only one of these is an international.¹⁹ **The project which should continue beyond its current remit of February 2016, should examine to what extent all staff are needed, to this end, an evaluation of the role of each staff member to the relevant outputs needs to be carried out, and where necessary, streamlined in order to improve efficiency in the future.**

The number of BRIDGE accredited persons in Nepal are amongst the highest in Asia, and the training of nationals has meant that there has been a substantial drop in the need to deploy internationally accredited BRIDGE Trainers to impart the courses. This has allowed the project to not only reduce costs but also allows the project to tap into BRIDGE expertise at will and enables more local experts to be trained efficiently and according to the country context and local language.

Since the signing of the ProDoc, approximately 3,898 persons (79% male and 21% female) have been trained in 132 different training events (including 18 BRIDGE module sessions resulting in 416 persons being trained). 1300 persons received essential training during the year of the elections coupled with on-the-job learning meant that the elections were able to take place and the ECN was able to “enjoy public confidence throughout the electoral process”.²⁰

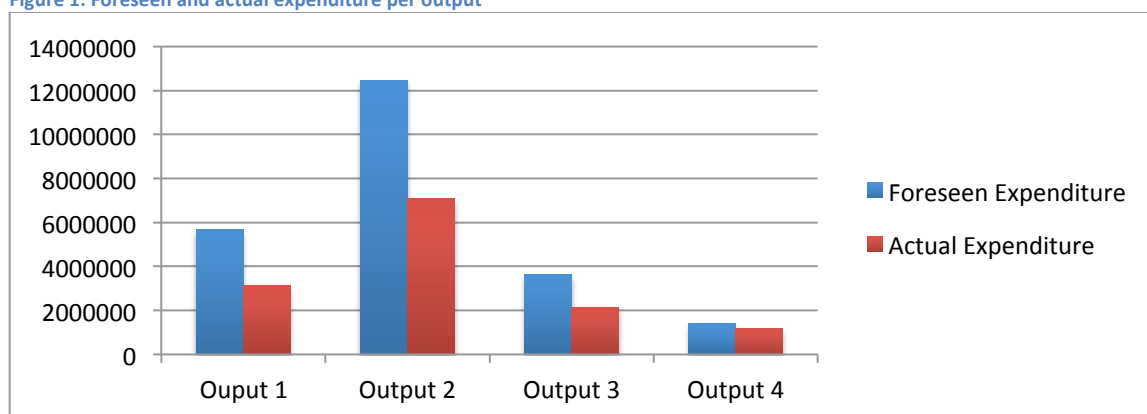
Nevertheless, while the training of the different individuals and groups/organisations has been useful and there is no doubt that value has been added, the training has tended to be piecemeal and has not encouraged strengthening of the institution itself. Institutional strengthening is essential as it will enable the ECN to adopt a more proactive rather than reactive approach towards the electoral cycle. Furthermore, given the fact that the issue of addressing staff retention directly is beyond the scope of the ECN and indeed the project - building the institutional memory of the ECN is crucial to mitigate the eventual loss of individually gained capacity

The project has a total budget of USD\$24,600,00 and to date has spent USD\$14,273,700. With a little less than a year to go before the foreseen closure of the project, the project has an important sum of money left to spend. Much of these resources were to be attributed to the cost of local elections, however some of these funds may now need to be directed towards the provision of temporary accommodation after the damaging effects of the earthquake - new priorities may need to be assessed in the light of these events.

¹⁹ There is one other post of election expert that is international. UNDP is currently recruiting for this position due to the former colleague leaving the project.

²⁰ EU EOM Final Report 2013

Figure 1: Foreseen and actual expenditure per output²¹



Outputs one and two have spent under half of their funds, whereas outputs three and four have spent a good percentage of the funds. Output four has already nearly spent its allocated budget therefore to ensure efficiency for the future, it is essential that the spending on staff and the need for so many project staff is examined and justified.

4.3 Effectiveness

The successful delivery of an election is time bound and leaves no room for flexibility. The ability to deliver a successful election in the Nepali context is further compounded by an ambiguous election timetable and an unpredictable political climate. Despite these constraints, ESP supported the ECN to successfully conduct the 2013 CA elections on time and enabled the effective and timely distribution of essential procurement material.

The project has also conducted a wide variety of training sessions coupled with on-the-job learning for persons implementing the elections. In order to promote gender equality and social inclusiveness, the project has emphasised the training of women and men as well as minorities and persons living with disabilities. The number of women trained reflects the proportion of women who currently work in the ECN. Furthermore, the project has promoted the BRIDGE module “gender and elections” whereby over 122 persons (58% women) have been trained in this subject. The discussion, explanation and holding of training sessions on the recently approved gender policy has led to a general acceptance and knowledge thereof across the board and has a positive effect on the working of the elections to ensure gender mainstreaming at all levels of the Election Commission.

Baseline data was not available in some cases until early 2014, and targets and indicators for the monitoring and evaluation framework were revised with the emergence of the new baseline data. This inevitably had a negative effect on the project, as reliable targets were not set on time and it was very difficult to gauge if certain outputs were on track. Furthermore, qualitative data alone does not always reflect the quality of the outputs and therefore the monitoring and evaluation framework needed to be more rigorous in its approach in ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative indicators were available. **A mix of both types of information would provide the project with a more accurate measurement as to how well a certain activity was doing and whether it is on track to achieve its desired outcome.**

In general the majority of the outputs do contribute to the achievement of the immediate objectives, there have been particular successes in the project including that of voter registration, GIS and gender and social inclusion as well as technical, logistical and operational support during the 2013 Elections. The activities planned most definitely produced the desired outcomes and thus were not

²¹ as of December 2014

only relevant but effective in their implementation. Furthermore, value has been added by assuring that gender has been mainstreamed across the project, and conscious efforts have been made to assure women in the project. ESP has approximately 36% of females working in the project.

Nevertheless, there are other outputs, which although have been successful, will not necessarily achieve the desired outcome as expressed in the ProDoc. These include the building of ECNs capacity which has tended to concentrate on individual capacities and therefore conflicts with the current context whereby on average staff are replaced every two years in the staff rotation programme. Currently the number of staff who have left ECN in a two-year period (2013-2015) has accounted for approximately 33%, the transfers normally occur at the level of Secretary of Joint-Secretary, nevertheless this level is much lower at the districts which boasts approximately 80% of its staff being retained for the same period. Despite these encouraging figures, **a piecemeal approach towards building individual capacities does conflict with building the overall institutional capacity of the organisation and thus a more strategic approach to capacity building is required.**

In this light, although the ProDoc encourages ESP to address issues of staff retention, use of government procurement procedures and improvement in financial management, **without a more coordinated and strategic approach involving other government ministries and other possible UNDP Projects, ESP does not have the capacity to tackle these highly contentious issues alone which in essence are general problems in all ministries and not just confined to the ECN.**

4.4 Implementation and management Arrangements

4.4.1 Execution and implementation modalities

ESP II is set up under a Direct Execution/Implementation modality (DEX/DIM), which is the default modality for most electoral assistance projects. This modality sees UNDP taking on the full responsibility for project implementation whereby UNDP procures goods and services according to internationally established rules and regulations and ensures due diligence. DEX projects tend to be more efficient than national execution run projects.

Despite the fact that UNDP is responsible for project implementation, the ECN takes full national ownership of the results of the project and drives the project according to their needs. This ultimately has a positive impact on the institution whereby ESP is able to gauge their needs and afford technical assistance thereto. Despite the project being implemented by ESP/UNDP there are often unforeseen delays in the execution of some of the activities or their results due to the fragile political context and the cumbersome decision making process at the level of ECN to approve certain texts and policies.²²

The project lends support to both the ECN at headquarters and also at the five regional levels. Support afforded to the regions has trickled down to the districts offices especially during the elections in 2013 and more recently whereby District Election Officers (DEOs) have received training on certain issues. Regional presence prove indispensable for the execution of elections in 2013 and has enabled the local ECNs to function more efficiently in the light of local By-Elections. Future local elections will benefit from the regional presence. ESP Regional staff are in constant contact with the DEOs in order to ascertain their needs in order to provide support in several areas, and this is invaluable in a local context. The regions needs often differ from those at the national level. This ensures that for example voter education campaigns are designed according to the local context and local languages and operational needs are identified well in advance of any electoral process.

²² For example, the ECN took nearly three years to approve the Gender Policy and is still to finalize the Strategic Plan 2015-2019 (despite its recent official approval) which was officially handed to them in December 2014.

Support to the regional offices was reduced subsequent to the departure of the international and national advisors in March 2014 after completing their work for the 2013 CA elections. The period from March to October-November 2014 was utilized to re-design the overall regional strategy together with the ECN and to complete the recruitment and the restructuring of the project at regional level. Nonetheless, in the referred five months, the ESP support continued uninterruptedly in all five regions²³ through IT²⁴ officers and regional support staff which remained in the project and still serve as ESPs institutional memory in the regions.

The overall success of the project to date can also be attributed to not only strong leadership by the project but also by the ECN themselves, including the Chief Election Commissioner and the Secretariat who have been the driving force behind supporting the strengthening of capacity and the introduction of key technical inputs to improve the efficiency of the ECN and their ability to deliver credible and transparent elections. The exit of three commissioners over a one-year period, including the current Chief Election Commissioner in May 2015 will most definitely have an impact on the project, and **they will therefore have to ensure full “buy in” from the future Commissioners to ensure that the project is able to keep on track in attaining its key objectives** and any new parameters the project may include due to the impact of the earthquake.

4.4.2 Project Management arrangements

The project is headed by the CTA/PM and is supported by a national deputy project manager whose role has proved invaluable and allows the project to have a national face as well as facilitating the overall management to understand the local context and enable acceptance of the project by the ECN and other key national stakeholders. In the same vein, the name of the United Nations has also lent credibility to the elections in general and has enabled the ECN to build their reputation and increase their professionalism while maintaining neutrality and respect from the general public. The presence of the United Nations, especially at regional level also dissipated fears of possible conflict.

4.4.3 Project Financial Planning Control

The project underwent a financial audit in 2014 and was rated as “unqualified”. The project has been able to manage the funds well, especially with regards to ensuring that enough money is put aside for any upcoming electoral event and the project therefore tends to prepare two annual budgets for the two scenarios (an election and a non election year).

The financial management of the project is considered as effective however some development partners would like to see a more systemized and standardized financial monitoring and reporting system. To date only one activity has gone over budget. (See Below) The majority of the activities which have spent a substantial amount of their budget²⁵ are in fact the most successful within the project, and in some cases with regards to voter registration for example, not all of the budget has been spent, but is considered one of the most sustainable activities within ESP. The activities where less than half of the budget has been spent, tend to be the least successful and to date have only partially achieved their objectives. **To this end, the project is on track to obtain many of its goals within the budget specified, however given the fragile political climate and the holding of the CA elections at the beginning of the project, and the subsequent earthquake which has put some activities on hold, the attainment of all the goals will not be possible within the current lifetime of the project.**

²³ The IT officers remained behind in all the five region together with vehicles, drivers and support staff.

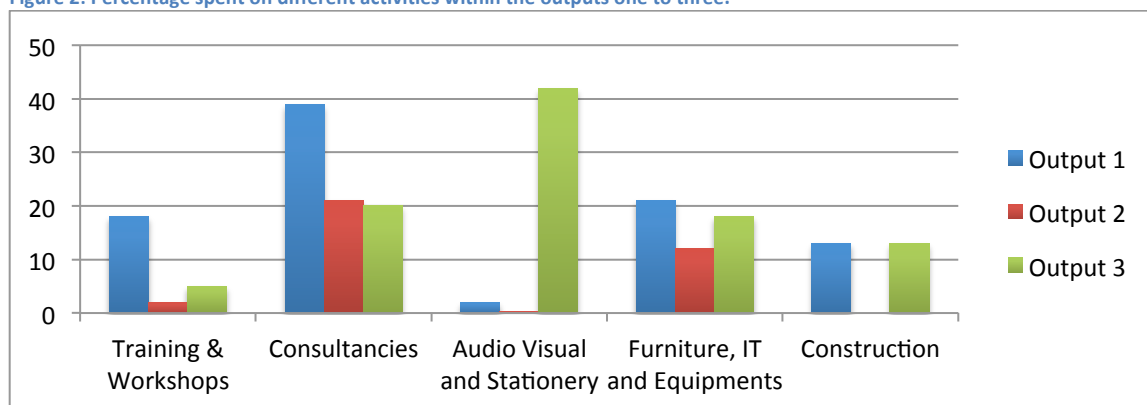
²⁴ Kathmandu, Dhanghadi and Biratnagar – in the case of Pokhara, the Regional Electoral Officer has been with the project since 2011.

²⁵ USD\$ 15,057,870

4.4.4 Cost-Effectiveness of Project Operations

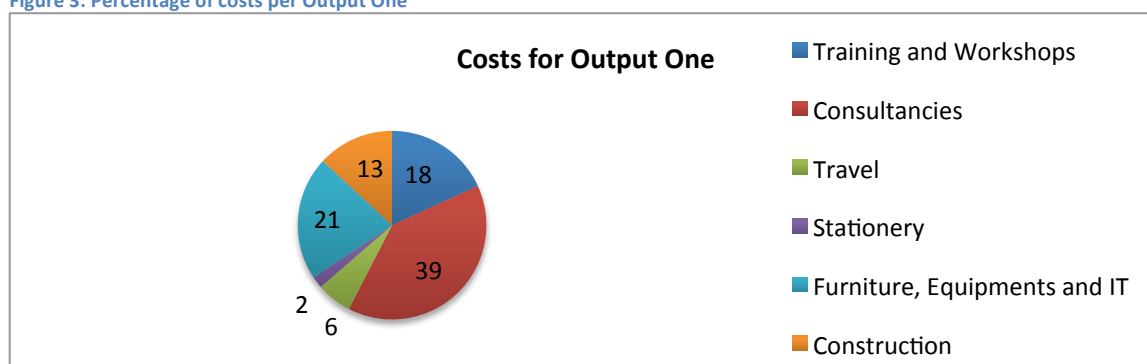
To date, the project has used approximately 61%²⁶ of its funds. The project has spent a considerable amount on consultancies, especially for output one (the voter register) USD3,119,039 (22%) and the provision of equipment, especially in output three (EEIC) USD1,269,827 (9%), Training and workshops (mainly in output one) USD 1,048,522 (7%), audio visuals and stationery (especially in output three) USD1,545,948 (11%) and Construction USD 733,156 (5%) for the media centre, warehouse and the EEICs.

Figure 2: Percentage spent on different activities within the outputs one to three.



The cost effectiveness of each of the outputs reflects the activities under each output. For example the largest proportion of the budget in output one has been spent on consultancies for voter registration mainly, whereby technical expertise was needed to ensure that the specifications met the needs of the ECN, the provision of furniture and IT covers 21% of the costs and 18% has been spent on training and workshops, which is of course natural as the output covers staff trainings.

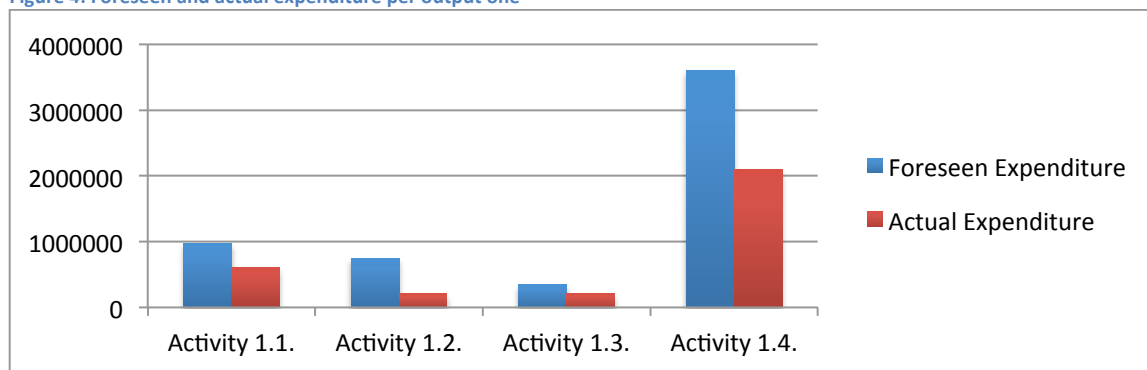
Figure 3: Percentage of costs per Output One



As can be seen in the graph below, the largest proportion of budget has been apportioned to the Voter Register, with a little over half of the budget being spent so far. (For more detailed information on expenditure see annex V). Despite only half of the budget being spent, this is the most successful activity in output one and is considered the most sustainable. The other three have been assessed as only partially achieved (See Section 5.1.1.) and both activity 1.1. and activity 1.2 as yet are considered to have a average impact and sustainability, therefore more investment in these two activities will be needed in order to ensure their success.

