

lection Cycle Support to ECP

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B0424 - Pakistan - Islamabad

REPORTING PERIOD 2012- 2024

Narrative

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1. Executive Summary

2. Background

3. Key Results Achieved

- **Level of Reporting:**

Output level results

Project Outputs:

ECP's institutional capacity and mandate to organize free, fair, and transparent elections strengthened through capacity develop of ECP staff, improved effectiveness, operationalization of ECP's subsidiary bodies, and instl. adoption of comms & outreach m

Contributing Outcomes:

Outcome 1 By 2027, the people in Pakistan, especially women, children, the most vulnerable and marginalized, have increased access to fundamental rights, gender equality and fundamental freedom through inclusive, accountable, effective and evidence-driven governance systems and rule-of-law institutions at all levels of government, contributing to good governance and stability

Contributing Outputs:

PAK_OUTPUT_1.1 Open, agile, accountable and future-ready governance institutions and systems in place to co-create and deliver solutions to accelerate transparent and equitable service delivery and SDG achievement

Progress Note:

- UNDP support for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) this year led to: a) Accrediting 18 ECP officers as BRIDGE trainers (15 men and 3 women), leveraging international best practices, and a comprehensive capacity development framework, has strengthened the ECP's internal capacity for training and professional development, thereby improving electoral processes. b) Enhancing the skills of 198 ECP officers, including 9 women, and piloting the ECP's Monitoring and Evaluation framework (EM2) during local government elections in Sindh effectively improved skills and evidence generation, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and self-monitoring by the ECP. c) Training 3,891 ECP Officials (630 women), including 125 lead trainers (13

women), 2,253 master trainers (517 women), 1,513 election officials (100 women) and 40 lead trainers for security personnel training (11 women), for the anticipated Punjab provincial assembly elections and upcoming general elections, is a significant milestone towards improved integrity and efficiency of electoral activities. d) Development of the ECP's Communication and Public Outreach Strategy expecting to enhance transparent communication and public participation. Despite pending formal approval, the ECP has begun implementing key recommendations from the strategy, including press briefings, increased social media presence, and prompt misinformation responses. e) Development of nine short, animated training videos aimed at refreshing election officials' and security personnel's knowledge. Categorized for Returning Officers, polling staff, and security personnel, the videos, available in Urdu, English, Pashtu, Sindh, Balochi, and Punjabi, were finalized in December 2023. These have been delivered to ECP, posted on social media for broader outreach, and include a video featuring sign language, contributing to enhanced election preparedness. f) A comprehensive cybersecurity assessment, identifying risks, and implementing measures to enhance the overall security of Pakistan's electoral system. g) Improved technical and professional skills of 30 ECP officers (all men) on cyber resilience, incident response, and safeguarding sensitive information.

- **Level of Reporting:**

Output level results

Project Outputs:

Accountability of elected representatives and parliamentary oversight enhanced through strengthening of Parliamentary institutions, communications and engagement of stakeholders.

Contributing Outcomes:

Outcome 1 By 2027, the people in Pakistan, especially women, children, the most vulnerable and marginalized, have increased access to fundamental rights, gender equality and fundamental freedom through inclusive, accountable, effective and evidence-driven governance systems and rule-of-law institutions at all levels of government, contributing to good governance and stability

Contributing Outputs:

PAK_OUTPUT_1.1 Open, agile, accountable and future-ready governance institutions and systems in place to co-create and deliver solutions to accelerate transparent and equitable service delivery and SDG achievement

Progress Note:

No actions planned for 2023 under output 4, as it was an unfunded project component.

- **Level of Reporting:**

Output level results

Project Outputs:

Peaceful and transparent elections are facilitated through electoral reform dialogues, peaceful access to electoral processes, capacity development of electoral stakeholder and institutionalization of comprehensive M&E framework.

Contributing Outcomes:

Outcome 1 By 2027, the people in Pakistan, especially women, children, the most vulnerable and marginalized, have increased access to fundamental rights, gender equality and fundamental freedom through inclusive, accountable, effective and evidence-driven governance systems and rule-of-law institutions at all levels of government, contributing to good governance and stability

Contributing Outputs:

PAK_OUTPUT_1.1 Open, agile, accountable and future-ready governance institutions and systems in place to co-create and deliver solutions to accelerate transparent and equitable service delivery and SDG achievement

Progress Note:

UNDP support for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) this year led to: a) Two provincial-level consultative sessions for a comprehensive discussion on electoral issues, bringing together 106 representatives including 26 women from diverse sectors such as ECP, media, academia, political parties, civil society, youth, and the private sector. The discussions resulted in recommendations on mandatory intra-party elections, limiting candidates' constituencies, reserved seats for youth, and a proportional representation system. Stakeholders proposed a social media cell to counter disinformation and addressing climate impact on polling. b) A federal-level dialogue on "Safe Digital Space" with a diverse representation of 31 participants, including four women, focusing on addressing the serious issue of electoral misinformation and disinformation within the digital landscape. Recommendations made to combat electoral misinformation, emphasizing legislation against cybercrime, co-regulation models, gender-inclusive digital policies, and media literacy in education, are incorporated into policy draft. This policy draft will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, electoral authorities, and stakeholders. c) A federal level consultation forum on political finance engaging 33 stakeholders, including five women provided a platform to discuss reforms in political finance framework, challenges in implementation, and proposals for greater transparency and oversight. Recommendations will be presented to the next parliament for consideration. d) A federal consultation session on Multiple Candidacy attended by 27 stakeholders, including three women, discussed constitutional reform to limit candidates contesting from multiple constituencies, emphasizing the need for democratic inclusivity. Recommendations, including restricting candidates to two constituencies, were proposed to enhance the fairness and integrity of Pakistan's electoral system. e) A provincial consultation session on "Election Tribunals and Electoral Dispute Resolution provided a platform to various stakeholders for discussions on challenges in the electoral process, potential violations, and improvements to the dispute resolution system. The discussions resulted in recommendations including digitizing election

processes, ensuring transparency, and addressing concerns about impartiality and interference. f) Equipping 705 university students, including 384 young women, with digital literacy skills and the ability to identify false online content is a significant step toward creating a safer digital environment, as these sessions have raised awareness about online misinformation and its consequences. g) The UNDP's iVerify mission's extensive stakeholder meetings with key groups, including government officials, journalists, and civil society representatives, resulted in a collaborative initiative to customize and deploy the iVerify platform in Pakistan. This initiative aims to address challenges related to hate speech and disinformation, contributing to the creation of a more informed and responsible digital environment. h) The establishment of the Advisory Council on hate speech and disinformation is a significant milestone, providing expert guidance and policy recommendations to combat these issues in Pakistan. i) Technical assistance to develop the ECP's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and training of 26 ECP officers to enhance accountability for ECP officers, election officials, and all stakeholders involved in electoral processes, such as candidates, political parties, and voters. This system aims to provide real-time evidence of compliance or violations related to ECP regulations, rules, and procedures, ensuring a level playing field for all stakeholders, including marginalized groups.

- **Level of Reporting:**

Output level results

Project Outputs:

Inclusive participation of vulnerable and underrepresented groups incl. women, transgender persons, PWDs, religious minorities and youth in electoral processes enhanced through civic/voter education and public outreach campaigns, and institutional reforms

Contributing Outcomes:

Outcome 4 By 2027, more women and girls at greatest risk of being left behind are able to benefit from and contribute to an environment in which they are empowered to exercise their fundamental rights, agency and decision-making power over all aspects, towards lives free from all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices.

Contributing Outputs:

PAK_OUTPUT_4.1 Empowerment of women, girls, transgender persons and vulnerable and institutional leadership is promoted through gender responsive policies, programmes, strategies and instruments through the provision of public and private financing and institutional development and strengthening.

Progress Note:

- UNDP support for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) this year led to: a) Engagement with the transgender community through provincial and national-level consultations, leading to recommendations for greater inclusion and protection, culminating in the National Strategic Framework on Transgender Persons Protection

