

Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: 1 October – 31 December 2012

IRAQ: Elections Support Project (ESP)

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I. SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period. A pair of important management training events took place, operational assistance continued smoothly, and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) agreed to launch the strategic planning process. These accomplishments sit alongside notable developments in the electoral context, as preparations for the 20 April 2013 Governorate Council Elections (GCE) continued.

A notable IFES achievement this quarter was getting the Board of Commissioners (BoC) to commence the strategic planning process concurrent with GCE preparations. This process was slated to start after the seating of the new BoC last April, but did not because the BoC was not named until last fall. Throughout Q1FY13, IFES attempted to convince the BoC that they could prepare for an election alongside long-term planning as well. A strategic planning workshop was planned for January 2013. IFES hopes to move swiftly through the process and has recruited a consultant to lead assistance.

Another achievement was the successful provision of operational assistance, primarily in the realm of voter registration. IFES IT, Election Operations, and External Relations Advisors all

played key support roles in ensuring the IHEC’s Database, Operations, and Public Outreach Departments were able to carry out a successful voter registration update (VRU), which took place in December 2012.

The third major achievement this quarter was the successful production of a series of public service announcements (PSAs) for the voter registration update. This effort required IFES’ management and advisors to combine diplomacy and patience as they brought together a sometimes contentious Public Outreach Department (POD) in order to produce high quality voter information. A landmark effort, IFES expects that with these PSAs complete it will be easier to produce outreach material for future elections.

IFES also completed vetting of over 200 civil society organizations (CSOs) applications for funding for the small sub-grants program. The selection committee is currently scoring applications for final decisions. Once the winners are selected, they will be asked to attend compliance trainings in February. Initial funding will be released shortly thereafter.

Finally, IFES successfully fielded its first nationwide Iraq Public Opinion survey. The results are currently under analysis and will be unveiled to the IHEC and USAID in a presentation next quarter. The follow-on survey will take place in 2014 to measure change in public perceptions of elections in Iraq in general, and of the IHEC specifically.

There are a number of elections scheduled after the April 2013 GCE. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) elections will possibly be held in September 2013. After that, preparations will begin for the spring 2014 Parliamentary elections. The main challenge facing IFES during this period will be ensuring that the IHEC does not operate in “ad-hoc mode.” With the strategic planning process commencing, IFES will work to ensure that the IHEC carries out long-term planning in conjunction with elections preparation.

Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, October – December 2012 (Q1FY13)

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
16 October	Basrah	Sub-Grant Info Session 1	27	5	N/A
18 October	Erbil	Sub-Grant Info Session 2	21	4	N/A
21, 23 October	Baghdad	Sub-Grant Info Sessions 3, 4	118	42	N/A
19-21 October	Erbil	GCE GEOs Operations Support	31	0	12/19
18-21 November	Erbil	Ledger 13/Fixed Asset Control	40	5	7/33
18-22 November	Erbil	BRIDGE: Electoral Administration	31	2	8/23
22- 24 December	Baghdad	Bids Analysis and Procurement	21	1	21/0
Total workshop participants			289	59	48/75

II. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The most significant development in the electoral context this quarter revolved around the adoption of the Governorate Council Election Law amendments¹. A series of amendments to the provincial law were approved in the fall.

The third GCE will be quite different from previous provincial elections. In 2005, Governorate Council Elections for 41 seats took place on a closed list system. Lists were able to win seats using the highest remainder formula. The electoral system changed substantially for the 2009 GCE. An open list was adopted, and seat assignment was based on governorate population. Also, a new seat allocation formula was introduced that eliminated the use of the highest remainder. This switch saw smaller parties unable to win representation in their governorate councils.