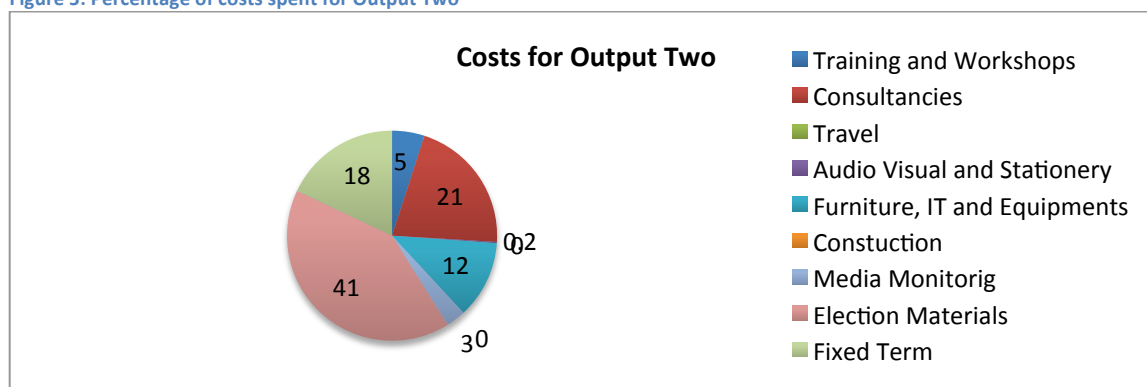
²⁶ As of May 2015, the project has utilized 61% of the foreseen funds

Figure 4: Foreseen and actual expenditure per output one



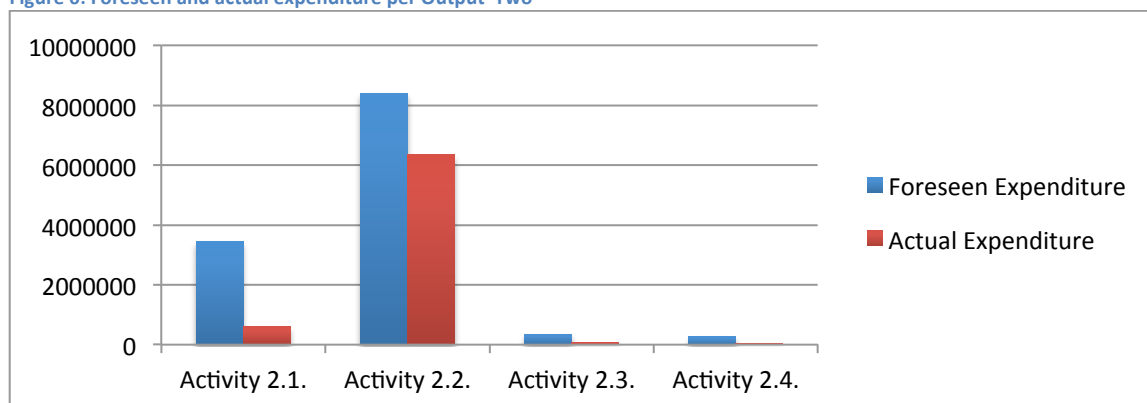
In Output Two, the largest proportion of the budget has been spent on election materials, however a considerable amount has also been afforded to consultancies and fixed term contracts which covered the expenses of international and national consultants during the election period, as well as the regional advisors at present. This output also cover the costs of the Chief Technical Advisor.

Figure 5: Percentage of costs spent for Output Two



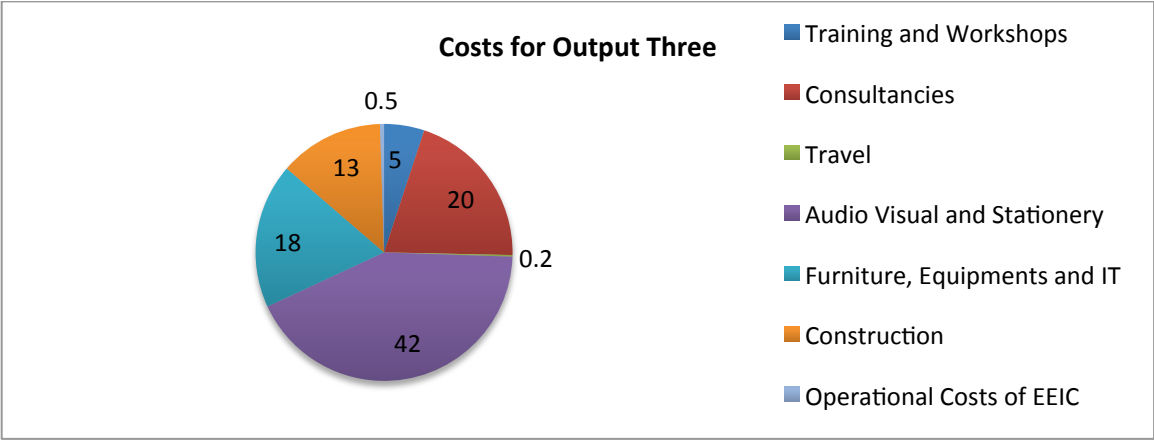
Activity Two, Support with Operations and Logistics which covered both election materials and staff has the highest amount of expenditure. As can be seen, the other three activities have not even spent half of their budgets to date. While activity 2.1 has utilised far less than its budget, in order to make it sustainable and to have a greater impact, the existing budget could be utilised to make this particular activity more successful. Very little has been spent on activity 2.3 and thus it has only been considered to be partially achieved. On the other hand, very little of the assigned budget to electoral security has been spent, but the activity is heralded as a success and needs very little to maintain its sustainability.

Figure 6: Foreseen and actual expenditure per Output Two



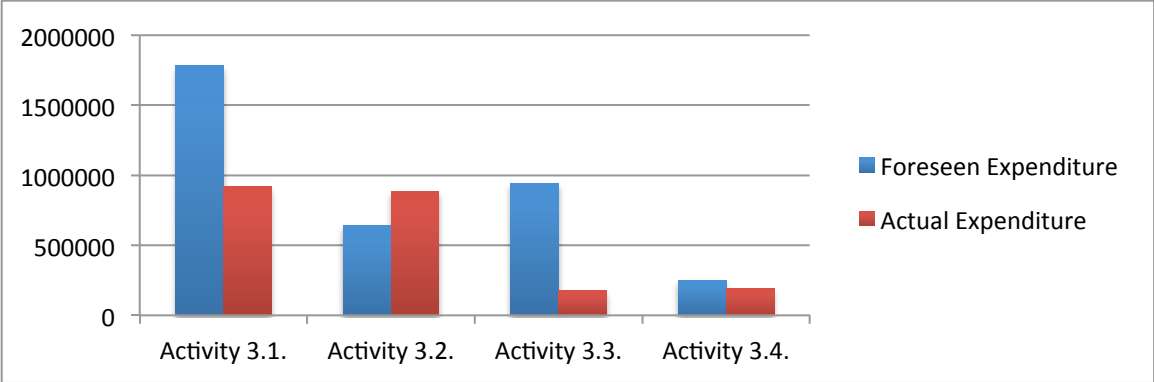
Output Three spent 42% on audio visual materials which included USD791,106 on materials for output 3.1 (Public Outreach, Civic and Voter Education) and 20% on consultancies, which included consultants to the gender component.

Figure 7: Percentage of Costs Per Output Three



As can be seen in the graph below approximately half the funds have been spent for voter education, however should new elections be called, these funds will be needed. The Review rates this activity as achieved however more effective advanced planning needs to exist to ensure its sustainability. Activity 3.2 has overspent its budget, and some more budget may still need to be spent²⁷ on the refurbishment of the regional EEICs, however this activity has important social benefits which warrants value for money (see separate report analysing cost to benefits of this activity) Activity 3.3. is only rated as partially achieved and has spent less than half of its budget, and thus in order to achieved the desired outcomes the budget should be utilised With regards to activity 3.4. almost all of the budget has been spent, but once again this is heralded as one of the most successful activities of the project.

Figure 8: Foreseen and actual expenditure per Output Three



4.4.5 Effectiveness of Project Monitoring and Evaluation

In the ProDoc, an initial Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) framework was developed however many of the baselines were not established until early 2014. Upon its finalisation, the M & E framework was revised. The M & E framework follows a typical UNDP template, however many of the indicators and subsequent targets do not necessarily reflect whether a particular output has been successful or not.

²⁷ Approximately an additional USD\$150,000 – USD\$200,000 is needed to complete this activity

Furthermore the design of the M & E Framework does not allow for continued monitoring to take place to ensure that targets are met. The majority of the targets were established after the elections, and do not provide the chance for the project to track the continual progress towards the achievement of results and to devise mitigation strategies should they not be on-track.

The ability of the project to monitor its outputs could be strengthened with more site visits and follow up on activities. In addition, although annual reports do highlight lessons learned, these are more operational in nature, rather than the failure to achieve a certain target or outcome as envisaged in the ProDoc. Lessons learned in turn should be reflected in changed priorities for future AWP's to ensure that the issues are addressed in the work plan of the project and ECN respectively.

4.4.6 Risk Management

The uncertain political climate had the potential to have a profound effect on how the project is managed, but due to its effective management, it has not had a serious influence over the project's ability to deliver the inputs and to achieve the potential outputs. ESP was able to provide support to the ECN to implement the elections efficiently and to high international standards despite the short notice of the call for the 2013 CA elections. Furthermore, in preparation of local elections, both the ECN and the project are able to change course to implement the elections at short notice should the need arise.

The overall approach towards training and capacity building, however, has perhaps affected the project, which in fact was due to weakness in its design rather than the ability of the project to manage risks. Although the project has provided training in the areas of procurement and finance, the implementation of government procurement procedures by the ECN in practice could not effectively take place due to the cumbersome and time consuming procedures as per the Public Procurement Act and regulations of the Government of Nepal.

The emphasis of the project has not been to address the complexities facing the ECN, especially the Secretariat, in its reluctance to use government procedures. It is agreed that the ability to deal with many of these deeply embedded issues is out of the scope of the project, however given the fact that the ProDoc does commit itself to looking at this issue as well as that of staff retention, some development partners are disappointed that the project did not highlight these constraints and their consequences on not realising the objectives of the ProDoc in meetings or emphasizing these particular challenges in annual reports.

4.4.7 Effectiveness of Project Reporting

The project is perceived as being very informative and provides constant written updates as well as regular standardised meetings and ad-hoc presentations when deemed necessary. The project sends out bi-weekly reports, quarterly narrative reports to compliment the PEB and produces annual reports. The project has also undertaken a number of assessments and has shared these with the development partners.

The project could benefit from adopting a stronger approach to results based management and using the established M & E framework for tracking and reporting on the achievement of results to date. The development partners appreciated the efforts by the project to ensure that the 2014 annual report was more results based and this line of reporting on achievement of results rather than purely activity based reporting is encouraged for the future.

5 PROJECT RESULTS

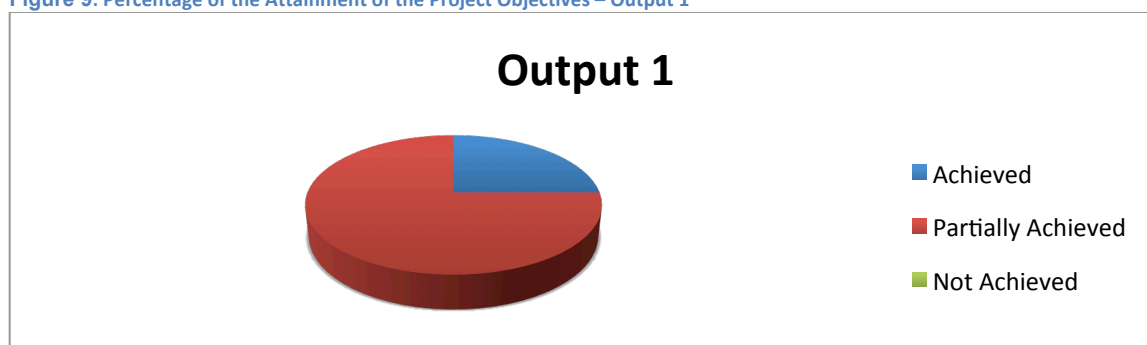
5.1 Attainment of the projects immediate objectives and outputs as per the Project Document and Results Framework

ESP Phase II focuses on long term electoral capacity-building in addition to operational support during the electoral cycle and a long term approach to enhance democratic participation. It has three main outputs: (See tables below).

In order for the Review Team to present a snap shot on the success of the outputs to date, the indicators from the original ProDoc and the updated monitoring and evaluation (M & E) framework have been analysed. However as the team considers that the attainment of many of the indicators will not necessarily present an accurate picture of the accomplishment of these outputs; they have also analysed the individual output using additional criteria drawn from the review. This includes examining to what extent each activity has achieved its result by analysing the reports from the desk review, results from questionnaires and input from the different interlocutors. In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), and bearing in mind that this is a Mid-Term Review, the team analyses whether the output has been **achieved**, **partially achieved** or **not achieved** according to the overall activity result. It then scores its performance from 1-5 using the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluation including relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, with 5 being the highest score.

5.1.1 Output One - Strengthened Capacity of the ECN to Function as a Permanent, Independent, Credible and Professional Institution of Governance

Figure 9: Percentage of the Attainment of the Project Objectives – Output 1



Upon examination of each activity result, the MTR Team conclude that activities 1.1. ,1.2. and 1.3. have been partially achieved and 1.4 has been achieved.

Table 1: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the ProDoc

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
Output 1: Strengthened Capacity of the ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance						
Activity 1.1. Support with Strategic Planning						
A multi-year strategic plan, making a special emphasis on women, minorities and other vulnerable groups' inclusion, is produced, adopted and implemented and guides the Election Commission of Nepal in the full attainment of its mission, vision, goals and objectives	Partially Achieved	5	4	3	3	3

Activity 1.2.: Support with Staff Retention and Professional Development						
The Professional skills of the election officials (as well as civil society, political parties and other stakeholders in the electoral process) at the various levels are enhanced and a pool of certified, skilled electoral trainers established and retained at the ECN; High quality training materials are owned by ECN together with a comprehensive training curriculum on election administration. ECN takes steps towards ensuring retention of their staff and the institutional memory through the development and implementation of a plan to retain staff and develop hand over and archiving modalities.	Partially Achieved	4	3	3	3	3
Activity 1.3. Support to Geographic Information and Mapping Systems						
The administration of the electoral process by the Election Commission of Nepal is made more efficient and transparent through the provision of a Geographic Information System (GIS) based electoral mapping suitable to the needs and environment in which it is used and maintained	Partially Achieved	4	4	4	5	4
Activity 1.4: Support with Creation and Display of New Voter Register						
A completely new, accurate voter's list with photographs containing some 15 million-voter records is produced and displayed prior to the election, allowing for smooth and credible electoral process. A sustainable, voter registration system is established after carefully examining options for its sets up and data-management. The issue of potential linkages between the different national databases is thoroughly examined. This activity is a key priority for 2012 to ensure that an accurate new voter register is ready in the event of an election in 2012/2013	Achieved	5	4	4	5	4

5.1.2 Output One – Support with Strategic Planning

In 2009 ECN launched its first strategic plan 2009/2013 with set targets and activities. In general, the plan achieved up to 78.42% of the indicators expressed in its plan,²⁸ including the introduction of the bio-metric voter register, voters roll and ID with photographs to which ESP I and II lent their support. The ProDoc envisaged support to the development of a new strategic plan making a special emphasis on the inclusion of women, minorities and other vulnerable groups. Given the election timetable, preparations for designing and drafting the plan were not initiated until 2014.

The drafting of the plan ensured a participatory approach and ensured that the ECN owned the plan in its entirety and the inclusion of women, minorities and other vulnerable groups is a key element therein. The new strategic plan was finalised in December 2014. It is now currently (May 2015) being launched after implementing some last minute changes and translating it into Nepali. To this end, at this moment in time Activity 1.1 has only been partially achieved, however once the plan is launched, ECN will require assistance in certain areas so that the goals set are attained. It is equally important that ECN continues to own the plan despite the implications that the earthquake may have on implementing some areas therein.

5.1.2.1 Impact

The timing for the approval of the plan is unfortunate²⁹ - it coincides with the departure of three of the commissioners within a space of one year, and the effects of the earthquake and the probability that support may be reduced by the government may also affect its initial momentum.

The impact of the plan has been rated at three, as it has yet to have an impact, although it has the potential to impact positively on the work of the ECN. It is nevertheless doubtful as to whether the ECN will have the capacity to draft a new plan in the years to come, if there is such a high rotation of staff, as many of those who partook in this exercise will no longer work for the electoral commission in five years time, especially those at the higher levels.

²⁸ Source: Five Year Strategic Plan 2015-2019 & Two Year Action Plan 2015-2016 – Page 1

²⁹ The ESP I review advocated for the strategic plan not to coincide with the departure of the commissioners, however this has been unavoidable as the ECN could not start planning until after the elections

5.1.2.2 Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

The development of the Five-Year Strategic and Two-Year Action Plan provided an excellent opportunity for ECN to build their skills in planning. It allowed the ECN to draw lessons learnt from the past elections and brought together members of the election commission from around the country to discuss the way forward and to develop a plan which addresses their individual needs and requirements.

5.1.2.3 Sustainability

The development of the plan is a step in the right direction and it is completely owned by the ECN. However, given the earthquake, the unpredictable election timetable, the weak institutional capacity of the ECN, as well as the departure of key commissioners in the foreseeable future, it is essential that each department owns the plan. The ability to plan within the ECN is still fragmented and given the frequent turnover of staff and the issues mentioned above, it is essential that planning becomes an integral part of the commissions work, and individual departmental plans are forged to align with the overall Five-Year Strategic and Two-Year plan and are enabled to effectively monitor and evaluate the progress towards the targets outlined therein.