and Political Inclusion. SELP's engagement and facilitation demonstrated a commitment to promoting the inclusion and protection of transgender individuals in the electoral process. b) A dialogue between the ECP and eight parliamentary parties emphasized the importance of gender-neutral language in the code of conduct, showcasing commitment to inclusivity. Whereas a roundtable session on electoral reforms at the Sindh Assembly Secretariat highlighted the need for comprehensive reforms, particularly focusing on women's empowerment and increased representation, offering insights for improving electoral and legislative processes in Sindh and Pakistan. c) The National Dialogue on Women Inclusive Electoral Processes, in partnership with UN Women and the Women's Parliamentary Committee (WPC), stressed the significance of political parties engaging women voters and promoting gender-inclusive electoral reforms. SELP's ongoing collaboration with WPC reflects its commitment to enhancing gender equality and inclusivity in Pakistani politics. d) Collaborative efforts with NCSW, involving stakeholders from the ECP, political parties, media, civil society, security forces, and more, led to the development of a "Code of Ethics" to combat hate speech and misinformation against women, addressing critical challenges related to women's electoral participation. e) Hosting a Design-Thinking Workshop to make Pakistan's electoral space disability-inclusive, SELP provided an opportunity to discuss challenges faced by differently abled individuals, particularly women. A survey tool for disability inclusion in the upcoming elections was crafted, engaging 40 participants, and involving members from disability advisory councils. f) Training 13 (6 men and 7 women) members of the ECP's federal and provincial level ECP's Inquiry Committees and developing three animated videos addressing legal aspects, and raising awareness effectively addressed workplace harassment issues, demonstrating UNDP's commitment to gender sensitization and safety in the workplace. g) Engaging 1,977 students, including 986 (49.9%) young women and 991 (50.1%) young men through targeted youth sessions across 15 universities nationwide including flood affected areas. The discussions yielded recommendations for awareness campaigns, curriculum integration, advocacy for student unions, and improved polling station environments, to encourage active youth participation in politics and foster trust in the electoral system. h) NIC registration for 86,401 beneficiaries, including 83,398 women, 51 persons with disabilities (PWDs), 2,513 elderly men, and 439 individuals from religious minorities in nine flood-affected districts of Sindh and Balochistan through formalized partnerships and well-planned approaches. A well-designed media campaign reaching 4.82 million people and adaptability in addressing challenges were key to success. Gender sensitization training for 49 NADRA officials promoted gender awareness and a harassment-free work environment, facilitating NIC registration. i) The development of the Youth Electoral and Political Participation Framework is a crucial step to address challenges in youth participation, especially in flood-affected areas. Collaboration among stakeholders is emphasized to ensure meaningful youth participation. The framework sets the stage for informed and inclusive civic engagement. j) Leveraging digital technology, UNDP's Youth Engagement Platform engages young people, focusing on marginalized communities, in monitoring and contributing to parliamentary affairs.

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4. Key Challenges Encountered

• **Level of Reporting:**

Project level results

Contributing Outcomes:

Contributing Outputs:

Progress Note:

• Political turmoil in Pakistan has adversely affected the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) election planning. Disputes concerning the timing of provincial assembly elections in Punjab and KP have resulted in uncertainty and the subsequent postponement of elections, causing them to extend beyond the constitutional deadline. This turmoil has placed additional strain on the ECP's preparations, disrupting the planning and training of election officials for both provincial and general elections. • Moreover, the passing of the "Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2023" on July 26, 2023, introduced significant changes to the election process in Pakistan. These changes affected the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) planning for training events and curriculum development in preparation for the general elections. The amendments included electronic transmission of results, modified campaign financing rules, and changes in constituency demarcation. While SELP is supporting the ECP in revising training materials and developing the instructional videos, this unforeseen development has disrupted the planning timeline, potentially impacting the preparedness for the upcoming general elections. • The transition to a caretaker government on 9 August and delay in the elections has inadvertently pushed engagement with parliamentarians to post-election phase. Moreover, the ongoing political uncertainty has resulted in delays in engaging with ministries and initiating discussions with relevant stakeholders. With the delay in elections, and political parties being engaged in their political campaigns, it has been difficult to engage with them. • These unachieved or off-track results (training of election officials are primarily due to external factors such as legal amendments, political crises, and unforeseen delays. They have disrupted the ECP's planning, and activities required to conduct various elections. SELP continues to support the ECP in adapting to these challenges, but the impact of these external factors on electoral preparations remains a significant concern.