With 20 April 2013 set as the GCE date, Iraqis will again elect provincial leaders through different methods than before. The 2013 GCE will be carried out according to the following parameters, as adopted by the Fourth Amendment of the GCE Law, effective 28 November, 2012:

- **Total seats:** A total of 456 seats across all governorates, excluding those that make up the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), will be contested.
- **Electoral districts:** Each province comprises an electoral district for the purpose of the GCE; the number of seats for each district is based on population, which means there are more contested seats in this election than there were in the 2009 GCE.
- **Minority Seats:** There are 9 total seats reserved for minorities, broken down according to the following:
 - **Baghdad:** One seat each for Christians, Mandaeans, Feyli Kurds, and Turkmen;
 - **Nineveh:** One seat each for Christians, Yazidi, and Shabak;
 - **Basrah:** One seat for Christians;
 - **Wassit:** One seat for Feyli Kurds.
- **Seat Distribution:** Seats allocation will be based on the Sainte Lague method, through which the total votes received by each candidate, or list, will be divided by 1, 2, 3, etc. up to the total number of seats available in the governorate.

The fourth amendment to the GCE Law was not approved without contention. In the months prior to its passing, many Iraqis, particularly those allegiant to small political parties, argued that the seat allocation used previously marginalized smaller parties. When the law was finally passed with the Sainte-Lague change, making it slightly easier for smaller parties to win seats, Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki's party stormed out of the Parliament. Whether this was because the new method was adopted or not remains unclear, but larger parties could be understandably aggrieved at the new arrangement.

¹ The Governorate Council Election law is also referred to as Law 36 (2008) elsewhere in this report.

What remains to be seen, however, is whether the new system will impact female representation in governorate councils. Previous seat allocations had quotas for women, but no such mandate is built into the current amendment. IFES will report more on this issue next quarter.

At the conclusion of the candidate nomination period on 31 December, a total of 8,275 candidates had submitted applications to run. IFES will indicate the final number of candidates next quarter after this list is put through the Integrity Commission. Initial figures indicate that of this number, there are 1,719 women.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES ²

Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened

IFES successfully encouraged the IHEC to begin the strategic planning process. The IHEC agreed to launch the process in January 2013, beginning with a workshop, which IFES will facilitate in Erbil. The 4-day workshop concept paper and initial agenda were approved by the BoC in December and the event dates are set for 6-9 January, 2013.

Activity 1.1: Development of an IHEC Strategic Plan

In October, IFES and the IHEC held several informal meetings about the need to initiate the strategic planning process, culminating in a request for IFES to facilitate a strategic planning workshop. This workshop will take place immediately following the holidays in early January. IFES will facilitate the event with an international consultant. Content is based on IFES' own strategic planning expertise, including the IFES publication *Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management* manual.

Activity 1.1.1: Induction workshop on strategic planning for senior IHEC staff and establishment of IHEC strategic planning bodies

The four-day strategic planning workshop in January will adhere to following thematic agenda, tentatively developed in preparation for activities in the next quarter:

- **Context & Introduction:** *participants will gain an understanding of strategic planning in the electoral context and the demands it will place on the IHEC.*
- **Methodology & Practice:** *participants will be instructed on the major steps in the strategic planning process.*
- **Evaluation & Action:** *participants will be exposed to lessons learned by other election management bodies during the strategic planning process and how they apply to the IHEC.*

² Activity numbering is per PIP

- **Way Forward:** *participants will establish a Strategic Planning Committee and develop an implementation timeline for the IHEC's Strategic Planning Process.*

The key objectives of the workshop will be to impart foundational strategic planning knowledge to the participants, facilitate the creation of a strategic planning committee, and produce an implementation plan for strategic planning activities in the months following the workshop.

IFES expects that these three objectives will prompt additional accomplishments in the following months. Should the strategic planning committee be successfully formed, Mission and Vision Statements will follow shortly thereafter. IFES and the IHEC will meet two critical milestones in the strategic planning process, as indicated in the project's Performance Management Plan.

1.1.3: Conduct of internal and external organizational assessments

IFES distributed its Finance and Administration Systems Assessment and Public Outreach Department Assessment to the IHEC in October 2012. The response was positive and many IHEC staff members found the recommendations to be necessary. IFES will use these and the other internal assessments it has developed to provide the basis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis during the strategic planning process in the coming months.