5.1.3 Output One – Activity 1.2: Support with Staff Retention and Professional Development

Activity 1.2 is perhaps the most ambitious activity envisaged in the ProDoc as it not only aims to build the professional development of the staff but also aims to tackle the issue of staff retention. The institutional growth of the ECN and its ability to sustain capacity is a problem facing all government ministries which recruit civil employees under the administrative service of the *Civil Service Act*. Civil service employees are normally eligible to be transferred from one ministry to another within two years of starting their tenure. Given the fact that there is no possibility of internal promotion, many civil servants favour this measure as it allows them to go up the professional ladder without being confined to one single institution.

Training, exposure to other regional election commissions and study visits have served as one of the incentives used to encourage staff to remain within the Election Commission. It is difficult to gauge if they have improved the retention policy within the ECN in comparison to other ministries, however there is wide spread acknowledgement that they are widely appreciated and to some extent encourage people to stay. However, the majority of the rotations that occur are due to promotion, and thus staff are reluctant to turn down a new post, especially if it means enhancing their career. To this end, while incentives are appreciated, and the offer of a continuous training programme has raised the importance of having a career in elections, ultimately it will not result in a profound change in the retention policy, as this will have to be agreed upon by a higher level than the Commission.³⁰ Furthermore, while the variety of courses and study tours offered can motivate the staff to stay, there are some who feel the lack of an established election timetable also limits their exposure to on-the-job learning, and therefore some staff are reluctant to remain as they will not see the fruit of their efforts. On the other hand, there are also some staff who do not relish the pressure that an election brings, and would prefer to leave before having to implement an election.

With regards to procurement and financial training and the importance thereof, there seems to be differences in the expectations of the development partners to what is envisaged in the ProDoc. The ProDoc envisages procurement training under Activity 2.1 but does not outline its importance above any other type of training. While it is noted that training in government procurement procedures could be strengthened under the auspices of the project, it should be equally noted that even if procurement capacity is enhanced, deep-rooted problems of perceived irregularities and the

³⁰ Please note however, that the ECN has recently drafted a letter to the government whereby the government must ask permission of the ECN prior to transferring any member of their staff to another position within another ministry.

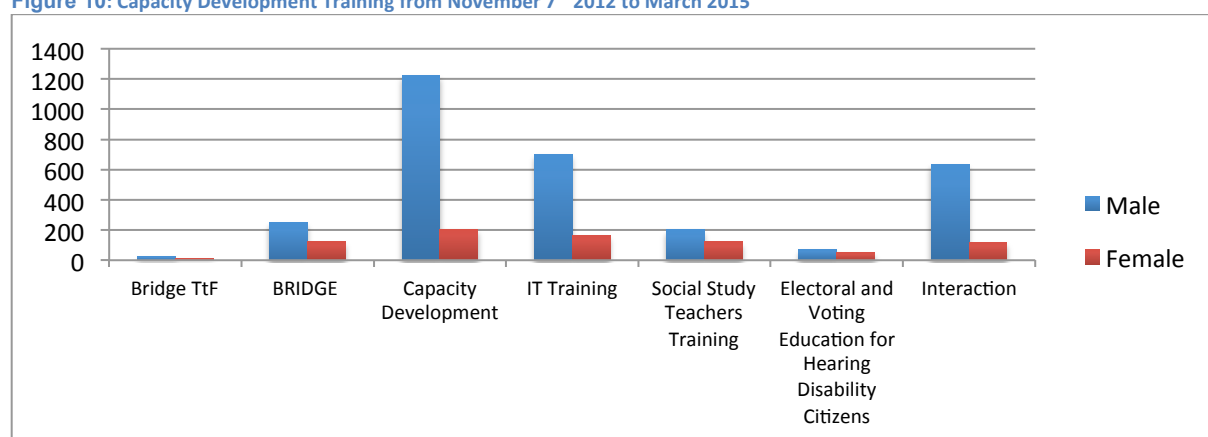
cumbersome government procedures will remain and cannot be addressed by augmented capacity alone.³¹

5.1.3.1 Impact

At the time of writing, nearly 4,000 persons have been trained on varying topics related to the elections including voter registration, communications, voter education and polling and counting. Approximately 1,300 persons received training during the 2013 CA Elections. Although the number of women trained is relatively low, this reflects the number of women working inside the ECN and thus is proportional to the number of women in the workforce.

A large number of trainings have been imparted aimed at addressing specific lacunas in the various departments of the ECN. These trainings have added value to the capacity of the recipients of the training. The topics of the trainings followed on from various training and capacity development assessments,³² which have been conceived by the project and represent a base for the projects capacity building programme; the majority of these trainings were in the guise of workshops and provision of skills under a training context aimed at individuals. While acknowledging the importance of building individual capacities, it is essential that the capacity of ECN as an institution be strengthened. Although the trainings are deemed useful, it is unclear to what extent the various trainings are being utilised in the individual's work and how these trainings in turn have strengthened the institutional development of the ECN.

Figure 10: Capacity Development Training from November 7th 2012 to March 2015



While it is difficult to ascertain what percentage of the staff have been retained since the start of the project, an approximate guess puts the retention of staff that have already been trained by ESP at around 67³³%.³⁴ Furthermore, the project is now targeting lower level staff, as they are more prone to stay longer periods than middle to upper management who often are promoted more quickly and leave the ECN after undergoing various trainings. It should be noted that while staff are rotated to work in other ministries, the ECN can call back staff during an election; to this end the individual capacities are not entirely lost.

Nonetheless, a piecemeal approach to training, while beneficial, has meant that many of the departments still do not have ingrained and established procedures and do not apply advanced planning into their every day work. Departmental plans do not exist, and the ECN acknowledges that

³¹ This supports the conclusions of the original ProDoc which states that “it is important to recognize that there are numerous challenges in this area which go well beyond electoral matters, and training for ECN staff is not likely to be enough”.

³² These assessments respond to the recommendation outlined in the ESP I Review, which recommended a detailed joint capacity building strategy between the project and the ECN.

³³ The majority of the transfers normally occur at senior level such as Joint Secretary or Secretary level.

³⁴ This figure is arrived at by comparing the ECN organigram for the period of 2013-2015.

much of their work is still on an ad hoc basis and does not fully work towards an electoral cycle approach.

Archiving of documents are essential and to date, approximately 25% of the documents are digitalised. Subsequent to the 2013 CA Elections, ESP supported the production of the first CD with all of the main documents of electoral process, including the Legal Framework, ECN decisions, Press Releases, Voter Education Materials. These CDs were distributed among ECN staff, Political Parties, Civil Society Organisations and other stakeholders.³⁵ Nevertheless, the institutional memory due to an inefficient archiving system is still relatively weak and this impacts on the efficiency of ECN to carry out their work. Notwithstanding, in the light of the earthquake, ECN is taking every care to ensure that essential documents are not lost so that they can continue with their work and build the institutional records.

5.1.3.2 Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

As indicated above, various trainings have been conducted. Training on Procurement Management took place in December 2012 whereby 30 persons were trained with the support of ESP. Furthermore, in 2012, 2013 and 2014 ECN officials were provided with on-the-job training whereby they were involved during the bid opening and technical evaluation of major procurement items. This type of training is invaluable as the officers involved were able to understand international standards in regards to procurement and developed new skills, which would have not been possible with training alone. Furthermore, two officers were sent to Copenhagen whereby they participated in the bid evaluation that provided essential on-the-job learning as well as clearer understanding how international standards apply to procurement. A total of 20 individuals took part in this type of capacity building.

In line with the general trainings conducted, baseline Data illustrates that the majority of ECN staff both at HQs and national level found the trainings to be useful for their work, and many requested that similar trainings to be provided for the future. Unfortunately, there is no immediate follow up or evaluation of individual trainings and therefore the data contained in the baseline survey is very generalised and it is not clear as to which trainings are the most useful. Furthermore, it is unclear how these trainings are being used in the day-to-day work of the staff. Some staff members stated that they learned more on-the-job learning than in individual training events, and others who were interviewed were unable to make the direct link between their work and some of the trainings they had received. Nevertheless, all persons interviewed found the trainings useful and appreciated the methodology used.

5.1.3.3 Sustainability

Sustainability of this activity is difficult to gauge, as there are many pertinent issues under this particular activity to be addressed.

Training

While individual training is important, in order to mitigate the staff rotation and to ensure a stronger institutional memory, it is essential to align trainings with on-the-job learning and for said trainings to be more strategic in building individual departments rather than individual capacities. Training should continue, however prior to the conducting of training, departments should examine the importance of the training and who will benefit from it the most. This is not only for the continuation of trainings, but study visits and other useful tools for enhancing capacity.

For those who undergo study visits, template reports should be used to ensure that the knowledge acquired is retained and shared with staff upon their arrival.

³⁵ Various copies are also kept at the EEIC

All trainings should be evaluated both on their performance and their usefulness and follow up evaluations should be done on a sample of trainings to ensure that the newly acquired knowledge is being applied in the workplace.

Staff Retention

The issue of retention is an issue that cannot be solely addressed by the project, and therefore institutional strengthening should be enhanced while supporting the ECN with any possible strategy they may want to employ to combat retention. Handover notes are still not the norm, and this needs to be institutionalized. The need for effective planning especially in line with the recently approved strategic plan is crucial – to ensure the sustainability of ECN to work without future international support, it is essential that the institution is strengthened in its ability to plan and establish and approve procedures and policies which should be ingrained in its day-to-day work.

Procurement and Financial Management Training

The issues of procurement and financial management are important, however over emphasis on these two items will not necessarily result in a more efficient ECN. ESP has conducted several trainings and on-the-job learning activities in the area of procurement, nevertheless due to the reluctance by many civil servants to implement the Procurement Act, ESP provided procurement support under UNDP Rules and Regulations in the 2013 elections. While it is true that without the support of ESP, procurement would have gone ahead anyway, the implications and the perceived quality of the process might have come into question. These are not issues that only face the ECN but all the government ministries. To this end, while it is important to continue capacity building in this area, it needs to be acknowledged that the use of whether to use government procurement procedures or not is outside the scope of the project. With regards to the financial training, this once again is an issue which is contentious however there is recognition that ECN should be provided support to enhance book keeping skills in order to comply with standards required by donors who bilaterally contribute to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund.

5.1.4 Output One – Activity 1.3: Support with Geographic Information and Electoral Management Mapping Systems

The Geographic Information and Electoral Mapping System (GIS) has proven to be a useful tool and has facilitated much of the work of the ECN. Given the huge volume of geographical data, the GIS has enabled information to be collected on the 10,013 polling locations, 18,438 polling centres, 3,663 Village Development Committees in 130 municipalities, 240 constituencies and 75 districts. Activity 1.3. envisaged the GIS to aid in the delimitation of electoral boundaries, to record all polling stations/locations, disseminate election results, and to use for the distribution of various comparative statistics.

5.1.4.1 Impact

The impact of the system has been very positive, it not only stores information on all polling location/centres locations but records also the quality of the accessibility of the polling location, the type of building available, and other important factors to consider when distributing materials to the individual polling location/centre. It also stores information on how many voters are registered broken down by gender. Within 24 hours of the election results being announced, it was able to produce accurate voter turnout, and results on digitalized maps. Furthermore, the maps were used by the security forces and the Joint Electoral Operation Centre (JEOC) in order to ascertain the whereabouts of hot spots and were used to plan for distribution and collection of election materials.

The ECN with the technical assistance of ESP published the first ever Electoral Atlas of Nepal which was unveiled by the Honourable Vice President of Nepal, Mr. Parmananda Jha during the fifth meeting of the Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) organized in

Kathmandu on 29-30 November 2014. The Electoral Atlas of Nepal is a comprehensive collection of district-wise electoral maps, information and Constituent Assembly (CA) Elections 2008 and 2013 results prepared based on the ground data received from the Election Commission, Nepal and all District Election Offices (DEO) spread across the country.

5.1.4.2 Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

The contribution to the capacity development of the ECN has been relatively high, whereby all district staff and those at headquarters have been trained on how to collect data. They are able to independently without the use of the project, plot Global Positioning System coordinates and to input all the relevant data needed for the mapping.

5.1.4.3. Project Achievements beyond the Planned Project Outputs

The GIS has had a number of achievements beyond the planned project outputs. These include the use of the maps by the security forces to plan their activities as well as deployment and distribution maps. They have also been used to draw up comparative maps of invalid votes and turnout figures in order to help the project identify where stronger voter education may be needed as well as their ability to display the results in a quick and efficient way.

Following the devastating Earthquake on 25 April 2015, the GIS Officer was deployed at UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination) at OSOCC Assessment Cell supporting strategic Information Management and GIS/Mapping services for a broader humanitarian community and national agencies. The GIS coordinates of the polling locations will also enable the ECN to check whether any of these locations will need to be changed due to damage caused during the earthquakes.

5.1.4.4. Sustainability

The activity results have been quite successful however to date there is no ownership of GIS by the ECN given the technical requirements to maintain it. At present, the project is concentrating on building technical capacity to design the maps, as this is very technical and will require ECN staff to be trained in order to ensure that the technology is not lost once the project leaves. This will also need to filter down to the regions and the districts, as they already know how to collect the data but do not yet know how to develop the maps.

5.1.5 Output One – Activity 1.4: Support with Creation and Display of New Voter Register

Out of the four activities envisaged under output one, the voters register is the most successful and has been achieved according to the result anticipated in the ProDoc, however given the magnitude of the earthquake(s) and its potential effect on the continuous voter registration (CVR) and the voters roll itself, it is essential that support is continued in this area.

5.1.5.1 Impact

The impact of the voter register has been positive. In 2008, the confidence in the accuracy of the voter register was weak as it did not have “adequate mechanism for regular maintenance and auditing to identify multiple entries and other anomalies³⁶” and it was stated that “a comprehensive review of the voter register is required to ensure greater inclusiveness, reliability and accuracy.”

Under the auspices of the project a total of 12,147,865 persons were registered including 6,166,829 (51%) of women for the 2013 CA Elections (This was an increase of nearly 2% as compared to

³⁶ EUEOM Final Report 2008

2008).³⁷ The new register enabled the ECN to address issues which were highlighted in the 2008 process, such as the: i). The removal of duplicate registrants; ii) Removal of deceased voters; iii) amendments to voters names and their date of birth; and iv) exclusion of minorities and disadvantaged groups. As a result, more confidence was instilled in the ECN and the electoral process.

Subsequent to the elections, continuous registration has continued and as of April 2015, 13,260,981 (80.43% of the eligible voter population³⁸) have been registered.³⁹ In some areas, voter registration has taken place in the vicinity of the offices that issue the citizenship certificates and this has contributed to an increase in the number of persons registered. Data is still to be integrated into the main database as at present there is no online service to directly input the information or the updates at district level and instead data needs to be stored and then sent to Kathmandu for data entry into the database.

5.1.5.2 Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

The ECN has received numerous trainings on how to update the voter register, and to date has been successful in promoting voter registration in all the districts. The need for international consultants has been reduced during the implementation of ESP II and ECN computer operators are now able to troubleshoot and impart trainings on most aspects of the voter register themselves. While essential training on how to conduct voter registration has been done, the change over to a new system and the ability to update and maintain the register training still needs to be carried out.

5.1.5.3. Project Achievements beyond the Planned Project Outputs

During the earthquake the National Police contacted the ECN with the purpose to use the voter registration information on biometric fingerprint identifications for the unclaimed dead bodies (victims of the earthquake) at the hospitals. The information has not yet been used, but it may be utilised in the future.

5.1.5.4. Sustainability

In order to ensure sustainability for the future, the project should provide support in the following five areas:

Reallocation of the Voter Registration Database

1. The 25th April Earthquake caused substantial damage to the current ECN building where the current database for the voter register is being kept, and thus the database needs to be re-located to another location. While the current database is not damaged, it is imperative to move it out of the current building as soon as possible in the case that the state of the building should continue to deteriorate. The actual re-location of the database should not be difficult but the installation and set up of the equipment could be a challenge, and technical assistance will be required from ESP. ESP will need to provide technical and financial support to establish the new location of the data centre. Establishment will include electrical, furnishings and civil construction works – transfer of all equipment (rack server including dedicated workstation) to the new location and finally install and setup (with proper cabling) and ensure proper functioning of the servers. Similarly, the transfer of two electrical back up systems 1. Battery Bank with Inverter (20KVA) and 2. Dedicated Generator (both with backup systems) will also be required to be shifted.

³⁷ The number of registered votes is now consistent with the results of the National Population Census 2011 in terms of number and sex ratio as well

³⁸ This includes persons over 16

³⁹ However the latest figures have not yet been added to the actual database

Additional Training to District Offices for the Rollout of new Software

2. A recent feasibility study for software carried out by a vendor in 2013, concluded that for the Voter Register to be sustainable for the future, a new system should be developed which would reduce maintenance costs. This system is currently being developed and training of personnel will need to be carried out.