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5. Project Risks and Issues

1. There is a risk of lacking the vulnerable groups' voice in the electoral process due to lack of inclusive mechanisms/ platforms. Mitigation: SELP II bridges ECP and vulnerable groups, addressing cultural challenges, advocating for gender quotas throughout ECP's structures, and enhancing staff responsiveness in electoral management. 2. There is a risk that lack of consensus among political parties on the introduction of meaningful and progressive reforms in electoral systems and processes, and participation of vulnerable groups (among others) due to various factors, such as ideological differences, vested interests, concerns over the potential impact on their electoral performance, or a lack of trust among parties. Mitigation: SELP fosters consensus on vital electoral reforms, including electronic voting and overseas voting, involving diverse stakeholders through ECP-led platforms. 3. There is a risk that implementation of gender mainstreaming activities including trainings on prevention of women against workplace harassment and consultations with transgender communities is hampered due to prevailing patriarchal norms and value systems in certain project areas such as in KP, Balochistan, interior Sindh and Punjab. Mitigation: To ensure gender mainstreaming in project implementation, the project uses a consultative and participatory approach in both designing project interventions as well as implementing them. 4. There is a risk that the smooth implementation of electoral operations is hampered due to introduction of electoral technologies without proper planning, testing, or training and lack of consensus among political parties and other electoral stakeholders on the appropriateness or fairness of the technologies' implementation. Mitigation: SELP sets up consultative dialogues to facilitate the ECP in developing consensus on electoral reforms before implementation. 5. There is a risk of increasing tensions among communities and violent confrontations during future local government, and general elections, due to widespread dissemination of hate speech and misinformation/disinformation. through various channels, including social media, online platforms, and possibly even traditional media. Mitigation: SELP fosters consensus on an electoral code, combats hate speech with media collaboration, and empowers youth for fact-checking. 6. There is a risk that UNDSS security restricts access to some areas, due to threat of retaliation by certain groups/organizations in some project areas (project is being implemented nationwide). Mitigation: 7. There is a risk that slow progress in achieving desired results and the ECP efforts for enhancing inclusivity and efficiency of electoral processes, due to insufficient funding and human resources required to carry out ECP's planned initiatives based on the prevailing state of the economy in the country and a shift in donor priorities away from electoral programs or reduce their support due to changing priorities. Mitigation: SELP provides technical and human resource support to the ECP ensuring that all project activities are completed on time and inclusivity for vulnerable groups is ensured in elections. 8. There is risk that Concerned departments (ECP and NADRA not meeting project obligations and rights holders not claiming their rights, due to the lack of technical and human resource capacities needed to fulfill their project obligations and rights holders (Citizens) lack the capacity to claim their rights. Mitigation: SELP addresses gender biases through support to ECP's Gender and Inclusion Wing and specialized training programs on gender sensitization. 9. There is a risk of low turnout of women and gender minority voters in the upcoming elections, as a result of entrenched gender biases and inequalities in electoral processes. Mitigation: Project collaborates for women's registration, addresses access issues, and ensures monitoring for progress and corrective actions.

6. Lessons Learned

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7. Conclusions and Way Forward

• Provide support the ECP with assessments and evaluation of electoral technologies used in GE to capture lessons learned and introduction of new technologies. • Support ECP in carrying out broad post-election reviews with a comprehensive group of electoral stakeholders (including those affected by floods) leading to the formulation of the next ECP's five-year strategic plan. • Evaluation of ECP's existing five-year strategic plan and formation of their next five-year strategic plan (2024-2028) • Provide support to ECP's IT wing to analyze and identify cybersecurity vulnerabilities, build strategies for their protection, and define internal ECP cybersecurity protocols. • Conduct training of IT/PMU/Political Finance wings on mega data handling, its integration and management. • Mobilize and facilitate women, transgenders and PWDs for NIC and voter registration in target flood affected areas. • Enhance the capacity of the Women Parliamentary caucuses (WPC) and parliamentary Secretariat. • Strengthen ECP's Gender and Social Inclusion Unit through the development of staff training activities including gender mainstreaming, inclusion, and protection against harassment of women in the workplace. • Support the design and production of CVE materials targeting underrepresented groups (women, youth, persons with disabilities, transgender persons, and religious minorities), and implementation of civic and voter education campaign through radio, digital media and boosting through social media with special focus in flood affected provinces. • Consultative sessions with legislators to enhance the inclusion of the transgender community in political and electoral processes. • Civic and Voter Outreach with transgender community. • Dialogue on intra-community conflict resolution led by the transgender community for effective inclusion and participation in the next general elections. • Developing case studies for transgender candidates in the next general elections. Documenting their journey. Journey Mapping of other transgender leaders engaging in political processes. • Mapping and Scoping exercise of voter turnout for the transgender community. • Support the ECP in establishing regular dialogue platforms with political parties, media, observers, CSOs, and minority actors, to lead regular information sessions/ consultations centered on critical issues related to the electoral process and electoral reforms. • Establishment and monthly coordination ds of Advisory Council and Steering Committee comprising of industry experts to provide coordination platform and suggestions for the improvement and diversification in project activities. • Inclusive multistakeholder dialogues to develop political consensus against hate speech and disinformation campaigns in Pakistan (one in each province and one at national level) • Training of Government officials on understanding and responding to hate speech in Pakistan • Launch the iVerify platform to identify and respond to instances of electoral hate speech and disinformation in Pakistan. • Capacity building support including Trainings of iVerify System, to fact-check and external actors with a focus on youth. • Organize trainings/learning sessions for university students to empower them to identify and address fake news and hate content online.

8. Other Reporting Requirements

- No items to display.

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