The IHEC will use the assessments as background material for its strategic planning process. As new Department Directors and Deputy Directors replace outgoing staff, the assessments may serve as useful introductory tools.

1.1.5: Development of the IHEC Strategic Plan

As stated in the Program Description, IFES will be basing a considerable amount of its strategic planning assistance on IFES' Guide *Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management*, which was written by IFES Egypt's Chief of Party.

In December 2012, IFES contracted a strategic planning consultant to begin preliminary work on the training package IFES will provide to the IHEC. The consultant will facilitate the January workshop and then work with the IHEC Strategic Planning Committee in Baghdad. His primary objective will be to shepherd the process to the completion of a comprehensive strategic plan for the IHEC.

IFES envisions that the main challenge currently facing the development of the IHEC's Strategic Plan will be maintaining momentum coming out of the January workshop. The BoC is pre-occupied with the April GCE, and there is a possibility that it will get busy with operations. However, IFES has so far successfully conveyed the need for the BoC to avoid becoming another ad hoc planning commission, similar to the previous BoC. This has spurred the current group on and convinced it to carry out the strategic planning process.

Activity 1.4: Facilitation of Transition to a new Board of Commissioners in 2012

In October 2012, IFES prepared the first bi-weekly brief for the new Board of Commissioners and in November 2012, four of the IFES' staff attended a BoC meeting to formally introduce the project. The IHEC welcomed IFES staff and the briefing on project activities, which bodes well for IFES' efforts in the months to come.

1.4.1: Preparation of detailed briefings by the IHEC Departments and Sections to the new Board of Commissioners

With the new BoC comprised mostly of internal appointments, IFES served as a facilitator between the new Commissioners and the IHEC's Departments. Rather than expend time and effort on developing redundant material, IFES capitalized on the BoC's intimate knowledge of the IHEC and chose to push the strategic planning process to the front of the new BoC's agenda. This effort saved a considerable amount of time and resources, given the delayed appointment of the BoC.

On 5 November, IFES Chief of Party and Deputy Chief of Party, along with the External Relations Specialist and Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, attended a BoC meeting to formally present the project and to highlight current activities and past achievements. The introductory meeting was significant because IFES and the IHEC came to an agreement on IFES' forthcoming activities, particularly on strategic planning and outreach activities. IFES staff presented options for initiating strategic planning activities concurrent with the GCE.

Additionally, the IHEC supported IFES' suggestion that public outreach activities be given high importance, particularly in the run-up to the GCE. After providing the Commissioners with a short list of recent POD achievements, IFES encouraged them to support the ongoing development of a Communications Coordination Committee (CCC) that will guide development of strategic communication policies and corporate branding. A single committee comprised of staff from POD and the Operations Department will help ensure that voter registration outreach and voter education messages are coherent and timely in advance of the provincial elections in April.

1.4.2: Specialized training course for new Commissioners

As noted in the Q4 FY12 Quarterly Report, IFES designed a training course for the new Commissioners. However, after extensive internal discussions and meetings with the BoC, IFES and the Commissioners have concluded that the training course is not a necessary activity as it will have limited utility. Seven of the nine individuals comprising the BoC have extensive elections experience gained through prior positions at the IHEC. The course IFES designed includes five components: institutional and organizational framework of the IHEC, electoral legal frameworks, the IHEC's composition and roles, overview of electoral operations, and financial operations. The content for these topics draws on IFES' own experience at the IHEC and from documents on electoral operations in Iraq. The current BoC is intimately familiar with the content as they have experienced the case studies first hand and received IFES assistance previously. The collective experience of the Commissioners makes it unlikely that the provision of this workshop will add extra value.