Roll Out of Online System

3. A recent survey has concluded that all 75 districts have Internet connectivity however only 57 of them have fibre optics that maximise the reliability of the connection. In order to ensure online data transfer, reliable connectivity needs to be guaranteed. This is costly and the Government of Nepal should commit to providing these funds to ensure online connectivity.

Sustainability of voters card

4. At present the majority of the persons who have voters card do not have a sustainable card, and it is a piece of paper with a plastic pouch. In order to ensure against damage and loss, it is important that these cards are replaced with a more permanent card. The ECN has the capacity to print and issue these cards.

Sustainability of current equipment

5. Approximately 3600 registration kits have been purchased, however many of these have now become obsolete due to use and natural life span. In order to carry out continuous voter registration, an additional 1000 kits will need to be purchased for the next phase.⁴⁰

5.1.6 Lessons Learnt in the Implementation of Output One

Activity 1.2. Support with Staff Retention and Professional Development

✓ Procurement and financial training may impact on the overall capacity of the ECN (and more trainings should be done in this regard) however well trained personnel in these areas will not address some of the endemic issues which especially affect procurement at all levels within the government. To address such an issue is outside the scope of this project.

✓ Despite efforts to address the retention of staff, and to ensure better handovers, more work needs to be done, a more strategic approach needs to be adopted to ensure the institutional capacity of ECN as well as targeting individuals for trainings. Please note that to address the issue of retention in general is also outside the scope of this project)

✓ Institutional capacity should be strengthened and should include more archiving, and lessons on how to archive, more institutionalisation of procedures and documents and systematic mechanism to ensure better handovers both of transfer of knowledge as well as materials and work plans.

✓ All training sessions should be evaluated, including pre and post tests as well as evaluating the quality of the training. A sample of evaluations could then be followed up on a few months later to see what type of impact the training has had on the work. This is essential to ascertain the real impact of the trainings on the work of ECN

Activity 1.3. Support to Geographic Information and Mapping System

■ In order for GIS to be sustainable in the future, the ECN must own the system and be fully trained in its use.

Activity 1.4. Support with Creation and Display of New Voters Register

✓ Training in IT is essential for all staff, especially in relation to VR in order to ensure sustainability and for the maintenance of equipment

⁴⁰ The average lifetime of these kits is approximately 4-5 years, many of the batteries are unable to support the long working days and approximately 10% of the equipment has been damaged due to usual wear and tear.

5.1.7 Output Two - Election Cycle Conducted in an Effective, Sustainable, and Credible Manner

Output Two principally focuses on activities during the elections, however work is still being done in order to support future electoral cycles. Taking into consideration the short timeframe to implement the elections, the MTR team concludes that 75% of the activities were achieved in the context of the 2013 elections, however although activities 1.1. and 1.2. are heralded to be achieved, more work is required to have the desired impact on subsequent electoral cycles and to ensure sustainability for the future.

Figure 11: Percentage of the Attainment of the Project Objectives – Output 2

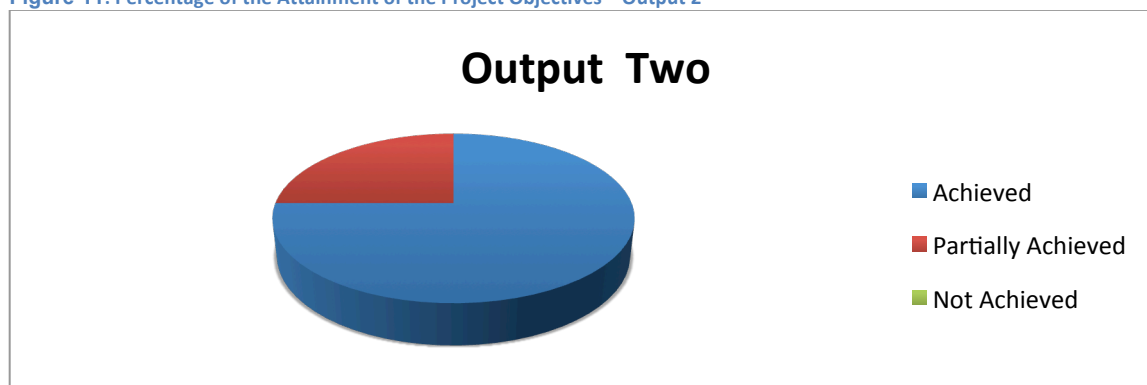


Table 2: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the ProDoc for Output Two

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
Output 2: Election Cycle conducted in an effective, sustainable and credible manner						
Activity 2.1: Support with Procedures and Training						
Clear electoral procedures resulting in a smooth electoral process, well informed electorate, and trained ECN staff.	Achieved	5	4	4	3	3
Activity 2.2.: Support with Election Operations and Logistics						
Timely development of operational plans and concepts, smooth conduct of election operations, as well as provision, transportation and storage of all election materials	Achieved	5	4	3	4	3
Activity 2.3. Support with Electoral Dispute Resolution						
Enhanced Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) skills acquired by the ECN and Judiciary, which lead to a tangible decrease in the number of unresolved disputes in future elections, thus enhancing stakeholders' confidence in elections	Partially Achieved	5	3	3	3	3
Activity 2.4: Support with Electoral Security						
Peaceful elections with any isolated incidents contained using carefully designed electoral violence mitigation strategies	Achieved	5	4	4	4	4

5.1.8 Output Two – Activity 2.1: Support with Procedures and Training

Project activity two envisaged training on the new legal system and the possible training on the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM),⁴¹ however neither of these types of training were necessary during the 2013 CA Elections, and the project thus provided essential training for the conduct of elections during 2013.

⁴¹ EVMs were not used in the 2013 CA Elections but have been used in all four by-elections which have taken place since 2013.

5.1.8.1. Impact

The call for elections at such short notice and the need to train such a large number of election personnel in a short period of time led to some level of inconsistencies in the application of procedures. Nevertheless the overall impact on the training was positive. Given the tight timeframe to work in and the continually changing political environment ECNs ability to plan early was affected and in turn impacted on the projects ability to establish clear electoral procedures which could be used for the entire electoral cycle.

5.1.8.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

During the 2013 elections, a total of 44 events in 7 thematic topics were held with the support of the ESP – communication, voter education, logistic and accounts management, security, polling and counting, election management for chief returning officers and returning officers, election observation for observers as well as general computer training for those taking part in election administration. All trainings were planned in collaboration with other partners.⁴² The training had an overall positive impact on the capacity development of ECN as did the on-the-job learning while conducting the elections. Since 2013, there have been five by-elections in Nepal,⁴³ which has provided further capacity to the local election commissions. In all five by-elections, the ECN has used EVMs and relevant training and voter education campaigns on their use were conducted.

5.1.8.3. Sustainability

On the one hand the lack of an established election timetable inhibits the election commission to properly plan however, given the fact that elections are not yet foreseen, it also provides the ECN with the support of ESP to develop procedures and plans to ensure that they are ready for any upcoming elections (including by-elections) and the remaining electoral cycle. The project with ECN needs to adopt a more strategic approach to training and ensure that the envisaged procedures are already developed prior to an election being called. This will of course be altered should the legal framework be amended, and the project needs to be able to provide such support should this be the case.

5.1.9 Output Two – Activity 2.2: Support with Election Operations and Logistics

Overall, election preparation went well, but observers noted a lack of contingency planning and in some cases an ad-hoc approach to logistics arrangements.

Observing Nepal's 2008 Constituent Assembly Election – The Carter Center

Observer reports in 2008 commented that some of the logistical arrangements were ad-hoc and required further support, to this end it was envisaged that ESP would lend support to develop operational concepts and plans, including logistical plans to the support of staff deployment, distribution and retrieval of materials, storage of materials, development of communication plans and infrastructure, as well as potentially with procurement.

5.1.9.1. Impact

The impact on the electoral process was quite positive, especially as a result of the setting up of the Joint Election Operations Centre (JEOC), the Media Centre and the Observers Resource Centre. The JEOC was pivotal in enabling the ECN to plan accordingly and to distribute materials ahead of schedule. The establishment of the Media Centre enabled the media to have regular access to ECN and allowed the ECN to conduct efficient press conferences, issue press releases and the announcement of the results. The Centre was also used as a place whereby observers could seek accreditation. The Centre was further supported by ESP in establishing a media monitoring unit, which although added value, monitoring started too late to have the desired effect on the overall process. ECN were hesitant to fully implement the code of conduct and although sometimes taking

⁴² IFES and IIDEA

⁴³ By-Elections took place on 22nd June 2014 in Kathmandu, Chitwan, Baridya and Kailali and on 11th May 2015, in Baglung

action against some media houses did little to follow up or actions were sometimes perceived as weak.

25 items of materials of sensitive and a non-sensitive nature were procured by the project. These included cutting and numbering machines and 485 metric tons of paper for printing nearly 30 million ballots; 20,000 bags for polling and returning officers, Xerox machines and toners for printing 12.1 million voter identification cards; 12.5 million plastic pouches for protection of these cards and various hardware and software for supporting elections. While it would have been preferred to use local procurement procedures, they were abandoned at the last minute due to cumbersome procedures and fear that the process was susceptible to manipulation. The project was able to step in and delivered important aspects of the election, which further contributed to its transparency.

Non-sensitive material for the districts were procured at the local level however procured sensitive materials was then transported from the capital to the districts. The lack of efficient and established plans also had an important impact as the boycott by political parties which caused strikes influenced on the plan especially in the areas of procurement and transportation. Violence ensued due to the strikes and by day many of the vehicles were torched and thus transport was unable to deliver the material at night, and thus many of the plans had to be changed and alternatives found.

5.1.9.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

This activity contributed significantly to the credibility of the election and ESP staff members rate logistic planning as either very good (60%) or excellent (20%). The ECN obtained essential on-the-job learning especially in the regions whereby 12⁴⁴ international advisors with five national advisors were co-located with ECN in the five regional hubs where essential on-the-job mentoring in logistics and operations was provided. Furthermore, although ESP favours the use of local procurement procedures above those of UNDP, ECN staff have benefitted widely from being involved in all UNDP Procurement procedures and have been able to enhance their skills in the area of procurement especially with regards to the development of specifications, attendance to the bid opening and bid evaluation processes and in one case, two ECN officials participated in a three weeks process of procurement, and bid-evaluation of software development for voter registration in United Nations Procurement Support Office (UNPSO) Copenhagen.

5.1.9.3. Project Achievements beyond the Planned Project Outputs

The project has supported the establishment of various centres such as the JEOC, Media Centre, Call Centre and the Observer Resource Centre, which all had a positive effect on the elections. Furthermore, the Media and Observer Resource Centre still exist, and the media centre is now being used at least once a month to hold press conferences, and trainings. Furthermore, the establishment of a call centre in the run up to the elections which took over 2500 calls in the period of November 14-27 was another effective endeavour to combat potential conflict and misinformation. The centre provided voters with information on where to vote and whether their name was on the list. ESP supported with the concept, infrastructure, staff and equipment.

5.1.9.4 Sustainability

The establishment of the centres are sustainable in themselves, however unfortunately the activity result of the development of operational plans and concepts was not realised and thus operational plans rather than day-to-day plans need to be developed and used for planning for the future. These should align with the plans already set out in the Five-Year Strategic and Two-Year Action Plan.

⁴⁴ Two of the international advisors were funded by AusAid

Between July 23 and Nov. 17, the ECN received 187 complaints regarding violations of the code of conduct. In most cases, the ECN's response was to issue warnings or to request parties and candidates not to repeat the violation. The commission did not impose any fines, although it had the power to do so (and for serious violations, to disqualify candidates). According to the ECN, no fines were imposed by election officials in the districts. The ECN was criticized by some parties, civil society, and media for not taking stronger actions in response to these violations. *Carter Center Final Report 2013*

5.1.10 Output Two – Activity 2.3: Support with Electoral Dispute Resolution

In general the “legal provisions establishing the complaints and appeals mechanism must be coherent, clear and comprehensive and guarantee impartiality, timeliness and due process in the adjudication of complaints.”⁴⁵ The Election Dispute Resolution (EDR) mechanism from 2008 which is heralded as weak remained in place for the 2013 CA elections, to this end the activity result in the ProDoc is considered unrealistic and ambitious.⁴⁶ The training of ECN and the judiciary on the EDR alone will not tackle the

weak legal framework and the inability of the judiciary to provide an effective and timely remedy. Furthermore, although an assessment of the 2008 EDR mechanism was undertaken at the beginning of 2013, the recommendations therein were not wholly adopted which in some cases contributed to the weak implementation of the EDR Framework.

5.1.10.1. Impact

The impact of the activities held under this activity is not very strong. A consultant was deployed to assist the ECN in allocating seats to political parties under Proportional Representation following affirmative action as stated in the interim Constitution and electoral laws. Some weeks prior to the CA elections, training for preparation of the elections was conducted for the judiciary/returning officers in the five regional hubs. However comprehensive training on the EDR system and its effective use amongst the general public did not take place. International Observation Reports highlighted the poor response of the ECN to various election complaints and stated that the majority of these were dealt with “informally and generally only resulted in warnings.” Complaints on Election Day were allegedly investigated, however investigations were limited to asking the election officials if they could corroborate the allegations. ECN encouraged the submission of complaints to the Constituent Assembly Court if the complainants were not satisfied. No written explanations for the ECNS decisions to reject a complaint were issued.

According to the Election Observer Reports of 2008,⁴⁷ a total of 16 cases were brought to the Constitutional Court, and ten of these had been decided by December 2008.⁴⁸ In comparison, subsequent to the CA Elections in 2013, 22 cases were brought before the Constitutional Court and the graph below demonstrates none of the cases were resolved within the 90-day timeline as stipulated in the law. This not only violates the national law but also goes against international best practice and international standards, which provides for an effective legal remedy. The majority of the cases took over three hundred days⁴⁹ to process and for a final decision to be taken.

⁴⁵ Review and Assessment of Nepal's Legal Framework for Electoral Dispute Resolution – Marla Joy Morry – February 2013

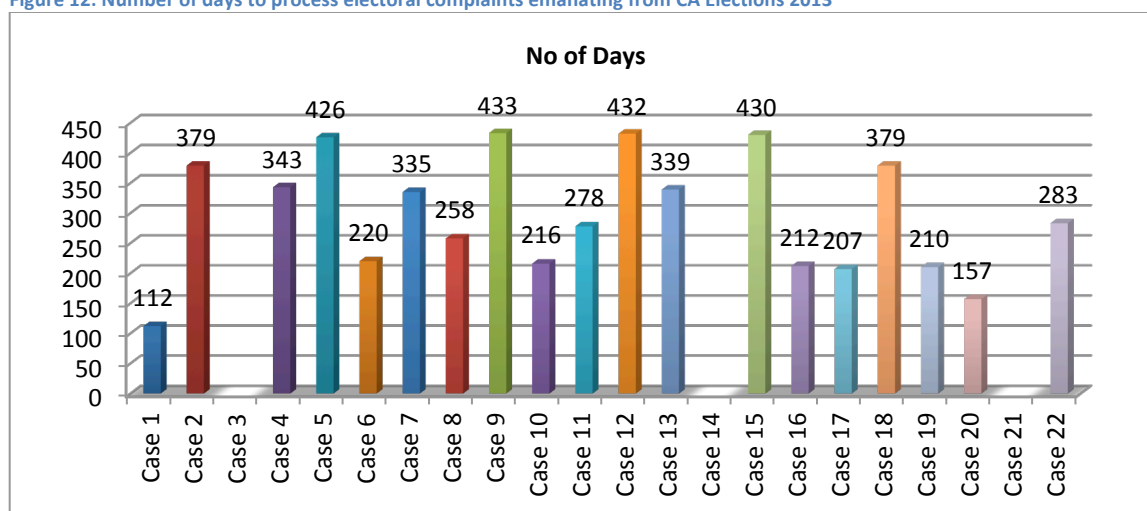
⁴⁶ The activity result aimed to train the ECN and the Judiciary in the anticipation that sufficient training would decrease the number of unresolved disputes.

⁴⁷ Sources – EUEOM Final Report 2008 and 2013 and The Carter Center Final Report 2008 and 2013

⁴⁸ As of October 2008, a total of 16 cases had been brought forward to the constituent assembly court, of which six were decided and 10 were still pending. – Source Carter Centre Final Report 2013

⁴⁹ Please note that the bench only meets once a week, and the electoral offences were not high on their priority, hence the decisions taking so long.

Figure 12: Number of days to process electoral complaints emanating from CA Elections 2013⁵⁰



Although an effective complaints adjudication process does raise public confidence and trust in the overall electoral process and ultimately the legitimacy of the final results, the delay in these decisions did not impact heavily on the outcome of the elections. There could be a number of reasons for this, including the lack of information surrounding the possibility of submitting a complaint, the overall trust that has been vested in the current ECN, and the public's acceptance that the law and procedures especially with regards to electoral complaints are not strongly implemented. This acceptance may differ in a local election, and for the future, more needs to be done. The project may not be able to influence the quality of the legal framework, however recommendations that were highlighted in the Review and Assessment of Nepal's Legal Framework for Electoral Dispute Resolution in order to at least strengthen ECNs resolve in dealing with electoral disputes should be re-visited.

5.1.10.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

The Project's recent support to the development of a "Model Election Code of Conduct" training is commended, however this needs to be strengthened during the future elections in order to ensure efficient implementation, which has been weak in the past. The ECN has conducted various visits to other regional Election Management Bodies to discuss EDR aspects with for example Australia, Afghanistan⁵¹ and has also conducted an exchange visit to the EMB in Mexico. All of these have contributed to building the capacity of the ECN in this area. The ECN had planned to mirror other EMBs with regards to EDR but have decided that for the time being it is too costly, and will therefore not establish an EDR unit within the Commission.

5.1.10.3. Sustainability

Given the fact that there is no current date for local elections or any other elections, the time must be used to learn lessons from the previous elections and ensure that important information is not lost from the last EDR process. It is important to digitalize all the cases and to ensure the development of a database for future elections both at national and district level.

Furthermore, the project should extend its support to the legal section to archive past cases and to digitalise information on political parties. ESP would need to support the development of the software for the database and strengthen research skills to use data and software.

⁵⁰ Please note that case 3, 14 and 21 are yet to be decided.

⁵¹ Although the team did not travel to Afghanistan, they did meet with the Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Afghanistan in Australia to discuss EDR issues.

5.1.11 Output Two – Activity 2.4: Support with Electoral Security

“All these incidents have contributed to a general atmosphere of fear and intimidation and have seriously undermined the right to campaign freely.”

EUEOM Final Report 2008

The threat of insecurity and violence in the lead up to any future electoral event in Nepal was identified as a key issue by the UN Needs Assessment Mission which was conducted in 2011. This was further reiterated by the

international and national observer groups that stated that for example “the campaign environment was tense across the country and there were numerous incidents of violence involving political parties. In this respect, a general climate of fear and intimidation prevailed in many parts of the country during the campaign period.” With this in mind, activity 2.4. aimed to support the electoral process by assessing potential for violence, and designing and implementing other mitigation strategies to reduce the level of violence in the upcoming CA Elections. One of the principal outputs of this activity was the installation of a Joint Elections Operations Center (JEOC) which addressed the coordination of security and electoral operations within all 75 districts bearing in mind that: a) the peculiar geographical diversity of Nepal (hills, mountains and plans) b) the consequent logistical constraints such as unreachable locations; c) potential security issues. The objectives of the JEOC are:

- Conducting joint operations among six relevant institutions, ECN, Home Ministry (HM), Nepal Army (NA), Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal Investigation Department (NID);
- Coordinating the Regional Centres which collects and consolidates information from several sources such as districts, local authorities, minority groups, NGOs and private sector agencies;
- Managing Information;
- Coordinating activities related to incident management;
- Employing all resources to translate intelligence and policies into action.

5.1.11.1. Impact

Overall, Election violence decreased compared to 2008 and, most likely, also compared to previous elections.

Carter Center – Observing Nepal’s 2013 Constituent Assembly Election

The impact of the mitigation strategy and especially the JEOC contributed to a positive effect on the elections. The number of incidences as compared to 2008 decreased dramatically. In 2008 there were over 50 election related killings,

whereas in 2013 there was only one. Similarly, there were 116 abductions/kidnappings in 2008 and only two in 2013.⁵²

As a result of the JEOC which provided guidance to the five regional centres to facilitate the ECNs tasks, the Centre was able to quickly identify hot spots and provide timely and proper responsiveness based on the information received from the regions. The development of GIS maps also aided the process as security forces together with ECN could identify the locations of polling locations/centres and had detailed information of all areas of the country. To this end, although the more peaceful environment may be attributed, in part, to a changed political scene and the development of the peace process, it has also been acknowledged that the well-coordinated security plan that the government put in place also contributed to a more peaceful election with the JEOC being at the centre of this plan.

5.1.11.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

The project supported a team of trainers (four men and five women) who were entrusted with the task of orientating the trainers of Nepal Police at the regional level. The objective of the programmes was to:-

⁵² Source: Observing Nepal’s 2008 and 2013 Constituent Assembly Elections – The Carter Center

- Sensitize the trainers of Nepal Police about the potential triggers of electoral violence
- Provide training on psychological violence and gender based violence (against women)
- Orient them about the mitigating measures including existing legal provisions and EDR
- Promote coordination among all key stakeholders of CA election in general and returning and polling officers and the security officers in particular

5.1.11.4. Sustainability

It is unclear as to what the next elections may bring in terms of security, however, there is now recorded data and a mapping of all generalised hotspots and the whereabouts where incidences occurred. The use of this data should be used in order to identify the causes of the possible hotspots, and to see if there is anything that can be done in the future to mitigate the problems arising from these areas.

5.1.12 Lessons Learnt in the Implementation of Output Two

Activity 2.1. Support with Procedures and Training

- ✓ Strategic planning was a useful exercise, sitting down with relevant staff in certain units should take place to enable them to make their own plans in line with the activities outlined in the Strategic Plan/Two-Year Action Plan and to ensure that generic plans are in place for operations, and voter education and perhaps other relevant departments.

Activity 2.2. Support with Election Operations and Logistics

Although the support to elections operations was quite comprehensive, the short amount of time to implement activities meant that Operational planning by sections and departments was not conducive to developing a comprehensive integrated election operational plan.

Activity 2.3. Support with Electoral Dispute Resolution

- ✓ EDR needs to be given more attention especially in preparation for any possible local elections and support needs to be extended to the legal section as a whole in order to ensure that there is full coverage to this section throughout the electoral cycle.

5.1.13 Output Three – Increased democratic participation in the next cycle of elections, particularly for under-represented and disadvantaged segments of the Nepali society

An Election Management Body normally has the overall responsibility to implement an election, however an enabling environment to conduct elections is paramount. To this end, the role of civil society to help create such an environment to ensure that elections are not only technically sound but are inclusive, participatory and transparent, is essential.

Upon examination of the project, the team would concur in stating that three of the activities have been achieved and one has been partially achieved. Activities 1.1. and 1.3. will require more strategic planning in order to make the already consolidated gains sustainable for the future.

Figure 13: Percentage of the Attainment of the Project Objectives – Output 1

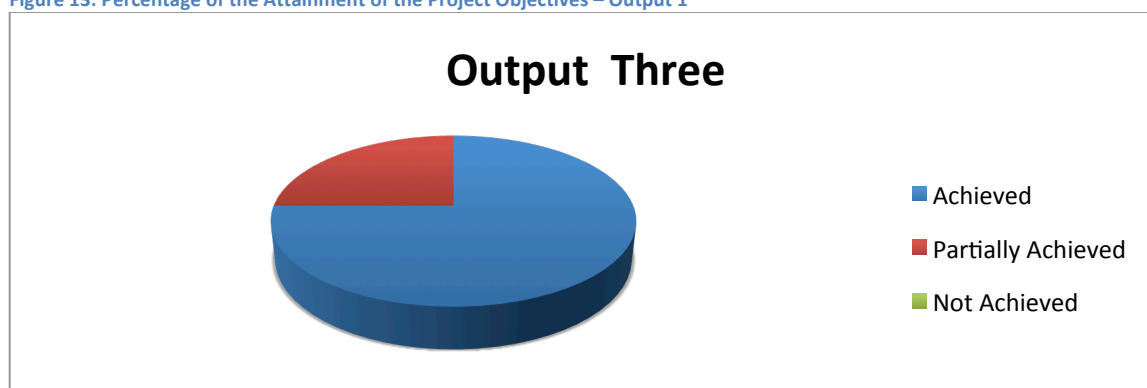


Table 3: Attainment of the project immediate objectives and outputs as per the ProDoc for Output Three

	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability
Output 3: Increased democratic participation in the next cycle of elections, particularly for under-represented and disadvantaged segments of the Nepali society						
Activity 3.1. Support with Public Outreach, Civic and Voter Education						
Voters well informed about electoral process resulting in an increased voter turnout, especially by under-represented groups and disadvantaged segments of the Nepali society	Achieved	5	4	3	4	3
Activity 3.2. Support with the Establishment of Electoral Education and Information Center(s)						
The enhanced institutional capacity of the Election Commission of Nepal to train its staff, educate voters, and engage more actively with the media and other stakeholders and build its own "historical records"	Achieved	5	4	4	4	4
Activity 3.3. Support with External Relations						
Well informed and engaged civil society and political contestants facilitate increased contribution and independent observation of elections by civil society groups and party agents, which contributes to a transparent electoral process	Partially Achieved	4	3	3	3	3
3.4. Support with Gender, Social Inclusion, and vulnerable Groups						
The mainstreaming of policies and mechanisms for inclusion of women and other minorities, marginalised and vulnerable groups which include Madhesis, Dalits, Janajatis, elderly, youth and others.	Achieved	5	4	4	4	4

5.1.14 Output Three – Activity 3.1: Support with Public Outreach, Civic and Voter Education

Public outreach, civic and voter education is an important component of any electoral process, and an EMB normally does not have sufficient resources to conduct a full-scale campaign especially in the rural and hard to reach areas. To this end, EMBs normally reach out to civil society and other pertinent actors to help carry out activities which expand their reach beyond the district capitals. In 2013 ESP supported the ECN in organizing a countrywide voter education campaign through the use of print, electronic and social media and the employment of 14,909 volunteers (24% male and 76% female) including 4700 Electoral Education Workers (EEW) to mobilise voters. One EEW was assigned for each Village Development Committee (VDC) and Voter Education Volunteers (VEV) (who are mainly teachers) were assigned to an individual polling location. The initiative aimed at raising awareness about the conduct of elections amongst the general public. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) through TV and radio programmes were aired on 12 TV channels and 350 radios across the country, these proved most effective. Street dramas with the additional support of

IFES took place in all 240 constituencies and were adapted according to the local context and language. Approximately three dramas took place in each constituency.

The project also worked with UN Women to raise awareness and adapt voter education material to female voters. Local organisations including the Deaf Association was also supported to raise awareness for deaf and the hard-of hearing voters and for the first time, sign language was used in voter education material. Other means such as online services and facebook were also used to target the physically challenged.

5.1.14.1. Impact

In general, the impact of this activity on the elections was positive, and there is no doubt that the voter education campaign was well received. The ECN was able to muster local social mobilizers and volunteers at the grass root level in order to carry out a massive voter education campaign, which encouraged nearly 80% of registered voters to go out and cast their ballot. Although not all data was disaggregated by gender, there are definite indications that more women partook in this election, and the involvement of disabled persons and the information afforded thereto has improved as a direct result of the project.

This activity did appear to impact on voter turnout which increased by almost 17% in percentage terms as compared to 2008, however the number of actual voters decreased. Nevertheless, given the unreliability of the former voters register, it is difficult to ascertain whether this fall was because of a decreased interest in these elections or because the number of voters was highly inflated in the 2008 elections. The number of invalid did decrease slightly by 0.19% for the FPTP and 0.46% for the PR election respectively, invalid votes ranged from 1.81 and 1.33 in Humla⁵³ to 8.95 and 6.39 in Bautadi for the FPTP and PR elections respectively. The slight decrease could be attributed to the project but it could also be because the general public was already familiar with the electoral system from the 2008 elections

5.1.14.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

The activity contributed to building the capacity in some areas of voter education. Training of volunteers and also the District Election Officers (DEOs) was conducted, and some media outlets were also provided training with regards to media monitoring. ESP staff rate the effectiveness of voter education during the 2013 elections at either very good (52%) or excellent (20%).⁵⁴ In the course of support to the 2013 elections, some of the ideas put forward by ESP were not accepted by the senior management and much of the traditional voter education strategy and materials utilised in former electoral processes were adopted. To this end, the department still does not have sufficient capacity to plan effectively for future elections.

5.1.14.3. Project Achievements beyond the Planned Project Outputs

To date approximately 250 social study teachers have been trained to impart voter education to children in high school. This will inevitably have a positive effect on the next generation of voters and has been taken up throughout the country which will contribute to a more profound knowledge of elections amongst the general public both in schools and at home.

5.1.14.4. Sustainability

Given the weak capacity to strategize plans for the future, it is imperative that the department starts to develop its future strategy for upcoming elections. This plan should align with the approved Five-Year Strategic and Two-Year Action Plan. This plan should take into consideration the findings of the Voter Education Assessment which was conducted subsequent to the 2013 elections and ensure the

⁵³ 0% invalid votes were also recorded in Kathmandu, however it is unsure whether this is entirely correct

⁵⁴ 16% rated it as average and 12% answered "I don't know"

localised context is taken into account for planning. This is especially relevant where invalid votes were high and turnout was low.

Given the reluctance by some members of the ECN to adopt more modern concepts in voter education design and methodologies, ESP should take the time to explain the different possibilities and usages of more modern designs and demonstrate their potential positive effect on civic and voter education. It is important to have the buy-in of both the department heads as well as the upper management belonging to the PEB. Reluctance to adopt new methods is sometimes due to misunderstandings and misconceptions rather than an outright rejection of new strategies.

Given the lack of adequate resources to outreach to the whole country, it is imperative that any new strategy uses grassroots to the maximum and that political parties, CSOs, especially youth group networks should be trained and mobilised to educate first time voters, women and marginalised groups.

ECN should continue with the training of social study teachers to impart voter education in schools and consider forging new partnerships with the Ministry of Youth and Sport for targeting the youth groups at the grassroots level. Finally, synergies should be sought with other similar UNDP projects to outreach to the grassroots. A partnership should be forged with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local development and the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) to work with social mobilizers (who were already trained and worked during the CA elections 2013) for regular voter education programme through LGCDP "reflect" programme for the target groups (Marginalized communities).

5.1.15 Output Three – Activity 3.2. – Support with Establishment of Electoral Education and Information Centre(s)

The Electoral Education and Information Centre was formally inaugurated on 24th May 2012. The centre provides voter education and public outreach to students, teachers, civil society organisations, political parties, police and representatives from different government ministries. In 2012, ESP afforded financial support to the operational costs but by the end of 2014, the ECN is fully responsible for these costs.

5.1.16.1. Impact

The EEIC, as well as containing essential records on the past elections and showcasing the progress of democratisation in Nepal, has an important function in educating and informing its visitors about the electoral process and the democratic process in general. To date, some 19,296 (46% women⁵⁵), (including 1221 Non Governmental Organisations/International Non Governmental Organisations) had visited the EEIC and all those who had the chance to evaluate their visit rated it as very good and educational. The impact on school children has been particularly important whereby children have tended to do better in election related subjects in school after having visited the centre.

In 2014, the additional decision to undertake the refurbishment of three more centres in the regions was approved. Approximately USD\$188,284 will be needed to complete the installation of these centres. In total, activity 3.2 has spent over its budget, and the efficiency of developing new centres was called into question.

The impact on Kathmandu has already been measured as positive, although more needs to be done to ensure that people are aware of its presence. Having regional centres far outweighs the initial costs, as once the centres are established, they need little maintenance, and give the ECN especially at regional level the chance to outreach to the public, including in a non election year. It heightens

⁵⁵ The number of females visiting the centre has increased by about 1% each year

the profile of the ECN in the region, and promotes interest for the elections. Its innovative approach, combining new technologies with interactive training workshops on the conduct of elections and other areas of the electoral process make it particularly attractive. The fact that schools will be able to access a local centre decentralises the ECN and its possible impact on the general population.

In total, the three regional centres could serve nearly six million⁵⁶ registered voters and persons who otherwise could not access the centre in Kathmandu will be more likely to visit the centres in the regions. Finally, the mobile interfaces will also have a positive impact as they will be able to reach out to the more rural communities.

5.1.16.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN and other Stakeholders

The EEIC has contributed substantially to enhancing the ECN to run the EEIC, various exchange visits have taken place with the Election Commission of Australia which has a similar centre. Furthermore, the EEICs ability to archive historical documents as well as presenting documentaries and presenting election related materials has been enhanced.

5.1.17.4. Sustainability

The running costs of the EEIC are now totally taken over by the ECN, and ESP is only paying for updating of regional offices, and equipment to be used in the centres. Although nearly 20,000 persons have thus far visited the EEIC in the capital, more information needs to be disseminated in order to attract more persons to visit the centre. According to the baseline survey, only 13.5%⁵⁷ of the persons surveyed were aware of its existence. Furthermore, to amplify its reach the EEIC is currently seeking new partnerships with banks and corporate houses, as well as NGOs and INGOS and various education institutions. The outreach to different organisations is essential to ensure that it continues to add value and reaches as many persons as possible.

5.1.16 Output Three – Activity 3.3. – Support with External Relations

Civil Society has a key role to play in the electoral process especially to represent key social interests, advocate policies and provide civic and voter education, normally from a non-partisan perspective. Civil society organisations will also often participate in the democratic process by fielding domestic observers to monitor the process, which can enhance the credibility and transparency of the process. ESP aimed to support civil society in order to facilitate increased participation and independent observation of the elections.

5.1.16.1. Impact

Although the project did support the establishment of the Media Centre and Observers Resource Centre and has ensured more participation by women's groups and other marginalised groups, the project still needs to support the ECN to reach out even more to civil society, political parties etc. While training is effective, and various trainings⁵⁸ have taken place for CSOs over the course of the project, regular dialogue between the ECN and civil society is not commonplace, especially in the regions.