IFES began planning for two BRIDGE courses in January 2013, which will be attended by a number of Commissioners. These courses will supplement what the BoC has already mastered about elections administration and will provide specific information on stakeholder management and elections preparations. The instruction provided at this workshop will be forward looking and immediately implementable. The BoC has also requested a Train the Facilitators (TtF) BRIDGE course to be conducted next quarter for the Commissioners and Directors.

Objective 2: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are strengthened

IFES Organizational Management Specialist left the project in October 2012. Though recruitment efforts continued intensely throughout the remaining months of the quarter, a replacement was not found. However, IFES did host two formal management training events, along with providing considerable on-the-job training to the IT and Database Departments.

Activity 2.1: Support to the IHEC's IT systems and infrastructure

IFES' previous Quarterly Report states that IFES developed an IT infrastructure assessment, designed to guide the IHEC through a cost-effective upgrade program. Throughout this quarter, IT equipment was upgraded based to a large extent on this assessment and United Nations (UN) funding. The upgrades will ensure that the IT infrastructure is reliable and up-to-date for future elections.

The upgrade process was relatively trouble free. The UN took the lead on actual implementation, but IFES' IT/Database Advisor and Iraqi Technical Program Associate were on hand to provide assistance when requested.

Activity 2.2: Capacity building support to the IHEC's database and software developers and staff

IFES IT/Database Advisor carried out extensive on-the-job training with his IHEC counterpart throughout this past quarter. The training occurred as part of ongoing refinements to the voter registration update (VRU) software. Beginning in late October, IFES' IT/Database Advisor worked with the lead IHEC Database Developer to identify and troubleshoot issues with the VRU program. They jointly identified software bugs, but rectification was left primarily to the IHEC database staff.

Activity 2.3: Support Improvements to the Voter Registration Process

Throughout October and November, IFES IT staff provided ongoing training to the IHEC's Database Developers in order to ensure that the VRU software would be in operational condition for the VRU, which commenced on 1 December, 2012. Instruction was provided in the form of on-the-job assistance at IHEC's National Office in Baghdad, as mentioned above.

IFES also hosted a major workshop in October, designed to provide support for voter registration and electoral operations for the upcoming Governorate Council Elections. Day-to-day

interactions between IFES' management and Election, External Media, and IT Advisors focused heavily on the VRU process and the operational progress.

For reference, at the close of the Voter Registration Update on 7 January, data stands as follows:

- **Total Voter Registration Center visits:** 956,897
- **Internally Displaced Persons registration (absentee voting):** 24,924
- **Complaints (officially lodged):** 21

Activity 2.3.2: Support operational planning for voter registration activities

From 19 – 21 October, IFES facilitated the GCE GEOs Operations Support Workshop in Erbil.

The event addressed preparatory requirements, specifically those related to voter registration, ahead of the April 2013 GCE. Directors from all GEOs attended, along with the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and Directors from the National Office (NO) Departments. Section Heads of the Complaints, Legal, and Procurement Departments from the National Office also participated. There were a total of 31 participants, with more than half coming from the GEOs.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- Review the GEOs preparation for the voter registration update process, including staff recruitment and contracting, printing of the provisional voters list, and opening of the Voter Registration Centers (VRCs).
- Identify the financial and operational duties related to the electoral process at the NO and GEO levels.
- Finalize the timeline, including differentiating its various stages and designing the process for implementation.
- Review outreach activities including the media campaign, political entities (PEs) registration, and accreditation of observer and PEs Agents.
- Discussing the complaints and appeals process for the VRU and adjudication process.

At the end of the workshop, a number of recommendations were put forth for implementation. Some of the key ones include:

- Modify the hiring procedures for VRCs staff in order to ensure staff represents the area serviced by the VRC and to formalize the preference for managers and deputies to have previous VRC experience.
- Permit the GEOs to hire temporary staff directly and in proportion to the social and ethnic make-up of the electoral district.
- Require general notifications to be sent to GEO managers informing them of relevant findings about candidates during the vetting process by the Integrity Commission.

The key outcome of this workshop was the finalization of an operational timeline for the April GCE. IFES' facilitation of this event enabled representatives from all of the GEOs to convene in one place within a set framework. The concept paper and design of this event was led by IFES in

order to ensure that the operational timeline for the GCE could be completed. The utility of this event was evident on the first day. GEO Directors from Nineveh and Dhi Qar were able to raise concerns that renovations to VRCs in their governorates could locally impact the operational timeline. While the IHEC colleagues could do little to influence the actual process of renovation, all participants agreed that certain deadline exceptions will need to be made for local contingencies and that extra National Office support should be provided wherever possible to mitigate the impact of these contingencies.

The cascade training program for VRCs' staff was also optimized. The workshop allowed GEOs and NO staff to discuss which body would be responsible for various aspects of training. Also, the workshop enabled participants to discuss contingency plans in the event of delays to the data entry process during the VRU period. The operational timeline is designed to absorb potential delays without affecting the overall electoral cycle.

The timeline was successfully approved shortly after the event, though it is likely that minor modifications (such as extensions) may be made to accommodate logistical issues that may arise in the run-up to the April polling day.

Activity 2.3.3: Support Coordination between the IHEC and Other Government Agencies on the Development of Voter Registries

The IHEC worked with other government agencies on a number of voter registry issues throughout the quarter. IFES' Chief of Party and Senior Election Advisor provided as-needed input to the IHEC for coordination with the following ministries:

- **Ministry of Health (MoH):** Throughout the VRU process, the IHEC coordinated with the Ministry of Health on updating the voter registry with accurate numbers of deceased citizens. The IHEC records for deceased people were out-of-date. To ensure accuracy, the Ministry of Health provided accurate numbers (roughly 300,000), which the IHEC is using to update the voter list.
- **Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM):** An important development in interagency cooperation this quarter was the inclusion of a special section of the voter registration update form. Through cooperation with the MoDM, the IHEC was able to design a box on the VR form that will enable internally displaced persons (IDPs) to provide their IDP file number. During the VRU, the number could be cross-checked with the MoDM database to ensure its validity.
- **Ministry of Defense (MoD):** The IHEC worked with the MoD to ensure that Special Needs Voting (SNV) for military and other security organizations would be made available so that are those people/organizations are able to vote separately from the general public. SNV will take place in advance of polling day.

2.5 Support to the IHEC Directorates of Finance and Administration with the introduction of financial controls, accounting, and finance systems

From 18 – 22 November 2012, IFES facilitated a workshop on the use of Ledger 13 and Fixed Assets Control. Ledger 13 is a mandatory Government of Iraq (GoI) mechanism for inventory control of government owned assets. This was a follow-on workshop to a November 2011 workshop on the same topic, which had the following outcomes:

- Identified inventory and budget allocation requirements;
- Provided instruction on documentation requirements for processing goods received;
- Provided instruction on Ledger 13 provisions as they apply to the IHEC.

This workshop built on those outcomes and included instruction specific to the management of electoral material. The event provided instruction to the IHEC staff on controlling the movement and allocation of polling equipment and on differentiating election equipment and general fixed assets. IFES designed the event to improve inventory controls, develop and deal with the concept of “strategic stocks” of non-perishable elections material, and to improve the general IHEC knowledge of Ledger 13 protocols.

A total of 40 people, including 5 women, attended the event. IFES contracted the Iraqi consultant who led the 2011 workshop, as she is widely regarded as one of the national experts on Ledger 13.

The goal of the 2012 workshop was to ensure that inventory management for the upcoming GCE, as well as subsequent elections, is carried out according to GoI requirements. The IHEC has adequate knowledge of Ledger 13 protocols for this. The average participant score of the post-workshop evaluation exam was 83%. However, out of 37 participants who took the test, just 25 (68%) indicated a genuine increase in knowledge.³ This training was just the first Ledger 13 dealing with election material control. Based on this workshop, IFES’ consultant recommends yearly implementation of a formal Ledger 13 training event. Additionally, she recommends that the accountants inside the IHEC continue to receive training in financial control areas. This is not because of lack of ability. Rather, the IHEC needs to continue to enhance its institutional knowledge in this area so that it ultimately improves its Ledger 13 knowledge without the need for externally-led trainings.