On the other hand, regional networking has become strong with the ECN participating in various international and regional forums⁵⁹ and showcasing their successes such as the development of the Elections Atlas and the Gender Book in public. These forums encourage ECN to strive to be better

⁵⁶ Eastern Region has approximately 2,409,190 registered voters, far western region has 1,124,513 and western region has 2,201,083 registered voters.

⁵⁷ This figure related to persons surveyed throughout the Territory of Nepal

⁵⁸ This includes a workshop on electoral administration and management for CSOs, BRIDGE Tutorial training for the Media and Electoral and Voter Education Training for Hearing Disability Citizens

⁵⁹ The ECN Nepal was due to host the Joint Task Force Conference on the 4th – 8th May, however due to the earthquake the conference was cancelled.

and the exchange of international good practices, and learning from south-south is nothing but positive.

5.1.16.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN and other Stakeholders

There is no doubt that the supporting of the Media Centre and Observers Resource Centre has had a positive effect on the relationship between ECN and Civil Society and the Media, furthermore the hiring of media advisors during the CA 2013 elections contributed to the development of the ECN in the area of public relations.

The project had envisaged to provide small grants to civil society but decided against this, and instead entered into various agreements with the Deaf Association and the Nepal Press Institute as well as the hiring of street drama performers from different NGOs under one umbrella organization called Gurukul for voter education throughout the country.⁶⁰ ESP also provided some trainings to various CSOs however this was not widespread.

5.1.16.3. Sustainability

The project needs to reach out to more organisations, or partner with key organisations in order to ensure that there is a larger impact at the grassroots level. In line with the ECNs Strategic Plan, Headquarters as well as the regions and in the districts should be encouraged to strengthen their relationship with civil society and political parties.

5.1.17 Output Three – Activity 3.4: Support with Gender, Social Inclusion and Vulnerable Groups

In 2010 ECN and UNDP commissioned a study on Gender Mapping in the Field of Elections in Nepal which identify gaps in the organizational, institutional and individual capacities with regards to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) issues in the ECN. Activity 3.4 aimed to address some of the issues outlined in the report. After two years of implementation of this particular component of the project, ESP has supported ECN to realise many of the recommendations highlighted in the report and as a result ECN owns the approved gender policy and is currently drafting the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategic and Action Plans. GESI is also firmly rooted in the ECNs Five-Year Strategic and Two-Year Action Plan. To this end, the MTR team concludes that this activity is one of the most successful within the project and commends the ECNs effort to continue to strive to improve on the current results.

5.1.17.1. Impact

The original ProDoc envisaged 7 different activities to achieve the established activity result.⁶¹ To date six of these have been achieved. The Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Policy was approved under the Project and ECN with the support of IFES are designing the GESI Strategic and Action Plans. The Policy has no doubt had an important impact on women's involvement in all areas of the electoral process. For example, in the 2008 elections the number of women working in the voter registration only amounted to 13.1%⁶² as compared to 51.4% in 2013. The overall number of women who worked in the 2013 elections amounted to 30.4%.⁶³

The impact of female enumerators working in voter registration had a substantial impact on the voter registration figures whereby for the first time a 51% / 49% of female and male registered voters were captured. (This figure is considered more representative of the ratio of women to men who reside in Nepal). Furthermore, in 2013 over 120 polling stations were entirely "managed" by

⁶⁰ Some of this activity was jointly funded by IFES

⁶¹ Activity Result: The mainstreaming of policies and mechanisms for inclusion of women and other minorities, marginalized and vulnerable groups which include Madhesis, Dalits, Janjatis, elderly, youth and others.

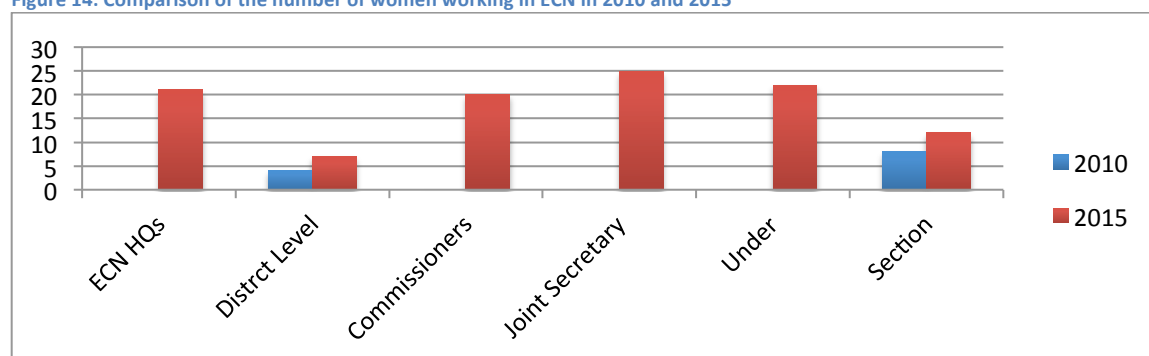
⁶² Nevertheless this figure increased in the Pilots Voters' List With Photo Project 2010 whereby 58.6% of women were enumerators

⁶³ No overall figures are available for 2008 however figures in 2010 state approximately 28% of women were involved in electoral activities.

women, although this is not an important number in percentage terms, it does represent a start, and is an improvement on 2008.

With regards to the number of female staff⁶⁴ within ECN, this has also increased since the initiation of the project. In 2010, there were no female commissioners, Joint Secretaries or Under Secretaries, Female staff made up only 7.4%⁶⁵ of the workforce as compared to 21% in 2015 at Headquarters level, and 4%⁶⁶ in 2010 as compared to the current 10% of female staff at district level.

Figure 14: Comparison of the number of women working in ECN in 2010 and 2015



According to the Interim Constitution, political parties are required to nominate at least one third of women as candidates. Furthermore, it stipulates that 50 percent of Proportional Representation (PR) candidates shall be women. The majority of the Political parties complied with this requirement⁶⁷ with the Sadvawana Party presenting only 28.9%⁶⁸ of female candidates and the Sanghiya Sadvawana Party presenting the highest with 52.5% of women across their two lists. The number of female candidates presented overall increased both in numbers and in percentage terms as compared to 2008. (179 candidates (8.9%) in 2008 and 383 candidates (11%) in 2013). Nevertheless, the number of females who secured a seat fell by over 3% to 30%. This drop was out of the scope of the project and can be attributed to a number of factors including a decrease in the number of female candidates that were presented by the big winning parties and despite the requirement to ensure 50 percent of female nominations, the order of the lists are not fixed, leaving the final decision on who will be elected to the political party leadership.

5.1.17.2. Contribution of the Input to the Capacity Development of ECN

This activity has had a very positive effect on the capacity of ECN not only in the area of gender equality but also with regards to the inclusion of minority groups and the disabled. Numerous trainings have taken place both on gender and other groups, and this has had a positive response from all the recipients. Furthermore, the GESI Policy is firmly embedded in the work of the ECN at all levels, and all levels of election administration are aware of its importance and strive to enable inclusion of these groups in all aspects of their work.

5.1.17.3. Project Achievements beyond the Planned Project Outputs

Almost all of the recommendations contained in the Report on Gender Mapping in the Field of Election, 2010 have been fulfilled, these include the establishment of a Gender and Inclusion Committee and the Gender Unit, increasing the number of women registered, the provision of 50 percent candidacy for women that has been introduced in the Draft Local Election Procedure Bill and the increased involvement of women's groups and other minority and vulnerable groups participation in planning and dissemination of voter information and other electoral activities.

⁶⁴ It should be noted that all ministries have a relatively low female presence due to many women not undertaking the Public Service Exam

⁶⁵ Source: Report on Gender Mapping in the Field of Elections – June 2010

⁶⁶ Idem

⁶⁷ 14 out of 30 parties fall short of the 50% mark for the PR elections and five parties fell short of the overall one third requirement.

⁶⁸ The procedures provide political parties with a 10 percent flexibility in the application of the quota requirement.

Furthermore, the first female toilet within the ECN has been established recognising that women have specific sanitary needs and toilets should be equipped with the necessary facilities. The “Her Voice Her Choice – Women in the 2013 Constituent Assembly Elections 2013” book is also a useful testament to the work that has been carried out during the course of the project, and should serve as a benchmark to surpass and not a threshold to maintain.

5.1.17.5. Sustainability

Despite the consolidated gains, there is still much to be done to ensure continued progress in the area of GESI. The implementation of the policy is crucial as is the efficient development of the Strategic and Action Plans. Data needs to continue to be disaggregated especially during the elections (this activity was implemented during CA elections in 2013 however it did not materialise despite providing orientation to the polling officers and returning officers - there were very few districts who could retrieve the disaggregated data (data was collected at regional and district level, and the system of collection has vastly improved and has been used during the by-elections), and the direct interaction between various civil society groups and ECN needs to be encouraged and strengthened. While ECN has been able to improve on the number of women in decision-making positions, the number of qualified women available in the pool of civil servants is limited, and this needs to be taken into consideration. Nevertheless women should be encouraged to work within the ECN and the legal number of female commissioners should be increased.

5.1.18 Lessons Learnt in the Implementation of Output Three

Activity 3.1. Support with Public Outreach, Civic and Voter Education

- ✓ Voter education strategies need to be strengthened and voter education assessment needs to be properly internalised and used for future planning
- ✓ Taking approval of ECN at every-time for the Implementation of the programme, regardless of the approval by the Project Executive Board, caused delays in achieving the target on time.
- ✓ Personal relationships with ECN officials contributed to facilitate and speed up the process of implementation of the activities.
- ✓ Overlapping and lack of clarity in job description of the ESP Staff created confusion on who should do what. This had an impact on time and quality of the work.
- ✓ Involvement of Civil Society Organizations could have been stronger.

Activity 3.3. Support with External Relations

- ✓ External relations especially with CSOs needs to be strengthened so there is more access to grassroots
- ✓ Political parties especially with regards to campaign financing could be strengthened by having joint ECN and political party campaign financing training.⁶⁹

5. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

ESP II has lent support to ECB during the last 18 months, and to date has achieved 58% of its activities with the remaining 32% being partially achieved. Approximately 54% of its finances have been utilised. The weakest output is the overall support to strengthen the capacity of the ECN, whereby a piecemeal approach towards training and capacity building has been adopted rather than building a comprehensive joint strategy with ECN which could have the potential of enhancing the institutional capacity as well as individual capacity. It should be further noted, that this particularly activity has spent less than half of its budget. The retention of staff from one election to the next is an issue, as is the political climate in which ECN has to work. Since ESP's inception, the ECN have only conducted one national electoral event and will need to be accompanied throughout the

⁶⁹ Such a training is currently being prepared together with IFES and IDEA

transitional period in order to achieve the standard of elections that have been achieved with ESPs support. **To this end, support to the ECN will need to extend beyond 2016.**

The management of the project is effective and has been able to deal well with the changing political landscape. Nevertheless due to an overly ambitious ProDoc, many of the originally foreseen key activities were not able to be realised and in some cases such as addressing the overall issue of staff retention, procurement and financial control as well as the Electoral Dispute Resolution, were out of the scope of a project of this genre. Reporting was effective and the project kept the flow of information fluid. The lack of a definitive monitoring and evaluation framework at the beginning of the project and then its subsequent revision were not utilised to their full potential and lacked adequate indicators and targets. Risk management for operational issues and progress of established activity results and targets were as a result not fully tracked. Annual reports and PEB meetings tended to report on activities and do not illustrate the extent to which the project has achieved or is on track to achieve its overall objectives. To this end, in line with the changes made to the latest 2014 annual report, the Review **encourages the project to ensure a more results based management approach in line with the monitoring and evaluation framework in future reporting.**

5.1. Sustainability of the Results Achieved with Focus on Capacities Built and Ability of the Institution to Operate with Reduced International Technical Assistance in the Future

The Review has outlined sustainability issues for each of the 12 activities outlined in the ProDoc, and provided subsequent recommendations to ensure sustainability for the future. Although capacity has been built, ECNs still requires assistance in order to consolidate the gains already made, and to ensure a more strategic approach towards both its work as an institution, in individual departments and to develop its capacity to sustain its institutional memory with more support for archiving and the establishment of procedures and protocols to turn the ECN into a *proactive* institution rather than a *reactive* one. **It should also be reiterated that ESP has only accompanied ECN in conducting one national electoral event and still requires substantive support throughout the transitional period to transfer sufficient capacity and knowledge. The current budget will be able to sustain the project beyond February 2016 and many of the original outcomes envisaged in the ProDoc can be achieved, however the project will need more time to implement these activities.**

The call for this Mid Term Review was foreseen in the original project document and the majority of the review was carried out prior to the deadly earthquake which devastated Nepal on the 25th April, followed by hundreds of aftershocks and another big earthquake on the 12th May reaching 7.3 on the Richter scale. Given the extensive damage across the country and the political climate thrown into even more turmoil, the future of the ECN and its finances from the Government is unclear. To this end, **it is essential that recommendations from this report are taken on board and the future sustainability of the ECN and the electoral process in general are not weakened by distracting assistance away from the project in the upcoming future.**

5.2. Extent to which the Project has built the Long Term Sustainability of the ECN in Independent Planning, Budgeting and Procurement Capability

This Review has already highlighted the weaknesses in these areas, which in essence were exacerbated by the ambitious design of the ProDoc, the volatile electoral timetable and the tendency towards building individual capacities rather than departmental and institutional capacities. With the Chief Election Commissioner retiring, and the deficit that the earthquake budget may leave on the state electoral budget, ESP II will need to ensure various strategic meetings take place with ECN to discuss the way forward and ensuring that key recommendations from this report are upheld. In order to address independent planning, ESP II should move towards a more strategic approach in

their trainings, and help ECN to identify their priorities within their Two-Year and Five-Year Strategic Plans and ensure ECNs future capability to sustain independent planning.

5.3. Impact of the Earthquake on future Project Activities

The 25th April Earthquake which was 7.8 on the Richter scale killed over 8,600 citizens, destroyed over 400,000 houses and public buildings such as schools, health facilities and other government offices with entire villages flattened across many districts of the country. Centuries old buildings of important national heritage were destroyed and 75% of the buildings in Kathmandu were either destroyed or declared unsafe. The April earthquake affected 39 out of the 75 districts and impacted heavily on the building of the ECN which was all but destroyed in the earthquake making the building unsafe and thus rendered the offices of the ECN and ESP unworkable. This was further compounded by hundreds of aftershocks, which culminated in a second big earthquake, 7.3 on the Richter scale on 12th May that now puts the risk of the ECN building to collapse

As the country and its government comes to terms with the sheer devastation and impact of the earthquake on the economy, the political climate and general future of the country, the prospects of the ECN and the governments ability to support it to the same extent prior to the earthquake is unclear. Given the priorities of a country in dire need of humanitarian relief, the ECN risks losing many of the gains consolidated in the last two years, if urgent action is not undertaken. Given the damage to the ECNs building, the Commission is no longer able to operate, and it is imperative to find alternative offices as soon as possible to ensure the continuation of their work. An official request has already been submitted to ESP.

Furthermore, given the success of the voter's register, and its importance for the holding of future elections, it is crucial to physically move the voters register database as quickly as possible from the damaged building due to the continuing aftershocks and the gradual decline in the instability of the ECN building. This will require financial and technical support from ESP.

6. WAY AHEAD: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

6.1. Future Actions That Will Build On and Reinforce the Initial Benefits From the Project

The Review has outlined to what extent ESP's efforts have had on the impact and potential sustainability of each activity. Bearing this in mind, and the key findings outlined in this report, activities with a scoring of four and above both in impact and sustainability, will require few efforts to ensure that the ECN will require little international support in these areas in the future. However, those activities which are rated at three, will require more attention. All recommendations at the end of this report should be considered in order to encourage more success in the implementation of the project. Approximately half of the activities within the project will require a substantial injection of efforts to ensure they comply with the desired outcomes expressed in the ProDoc.

Table 4: Assessment of impact and sustainability of each activity

Activity	Impact	Sustainability
Activity 1.1. Support with Strategic Planning	3	3
Activity 1.2. Support with Professional Development and Cooperation	3	3
Activity 1.3. Support with Geographic Information and Electoral Mapping	5	4
Activity 1.4. Support with Creation and Display of New Voter Register	4	5
Activity 2.1. Support with Procedures and Training	3	3
Activity 2.2. Support with Operations and Logistics	4	3
Activity 2.3. Support with Electoral Dispute Resolution	3	3
Activity 2.4. Support with Electoral Security	4	4
Activity 3.1. Support with Public Outreach, Civic and Voter Education	4	3
Activity 3.2. Support with Electoral Education and Information Centre(s)	4	4
Activity 3.3. Support with External Relations	3	3
Activity 3.4. Gender Social Inclusion and Vulnerable Groups	4	4

6.2. Possible Scope of Future Support including exit strategy and recommendations on how best the project can maximise the transfer of project activities and resources to the ECN in a phased way.