Activity 2.6: Support to the IHEC Finance and Administration Department to Improve Staff Capacity to Prepare and Execute Budgets

IFES supported the IHEC’s Finance and Administration Departments with the provision of a formal training event on bid analysis and procurement in this quarter. The workshop made use of Iraqi facilitators and was designed to simultaneously support the April GCE and build institutional capacity.

³ IFES adhered to its general workshop exam format of 10 multiple choice questions and 5 open ended questions for this event. Only participants who experienced an increase of three correct questions are deemed to have acquired additional knowledge on the content material being taught. For this event, 25 participants out of 40 total attendees (68%) indicating improved knowledge is below IFES general expectations of workshop learning outcomes. Given that, IFES may repeat the workshop again prior to upcoming electoral events.

Activity 2.6.2: Conduct training on budget execution processes and the use of financial software in budget execution

From 22 – 24 December 2012, IFES facilitated a workshop on Bid Analysis and Procurement for the committee of IHEC staff charged with carrying out procurement activities related to the April GCE. There are five committees: Solicitation Committee, Bids Opening Committee, Bids Analysis Committee, Ratification & Review Committee, and Black List Committee.

The three day event was chaired by local facilitators who are experts in GoI procurement policy and regulations. All participants were instructed on GoI regulations for procurement, with specific sessions set aside for the various committees. Some of the highlighted topics included evaluation and qualification criteria, conflict resolution, and general contract conditions.

This workshop resulted in the clarification of procedures regarding the bid and award process during material procurement. IFES will report on the implementation status of the updated procurement procedures in Q2FY13. With updated procedures in place, the IHEC will be able to handle procurement for the GCE, and also for elections likely in the next 18 months, thereby contributing to long-term budget execution abilities.

The participants were already well-versed in procuring electoral equipment. However, IFES chose to facilitate this workshop in order to ensure that the IHEC’s procurement regulations adhere to GoI

mandates and that each committee is fully aware of its responsibilities – both ethically and electorally. The workshop was a cost-share with the IHEC as the IHEC was responsible for locating and booking a venue for the event while IFES contracted the facilitators.



Instructional slide from Bid and Procurement Workshop, 22 - 24 December 2012

Activity 2.7: Development and Implementation of a Training Package for GEO Staff to Address Technical Skills Gaps and to Ensure a Uniform Standard of Technical Capacity

Although not part of a formal training package, IFES facilitated a three-day workshop in Erbil in October 2012, which was heavily attended by GEOs staff, as mentioned above (under activity 2.3.2).

GEOs staff received instruction on logistics requirements and strategies, including warehousing and procurement procedures. Additional lectures gave GEO participants the opportunity to become more familiar with their financial responsibilities vis-a-vis the electoral budget.

The National Office delegated a number of responsibilities to GEOs Directors that had not previously been in their purview. For example, the Operations Department gave GEOs the responsibility to print provisional voter lists and engage in contracts for media campaigns. This is a welcome step away from centralized control. IFES will report on major obstacles faced by GEOs in these processes after the election in April.

Activity 2.8: Implementation of a Comprehensive Electoral Curriculum Based on the BRIDGE Curriculum

IFES facilitated a BRIDGE module in mid-November 2012. The topic was *Introduction to Electoral Management*, the foundation module of the BRIDGE series. This event brought together 31 IHEC employees and was facilitated by the fully accredited BRIDGE trainer – Director of the Erbil GEO.

Five IHEC employees were chosen to co-facilitate the workshop. Two of the facilitators held semi-accreditation, including the IHEC BoC Chairman, and three were fully accredited. Both of the semi-accrediting facilitators advanced to full accreditation, while the remaining individuals continued accruing training hours in order to reach the Accrediting level, which will allow them to accredit facilitators in the future.

IFES will continue BRIDGE trainings in January, with an introductory module scheduled to take place in the third or fourth week of the month in Erbil.

Objective 3: IHEC capacity to manage external affairs with key external stakeholders is improved

IFES' nationwide survey was successfully implemented this quarter, and the results will be shared with the IHEC and USAID mid-February 2013. IFES is completing initial vetting of the more than 200 applicants for funding from the small sub-grant program. Turning towards direct assistance to the IHEC, IFES supported the successful development of a series of voter information products and made headway on developing the IHEC's strategic communications plan.

Activity 3.2: Conduct of National Surveys

On 3 December 2012, IFES received the survey dataset from IIACSS, the company contracted to carry out the nationwide survey. The results of the survey are currently under analysis and IFES is preparing a presentation for the IHEC and USAID to occur in mid-February 2013.

Once IFES has finished analyzing the results and made its presentation, IFES will work with the IHEC and USAID to identify meaningful ways to positively influence the electoral environment between now and the time of the next survey in 2014. Initial plans are to encourage the IHEC to

focus on public outreach to give Iraqis a better sense of what the IHEC is responsible for and what it does well. Furthermore, with IFES' confidence that the April 2013 provincial elections will be successful, we expect that the IHEC will be able to leverage that success to positively influence public opinion. Subsequent successful elections, such as the likely KRG elections in summer 2013, will only provide increased popular satisfaction with the IHEC.

Activity 3.3 Development of an Effective Media Relations Strategy

IFES has made strides in getting the IHEC to adopt an effective media strategy. However, because previous elections and assistance projects were focused primarily on operations, public outreach is perhaps the most laggard of the IHEC Departments.

IFES developed a toolkit that could be used as a reference for the rapid development of a functional outreach strategy. Combining all that has been learned about the POD since the project's inception and working to build consensus among the various sections inside the POD, as well as among the POD and other IHEC Departments, the toolkit should pave the way to a communication strategy in the coming months.

3.3.1: Development of a strategic communications plan

In November 2012, IFES External Media Specialist presented the IHEC with a Communications Strategy Toolkit. The toolkit contains ten steps that should be undertaken in order to develop a comprehensive and impactful strategic communications plan.

After a brief introduction that defines what the strategic communications plan and explains why such a document is important, the toolkit outlines the ten steps that are required for developing a plan. The steps are listed with a brief explanation below (a full copy is provided as an appendix):

- *Build situational awareness as an organization:* consider the perception of the organization and outreach goals.
- *Identify key stakeholder audiences:* define the target audience.
- *Map stakeholders:* chart stakeholders' channels of influence, opinion drivers, favorability, and familiarity in order to ensure the audience is understood.
- *Map new and tradition media outreach techniques:* identify which mediums could be employed to reach specific audiences.
- *Define communication goals:* define what the communications strategy will achieve.
- *Create messages:* establish the message for the audience in a manner that achieves the desired result.
- *Select communication channels:* identify which sources you can employ to deliver the message to the specific stakeholder
- *Select tactics:* establish the means through which messages will be put into the selected channels.
- *Create an action plan:* build a project management plan to ensure coordination of the various activities and deliverables.
- *Execute, evaluate, and update:* implement the strategy while remaining vigilant for processes that are not having the desired effect.

Critically, each step is situated within an Action-Output framework. This forces the staff tasked with developing the strategic communications plan to carry out each step in a manner that produces an explicit result. The process will be managed for results.

The key challenge in developing the strategic communications plan will be ensuring that the POD Sections collaborate with each other and do not view the process as either a competition or an opportunity to undermine each other. As reported in IFES weekly reports, communication among POD Sections is frequently disjointed, and is something IFES is working to rectify by holding regular meetings with participants from all sections.