The 2013 CA Elections are not considered the last step in the peace process but a step towards the continuation of “democratic state building”.⁷⁰ Nepal is yet to establish a periodic election calendar as a result the project has only accompanied one national electoral event in 2013, depriving the ECN of further capacity building opportunities in the guise of essential on-the-job learning. Elections are anticipated in the short to medium-term future, and until these are conducted, ECN will need support to ensure that future elections comply with international standards. While the lack of an established election timetable limits a project of this genre to fully capacitate the ECN, it also provides a window of opportunity to allow the ECN strive towards adopting a potential electoral cycle approach to all aspects of its work. To this end, it is essential that the Project ensures the efficient implementation of the strategic plan and the respective sections within ECN align their work plans thereto. ESP will need to support ECN in this endeavour. Once procedures and generic work plans are in place as well as the documentation of the ECN is digitalised, the ECN will be way on their way to ensure their future sustainability providing the Government continues to provide the same resources they have prior to the earthquake.

Any UNDP Project foresees an exit strategy and ESP II is no exception. The current project should continue its support beyond February 2016 to achieve what has been outlined above, and then reduce its support to strategic interventions including those highlighted in the recommendations below. This should also include a revision of the current support of human resources to the project with the aim of reducing personnel both at the headquarters and eventually at the regional levels. The number of consultants to the project have mainly concentrated on technical issues such as the voter registration and GIS, and this support is being phased out slowly whereby in voter registration at least, the ECN takes full ownership of this activity and only needs support in technical improvements which are currently being carried out. With regards to financial resources, it should be noted that the majority of financial support was utilised to implement the elections, in the guise of voter registration, public outreach and operations and provision of advisors in the regions (as well as provision of certain procurement items). These will need to be phased out slowly, and ideally, with established section generic plans and improvements in voter education, less resources will be needed. This will also be the case with regards to voter registration, as the ECN is now taking responsibility for this item, although the procurement of further voter registration kits may be necessary in the near future to replace those which are in a state of disrepair.

The necessity to have presence of internationals in the regions for a new electoral cycle should also be discouraged, especially given the regional support that the project is currently providing. Highlighting the necessity of ensuring that cross cutting issues are mainstreamed in the project, it is important to seek synergies with other relevant UNDP projects which can complement activities such as the Local Governance and Community Development Programme and Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights Protection system in Nepal Programme (RoLHR). Synergies need to be sought and the good offices of the UNDP can be used to address issues such as the use of government procurement rules as well as staff retention. Finally, given the strong relationship that the current ECN has built with regional election management bodies, the usage of more south-to-south expertise should be utilised.

The Review advocates the project to institutionalize the comprehensive assessments already made with regards to individual outputs, and encourages for the recommendations therein to be adopted.

⁷⁰ EUEOM Preliminary Statement to the Constituent Assembly Elections 2013 – Kathmandu 21st November 2013
Mid Term Review of the Electoral Support Project Phase II – Institutional Strengthening and Professional Development Support for the Election Commission of Nepal

The recommendations which follow may coincide with some of the recommendations already made, however the Review hopes that the following list will guide the project to ensure that the objectives set out in the ProDoc. To this end, the Review concludes with the following actions. The level of priority of these actions and their rationale are outlined in the tables in Annex II:

General Recommendations

1. Extend the ESP II beyond February 2016 – Minimum two years)
2. Provision of temporary offices for ECN Staff
3. Transfer of Voter Register Database
4. Forge synergies with other relevant UNDP projects

Project Management

Staff Management

1. Review of ToRs for each member of ESP Staff
2. Review Organigram of ESP

Reporting

3. Ensure Results Based Management
4. Ensure effective monitoring and evaluation
5. Establishment of internal output targets
6. Continuation of Pre-PEB meetings with development partners (DP)

Output One

Support with Strategic Planning

1. Ensure continued support to ensure effective implementation of the strategic planning
2. Support the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategic plan and training on how to monitor its implementation

Support with Staff Retention and Professional Development

3. Development of key strategic planning tools for future training
4. Development of complimentary training and on-the-job mentoring
5. Finalise archiving of key historical documents

Support with Geographic and Electoral Mapping

6. Enhance the technical capacity of ECN to carry out GIS mapping
7. Ensure that all polling locations are still valid after the earthquake

Support with Updating and Display of New Voter Register

8. Ensure transfer of capacity for software development
9. Provide additional VR kits
10. Conduct an assessment of the current voter register
11. Devise a strategic plan to ensure that the voter register is adequately updated and adjusted

12. Support ECN to design and produce a new sustainable voters card

OUTPUT TWO

Support with Procedures and Training

1. ECN should ensure the development of generic plans to work towards an electoral cycle approach

Support with Election Operations and Logistics

2. Support the development of a generic operational plan

Support with Electoral Dispute Resolution

3. Digitalise all documents from the 2008 and 2013 case load
4. Develop a database for the establishment of recording election complaints for future elections
5. Provision of training of EDR
6. Support to the Legal Section to conduct research on key issues pertaining to elections

Support with Electoral Security

7. Ensure all records from the previous elections are archived and assessed to identify possible strategies for mitigation of conflict in local or future national elections

Output Three

Support with Public Outreach, Civic and Voter Education

1. Development of generic strategic planning for implementation for the future electoral cycles
2. Outreach to local grassroots organisations to ensure the dissemination of information at all levels
3. Forge partnerships with the Ministry of Youth and Sport
4. Forge partnerships with Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development and the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP)

Support with External Relations

5. Strengthen ECNs relationship with other relevant election stakeholders
6. Build a local and national database of possible CSOs who work in the electoral environment

Support with Electoral Education and Information

7. Conduct an outreach campaign to ensure awareness of the existence of the EEICs in the regions

Support with Gender, Social Inclusion and Vulnerable Groups

8. Ensure the implementation of the GESI Strategic and Action Plan once designed

ANNEXES

ANNEX I – LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Name	Position	Organization
Mr Neel Kantha Uprety	Chief Election Commissioner	ECN
Mr Madhu Prasad Regmi	Secretary	ECN
Mr Bir Bahadur Rai	Joint-Secretary	ECN
Mr Surya Prasad Sharma	Joint-Secretary	ECN
Mr Eak Narayan Sharma	Under Secretary	ECN
Mr Ramanath Paudyal	Deputy Attourney – Political Party Branch	ECN
Mr Chandra Shiwakoti	Under Secretary – Voter Lists Section	ECN
Mr Arun Jha	Legal Officer	ECN
Mr Surya Prasad Aryal	Director	EEIC
Mr Jamie McGoldrick	Resident Representative	UNDP
Ms Sophie Kemkhadze	Deputy Country Director	UNDP
Mr Yamnath Sharma	Assistant Country Director	UNDP
Ms Pragya Bashyal	Programme Analyst	UNDP
Mr Andres Del Castillo	Chief Technical Advisor/Project Manager	ESP
Mr Kundan Das Shrestha	Deputy Project Manager	ESP
Mr Dan Radulescu	Senior Regional Electoral Advisor	ESP
Mr Hemant Pathak	Operation and Logistic Officer	ESP
Mr Prabhat Kumar	National GIS Officer	ESP
Mr Sujit Gopal Shrestha	IT Specialist	ESP
Mr Mukunda Raj Panday	Training and Capacity Building Specialist	ESP
Mr Sachin Karmacharya	VR Coordination Officer	ESP
Ms Anamika Pradhan	Reporting and Communication Officer	ESP
Ms Deeva Yonzon Lama	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	ESP
Mr Munish Kumar Kama	IT Officer	ESP
Ms Sumita Shrestha	Training & Logistics Officer	ESP
Ms Sita Poudel	Regional Electoral Officer	ESP – Kathmandu Regional Office
Mr Pradip Maharjan	Regional IT Officer	ESP – Kathmandu Regional Office
Ms Amrita Chang	Regional Logistics/Administrative Assistant	ESP – Kathmandu Regional Office
Ms Nita Barnawal	National UNV	ESP – Kathmandu Regional Office
Ms Sabina Acharya	National UNV	ESP – Kathmandu Regional Office
Ms Pritha Regmi	Youth Volunteer	ESP – Kathmandu Regional Office
Mr Dinesh Pathak	Regional Electoral Officer	ESP – Dhanghadi Regional Office

Name	Position	Organization
Mr Sanjay Kumar Shah	Regional IT Officer	ESP – Dhanghadi Regional Office
Mr Padam Mahar	National UNV	ESP – Dhanghadi Regional Office
Mr Suraj Sharma	Youth Volunteer	ESP – Dhanghadi Regional Office
Mr Chandra Prasad Gautam	District Election Officer	ECN – Kathmandu Regional Office
Mr Bishaksen Dhakal	District Election Officer (Under Secretary)	ECN - Kailali District Office
Mr Prem Raj Bhatta	Main Computer Operator	ECN - Kailali District Office
Mr Prakash Bhatta	Main Computer Operator	ECN – Kanchanpur District Office
Mr Krishna Singh Nayak	Clerk (Administration)	ECN – Kanchanpur District Office
Mr Hari Lal Bhatta	Accountant	ECN – Kanchanpur District Office
Ms Sita Gurung	Civic and Voter Officer	ESP
Mr Mim Bahadur Lama	Admin/Finance Officer	ESP
Ms Srijana Shrestha	Senior Administrative Assistant	ESP
Mr Saraswati Rai	Admin and Finance Assistant	ESP
Mr Tek Bahadur Lawati	Procurement Officer	ESP
Mr Bishnu Adhikari	Governance Advisor	DFID Nepal
Ms Diana Garcia Alcubilla	Attaché – Governance Programme Manager	Delegation of the European Union to Nepal
Ms Vibeke Sorum	First Secretary (Good Governance)	Royal Norwegian Embassy
Mr Bhola Prasad Dahal	Governance Advisor	Royal Norwegian Embassy
Ms Elizabeth Côté	Country Director	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Ms Nilu P. Basnyat	Deputy Country Director	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Mr Shanti Ram Bimali	BRIDGE/Election Risk Manager/National Coordinator	Institute of IDEA
Ram Kushal Pant	President	National Federation of the DEAF (NDFN)
Bikesh Ghimire	Member	National Federation of the Deaf (NDFN)
Ganesh K Mandal	Member	General Election Observation Committee (GEOC)
Chrisanjibi Khanal	Director	Nepal Press Institute (NPI)
Binod Kapali	Interpreter	National Federation of the Deaf (NDFN)
Suneeta Acharya	Interpreter	National Federation of the Deaf (NDFN)
Rajendra Phuyal	Sr Sub Editor	Kantipur Daily

Name	Position	Organization
Achyat Raj Aryal	News Editor	Radio Nepal
Narad Muni Goutam	Senior Editor	Gorkapatra

ANNEX II- RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 5: General Recommendations for Project Management

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
General Recommendations					
Extension of ESP II beyond its current mandate	ECN	Minimum extension of two years	ESP continues to support the electoral cycle and is able to achieve all its outcomes	Extension of the project for a minimum of two years	ESP is able to provide adequate support to ECN and to design an exit strategy depending on the election timetable
Provision of temporary offices for ECN Staff	ECN	Immediate	The ECN has access to a suitable workspace while their current building is being restored	Provision of possible PREFABS in the vicinity of the ECN building	ECN are able to work efficiently and are able to continue their work without interruption
Transferral of Voter Register Database	ECN	Immediate	The Voter Register is transferred to a building outside the current ECN building	Provision of technical and financial support to transfer the Voter Register Database to a safe location	The ECN recovers access to the Voter Register
Forge synergies with other relevant UNDP Projects	ESP and UNDP	Immediate			
STAFF MANAGEMENT					
Review of ToRs for each member of ESP Staff	ESP	Beyond February 2016	The ToRs do not clash and individual responsibilities and tasks are clearly delineated.	Revision of current ToRs of staff	There is no ambiguity of responsibilities between staff members
Review Organigram of ESP	ESP	Beyond February 2016	Organigram is streamlined, and clear focal points are established for each output	Revision of organigram and staff levels to ensure sustainability of the project and its effectiveness for the future	The project is even better managed and the number of staff for the project aligns with the new priorities of the ECN
REPORTING					
Ensure Results Based Management	ESP/DP	Immediate	Annual Reports and reporting within PEBs are more in line with RBM	Improve results based management in reporting	Development Partners and project will better able to report the progress to date and design strategies to address any emerging issues
Ensure effective monitoring and evaluation	ESP/DP	Immediate	Review the attainment and progress towards achieving targets periodically and ensure that AWP, reports and PEBs reflect the progress	Appoint a focal point for each output to ensure effective monitoring and reporting to the M & E specialist as well as senior management	The project will be better able to track progress and will ensure strategies are put in place should a target not be on track.
Establishment of internal output targets	ESP	Immediate	All outcomes have internal periodic targets	Establish periodic targets for each activity	Internal periodic targets will ensure that activities lead to the achievement of overall outcomes
Continuation of Pre-PEB meetings with development partners (DP)	ESP/DP	Immediate	Hold pre-donor meetings prior to each PEB meeting	Holding of regular pre-donor meetings prior to PEBs	Creation of an informal space whereby DPs and ESP can openly discuss issues affecting the performance of the project

Table 6: Recommendations for Output One

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
Output 1: Strengthened capacity of the ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance					
SUPPORT WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING					
Ensure continued support to ensure effective implementation of the strategic planning	ECN HQs	Throughout lifespan of project	Identified Targets within the Strategic Plan are attained	Strategic interventions in identified areas of the strategic plan	A more effective ECN who has the ability to effectively implement the strategic plan
Support the establishing of an effective monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategic plan and training on how to monitor its implementation	ECN HQs	Immediate	ECN personnel are able to develop their own m & e framework and monitor its implementation	Support the ECN to design an m & e framework and train members of staff and establish section focal points to ensure its proper monitoring.	ECN is able to monitor the implementation of its strategic plan by themselves and thus take full ownership of its implementation
SUPPORT WITH STAFF RETENTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT					
Development of key strategic planning tools for future training	ECN HQs and DEOS	Continual	Ensure that participants knowledge is assessed through a pre and post test	Devise a strategic training programme which allows for its performance to be continually monitored	Trainings will become more relevant and efficient
Development of complimentary training and on-the-job mentoring	ECN HQs and DEOs	Continual	Training topics should include the ability of individual sections to design their own strategic plans in line with the overall ECN Plan	Design coordinated trainings complemented by on-the-job training to design internal strategic plans for individual sections	Sections will align their work strategically with the overall five-year strategic plan of ECN and recommendations emanating from previous capacity assessments
Finalise archiving of key historical documents	ECN	Short to medium Term	Staff are trained on archiving and organisation of documents and all relevant documents are collected and archived	Support ECN to train staff on archiving and organising of documents and support them to find and collate all relevant information which should be digitalised /archived	ECN is more efficient and is able to consult documentation with ease
SUPPORT WITH GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND ELECTORAL MAPPING SYSTEM					
Enhance the technical capacity of ECN to carry out GIS mapping	ECN HQs and ECN	Immediate	Train a number of persons in the ECN to be able to develop maps without support from ESP	Conduct technical trainings at the HQs and Regional Level	Ensure the gradual transfer of ownership of GIS by the ECN so that they will be able to use it without the input of ESP
Ensure that all polling locations are still valid after the earthquake	ECN via DEOs	In the next six months	All polling locations are checked for their accessibility and condition after the earthquake	DEOs will physically use the GIS to ensure that all polling locations are useable after the earthquake	Polling Location list will be updated and will reflect the current situation after the earthquake

SUPPORT WITH UPDATING AND DISPLAY OF NEW VOTER REGISTER					
Ensure transfer of capacity for software development	ESP with ECN HQs and DEOs	Commence in the third quarter of 2015	ECN staff gain sufficient capacity and knowhow on technical management and development of software	Conduct trainings on technical management and development of software	The VR and its future is completely sustainable
Provide additional VR kits	ECN	1 st Quarter of 2016	ECN are supplied with sufficient kits to carry out CVR	Procure and Purchase of VR KITS	ECN is able to continue CVR with working equipment
Conduct an assessment of the current voter register	ECN with an independent agency carrying out the evaluation	1 st half of 2016	Assessment is conducted and VR is at least 90% accurate and strategic plans are then designed to ensure future accuracy and inclusion of the VR	An independent agency carries out assessment according to international criteria	VR is assessed as accurate and further enhances the credibility of the Voters Roll ⁷¹
Devise a strategic plan to ensure that the voter register is adequately updated and adjusted	ECN with DEOs	Subsequent to the assessment of the accuracy of the VR	Development of a strategic plan to ensure adequate coverage of eligible voters due to the consequences of the earthquake	Subsequent to date found in the assessment of the VR and the use of GIS and consultations of the DEOs carry out an exercise to assess the outreach of the VR with regards to those affected by displacements from the earthquake and any other inaccuracies or lacunas found in the assessment	Those affected by the earthquake are able to be included in the Voters List and accuracy of the list is more in line with the number of eligible voters in the country
Support ECN to design and produce a new sustainable voters card	ECN	Subsequent to the update of the VR	Design and production of a voters card which is more sustainable and distributed to all registered voters	Production of a new and sustainable voters card	Voters are able to possess a card that is durable

⁷¹ In the baseline Survey 2014, only 37.6% of the total respondents were highly confident when asked about the accuracy and completeness of the voter list.

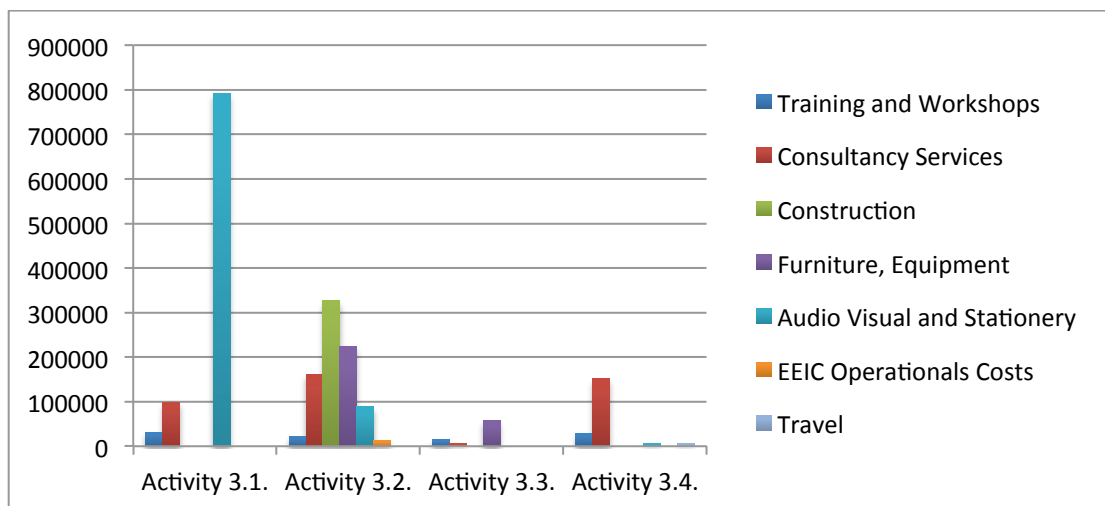
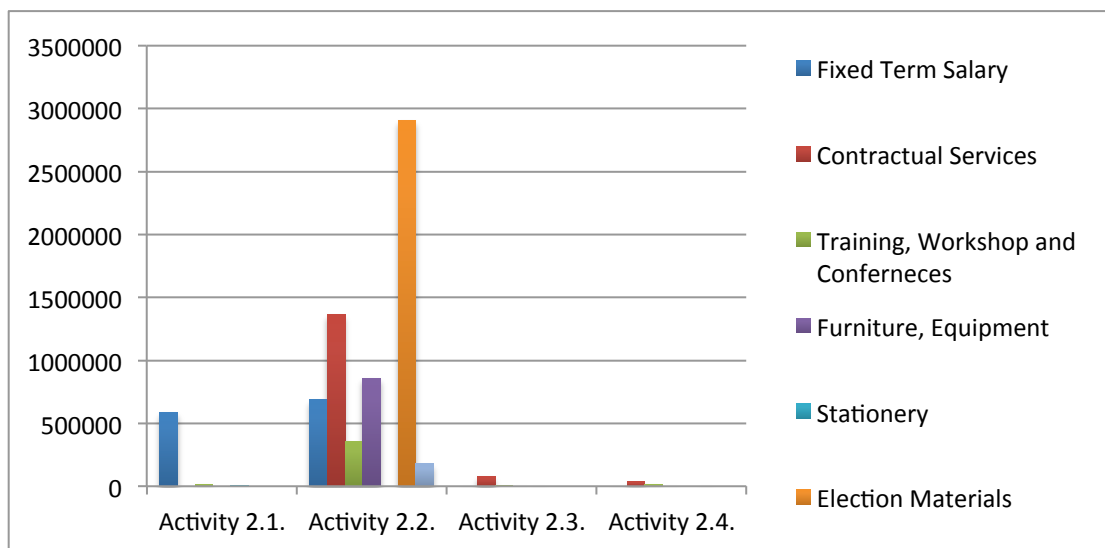
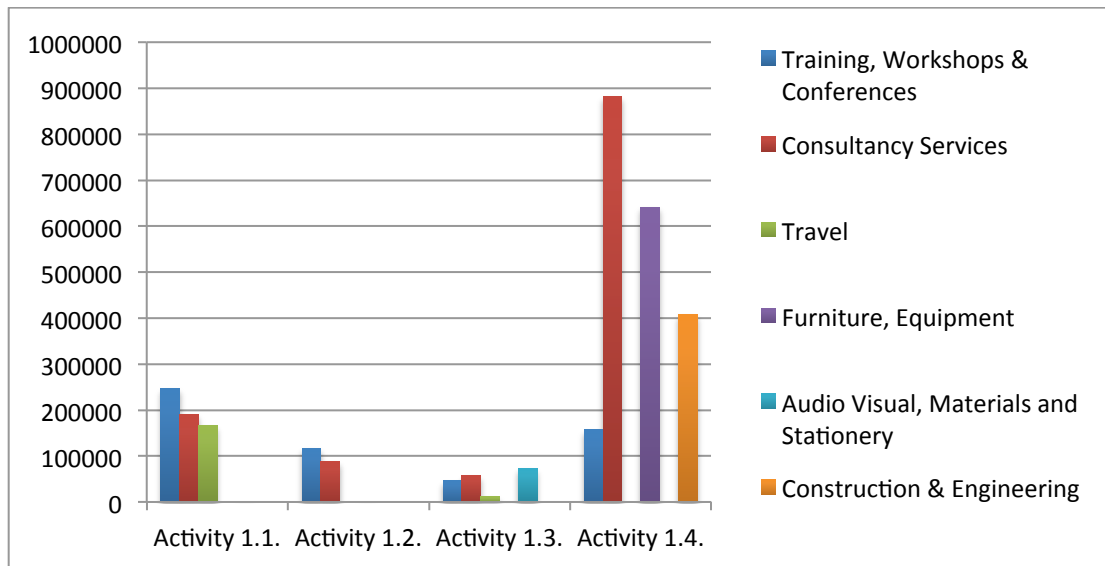
Table 7: Recommendations for Output Two

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
Output 2: Election Cycle Conducted in an Effective, Sustainable and Credible Manner					
SUPPORT WITH PROCEDURES AND TRAINING					
ECN should ensure the development of generic plans to work towards an electoral cycle approach	ECN and relevant sections	Short to medium term	Development and implementation of a generic plan for each department	Workshops and roundtables to develop individual section plans which is aligned with the currently approved Two-Year Action and Five-Year Strategic Plan and lessons learned from 2013 CA elections and subsequent by-elections	The sections is better prepared prior to an upcoming election and is able to adjust the plan according to the circumstances
SUPPORT WITH ELECTION OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS					
Support the development of a generic operations plan	ECN and relevant sections	Short to medium term	Development and implementation of a generic plan for operations	Workshops and roundtables to develop an operational plan which is aligned with the currently approved Two-Year Action and Five-Year Strategic Plan lessons learned from 2013 CA elections and subsequent by-elections	The sections is better prepared prior to an upcoming election and is able to adjust the plan according to the circumstances
SUPPORT WITH ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION					
Digitalise all documents from the 2008 and 2013 case load	ECN Legal Section	In the next six months	All documents from the previous elections are archived and digitalised	Collect the information and ensure it is digitally transferred	Efficient records are kept of previous cases in the elections
Develop a database for the establishment of recording election complaints for future elections	ECN HQs and DEOs	In the next six months, and preferably prior to the next set of elections	A database is developed and relevant ECN officials trained on how to use it	Design in collaboration with the judiciary, and other key stakeholders	ECN is better able to deal with election complaint caseload
Provision of training of EDR	ECN (both HQ and Districts) and judges of district courts (who are returning officers during elections)	Prior to local / or next elections	Members of ECN and judiciary are adequately able to understand the EDR process and handle relevant caseload	Provide a series of workshops and training sessions on EDR mechanism	Relevant entities are better able to handle EDR caseload
Support to the Legal Section to conduct research on key issues pertaining to elections	Legal Section within ECN	Continual over the next electoral cycle	The department is able to conduct research and establish relevant databases for effective research	Mentoring on research and the development of databases for research purposes	The Legal Section is better able to carry out research including comparative research for issues affecting the working of the ECN
Support with Electoral Security					
Ensure all records from the previous elections are archived and assessed to identify possible strategies for mitigation of conflict in local or future national elections	ECN and Security Stakeholders	Short to medium Term	To ensure the recording of all pertinent data from the previous elections and sharing the information with the relevant stakeholders for future use	Collecting and analysing the data already accumulated in the past elections	To ensure that all data from previous elections is collected and in a useable format for future elections.

Table 8: Recommendations for Output Three

Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Timeline	Performance Targets	Output	Outcome
Output 3: Increased Democratic Participation in the Next Cycle of Elections, particularly for Under-Represented and Disadvantaged Segments of the Nepali Society					
SUPPORT WITH PUBLIC OUTREACH, CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION					
Development of generic strategic planning for implementation for the future electoral cycles	ECN and relevant section for voter education	Commence activities in the next six months	Ensure that lessons learned and recommendations emanating from previous assessments are taken on board	Conduct a series of workshops and round tables to develop a strategic plan for future implementation for voter education	A strategic plan aligned with the ECN plan is designed and implemented to ensure that the section is able to work on voter and civic education well in advance of the next elections
Outreach to local grassroots organisations to ensure the dissemination of information at all levels	ECN and CSOs	Prior to the expiry of the current mandate of ESP II	ECN engages with more grass roots organisations especially at the regional and district level	Facilitate dialogue and workshops with local CSOs	Future elections will be more inclusive and the electoral process will be more transparent
Forge partnerships with the Ministry of Youth and Sport	ECN, Ministry of Youth	Prior to the expiry of the current mandate of ESP II	ECN engages regularly with the Ministry of Youth and Sport	Facilitate dialogue between the ministry and ECN	More youth will be interested in the elections and have knowledge about the process
Forge partnerships with Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development and the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP)	ECN and local governance	Prior to the expiry of the current mandate of ESP II	ECN develops a more regular relationship with these institutions to ensure better dissemination at local level of election related issues	Facilitate dialogue between the relevant stakeholders	Election process will be more inclusive
SUPPORT WITH EXTERNAL RELATIONS					
Strengthen ECNs relationship with other relevant election stakeholders	ECN (HQs and District Level) and other election stakeholder such as CSOs, Political Parties, Media etc	Continual	Ensure regular meetings between important stakeholders and ECN both at HQ Level and in the Regions/Districts	Encourage ECN to build relationships with different election stakeholders by holding meetings, events and workshops with the different entities.	All important election stakeholders are able to contribute to enabling a transparent and participatory election environment
Build a local and national database of possible CSOs who work in the electoral environment	ECN and civil society	Short to Medium Term	Creation of a database both at HQs and at least regional level of CSOs who work on elections	Through a series of workshops, establish contacts with CSOs who want to be a part of the database and hire someone to develop the database to ensure all relevant CSOs are included	ECN will have better access to CSOs and identify CSOs for election activities in the particular districts
SUPPORT WITH ELECTORAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION CENTRE					
Conduct an outreach campaign to ensure awareness of the existence of the EEICs in the regions	ECN and Regional EEICS	Short to Medium Term	Creation and implementation of information campaign on the function of the EEICs	Conduct an information campaign on the existence of the EEICs	More effective EEICs and more persons will know about the electoral process
SUPPORT WITH GENDER, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND VULNERABLE GROUPS					
Ensure the implementation of the GESI Strategic and Action Plan once designed	ECN and Gender Unit	Continual throughout Project	Support to the Gender Unit and ECN in implementing Strategic and Action GESI Plan	Provision of support and advice	ECN will continue to support Gender and Social Inclusion Issues in all its aspects

ANNEX III - EXPENDITURES PER OUTPUT



ANNEX IV- BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ESP Mid-Term Review - Evaluation Questions for ESP Staff

Name: (optional)

Position:

Region:

District:

1. Has the UNDP ESP, in general, been effective in providing support to ECN?

Not at all	Somewhat	Significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I Don't know

Comments:

2. To what extent do you consider that ESP has contributed to strengthening the capacity of ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance?

Not at all	Somewhat	Significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I Don't know

Comments:

3. To what extent do you consider that ESP has contributed to ensuring that the electoral cycle was conducted in an effective, sustainable and credible manner?

Not at all	Somewhat	Significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I Don't know

Comments:

4. To what extent do you consider that ESP has contributed to helping the ECN increase democratic participation in the next cycle of elections, particularly for under-represented and disadvantaged segments of the Nepali society?

Not at all	Somewhat	Significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I Don't know

Comments:

- 5. To what extent did ESP support and contribute to the legitimacy and transparency of the voter registration?

Not at all	Somewhat	Significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I Don't know

Comments:

6. How would you rate ESP coordination with ECN?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

7. To what extent did ESP account for improvements in electoral performance compared to previous elections?

Not at all	Somewhat	Significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I Don't know

Comments:

8. How would you rate the performance of ESP as a whole?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

9. How would you rate the ECNs capacity to conduct a future electoral event without ESPs support?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

10. Did ESP encounter any challenges in delivering its mandate according to the Prodoc?

- Comments:**

11. How would you rate ESP support to national bodies in the following areas:

11a. General Capacity development of ECN?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

11b. Reforms in the electoral system and election process?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

- 12c Support with strategic planning?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12d. Reforming electoral legal framework?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12e. Support with professional development ?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12f. Support with GIS?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12g Voters registration?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12h. Training?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12i. Logistic Planning?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12j. Electoral Dispute Resolution?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12k Public outreach and voters education?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12L Establishment of Electoral Education and Information Center (EEIC) – in the regions?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

12M Support with gender, social inclusion, and vulnerable groups?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know

Comments:

13. How do you prioritize the future activities of ESP ?

	Area	Very important	Important	Not important	Specify the activities
1	Reforms in the electoral system and election process				
1.1	Support with strategic planning				
1.2	Reforming electoral legal framework				
1.3	Support with professional development				
1.4	Support with GIS				
1.5	Voters registration				
2.1	Training				
2.2	Logistics				
2.3	Electoral Dispute Resolution				
3.1	Public outreach and voters education				
3.2	Establishment of Electoral Education and Information Center (EEIC)				
3.3	Support with gender, social inclusion, and vulnerable groups				

13.1 To what extent did the project build and promote its partnership with other relevant stake holders for greater results?

13.2 Would you suggest any areas other than listed above for future support ?

14. Any other comments?

ANNEX VI- SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Table 9: Respondents Perception on ESP Support to ECN (in %)

Questions	Not At all	somewhat	significantly	Absolutely (elections would have not taken place without it)	I don't Know	Total Responden ts
1. Has the UNDP ESP, in general, been effective in providing support to ECN?	0.0	0.0	67.9	32.1	0.0	28
2. To what extent do you consider that ESP has contributed to strengthening the capacity of ECN to function as a permanent, independent, credible and professional institution of governance?	0.0	10.7	75.0	7.1	7.1	28
3. To what extent do you consider that ESP has contributed to ensuring that the electoral cycle was conducted in an effective, sustainable and credible manner?	0.0	3.8	80.8	3.8	11.5	26
4. To what extent do you consider that ESP has contributed to helping the ECN increase democratic participation in the next cycle of elections, particularly for under-represented and disadvantaged segments of the Nepali society?	0.0	18.5	74.1	0.0	7.4	27
5. To what extent did ESP support and contribute to the legitimacy and transparency of the voter registration?	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	27

Table 10: Respondents impression about performance of ESP II (in %)

Questions	Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know	No. of Respond ents
6. How would you rate ESP coordination with ECN?	0.0	0.0	11.1	74.1	14.8	-	27
7. To what extent did ESP account for improvements in electoral performance compared to previous elections?	0.0	4.0	72.0	8.0	16.0	-	25
8. How would you rate the performance of ESP as whole?	0.0	0.0	7.1	60.7	32.1	0.0	28
9. How would you rate the ECNs capacity to conduct a future electoral event without ESPs support?	0.0	8.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	12.0	25

Table 11: Impact of ESP Support to ECN (in %)

Q. No.	Questions	Poor	Below Average	Average	Very Good	Excellent	I don't Know	No of Respondents
11a	General Capacity development of ECN?	0.0	0.0	14.3	60.7	14.3	10.7	28
11b	Reforms in the electoral system and election process?	0.0	0.0	22.2	51.9	14.8	11.1	27
11c	Support with strategic planning?	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	18.5	14.8	27
11d	Reforming electoral legal framework?	0.0	0.0	25.9	29.6	11.1	33.3	27
11e	Support with professional development?	0.0	0.0	8.0	52.0	28.0	12.0	25
11f	Support with GIS?	0.0	0.0	16.0	52.0	20.0	12.0	25
11g	Voters registration?	0.0	0.0	3.7	55.6	40.7	0.0	27
11h	Training?	0.0	0.0	11.1	66.7	22.2	0.0	27
11i	Logistic Planning?	0.0	0.0	7.4	63.0	18.5	11.1	27
11j	Electoral Dispute Resolution?	0.0	3.8	30.8	23.1	0.0	42.3	26
11k	Public outreach and voters education?	0.0	0.0	15.4	53.8	19.2	11.5	26
11l	Establishment of Electoral Education and Information Center (EEIC) – in the regions?	0.0	0.0	3.8	50.0	38.5	7.7	26
11m	Support with gender, social inclusion, and vulnerable groups?	0.0	3.7	14.8	40.7	29.6	11.1	27