Activity 3.4: Capacity Building Training in the Design, Implementation, and Conduct of Voter Information and Educational Programs

An important area that IFES worked on with Public Outreach Department staff in the previous quarter was the legal and regulatory frameworks regarding election reporting. IFES has supported the IHEC's drive to ensure that media outlets adhere to the mandatory standards in their election coverage.

IFES' activities in this area centered on facilitating the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the IHEC and the Communications & Media Commission (CMC) and the IHEC and the Iraq Media Network (IMN).

The MoU with the CMC is to ensure that election news is reported within the legal framework set forth in the relevant election laws, such as Law 36 (2008), for example. The MoU is supplemented by a Code of Conduct for Media during Elections, which is

Outreach to People with Disabilities

IFES External Media Advisor has taken the lead on supporting the IHEC to expand outreach activities to people with disabilities (PWDs).

Under her lead, IFES is leading the joint UN-IFES initiative to support IHEC's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Initially, efforts focused on people with sensory and physical disability but following research and the reading of the Iraq Mental Health Act (2004), IFES has prepared recommendations for the inclusion of mental illness and intellectual impairment, both extremely sensitive issues. IFES has coordinated with the National Mental Health Council, the Advisor on Mental Health to the Iraqi Government, and the University of Nottingham Mental Health Law Department on the preparation of documents and briefing papers. IFES will provide training to the Procedures Department on PWDs and People with Mental Health Problems (PMHP) in the following quarter to sensitize electoral officials and show them how they can best help people to access electoral information and to vote.

IFES will provide an update on these efforts next quarter.

being finalized at the time of this report. Though not a legally binding document, the code should provide a normative framework for elections reporting.

The MoU with the IMN is to ensure that public service broadcasting adheres to the regulatory framework governing both public media and elections.

While activities of this nature are not explicitly called for in the Program Description, IFES has found that the media has historically been a neglected stakeholder in past Iraqi elections. With USAID knowledge, IFES has endeavored to change this (at no cost to the project). Facilitating the IHEC's relationship with this group can help to ensure that voter information is as unbiased as possible and is delivered according to a clear set of standards.

IFES expects that the fledgling relationship between the IHEC, the CMC, and the IMN will grow, allowing a mutually constitutive network that respects elections reporting and provides the public with an interlocutor able to hold the IHEC to account at the same time.

3.4.1: Training program on voter education methodologies and use of new media for public outreach

IFES has been supporting improvements to the IHEC's online news content during this quarter. Though there are several new media formats for information dissemination, the IHEC's website remains central and must be perfected before other formats are widely employed.

Early in the quarter, the External Media Specialist provided support to the IHEC in re-launching the website after it was taken down last summer. After going live again in October 2012, the EMS collaborated with the IHEC in improving both the Arabic and English language news content that was posted on the site. For the English language section, the EMS provided two tutorial sessions on the news writing process and the proper forms of English.

This instruction was supported by the development and implementation of an English language style guide that the website editors can use in the future. The guide explains grammar and fundamental mechanics of news writing. More importantly, the guide provides a standard reference for Commissioners' names, international officials, governorates, and disability-friendly terminology. The IHEC will incorporate this guide into its own in-house training regimens.

In order to provide effective Arabic language support, IFES facilitated cost-free instruction from the Institute of War and Peace Reporting's (IWPR) Arabic-language news editor. Arabic language training is currently being finalized and is likely to occur early next quarter. The Public Outreach Department has already approved the training, but the delivery process remains under discussion.

The above activities will enable the IHEC to use its website as an outreach tool more effectively. Once the IHEC has mastered the methodologies behind this form of outreach, IFES will support development of other new media.

3.4.2 Review and production of outreach and voter information materials

IFES has continued to support the IHEC in development of voter informational materials. The previous Quarterly Report states that IFES was working with the IHEC on creating a standardized set of branded outreach materials, designed under three different rubrics: Election Advisor, Election Training, and Election Education. These materials were ultimately not produced as the IHEC preferred other types of material.

In its place were a series of four public service announcements (PSAs) that were developed with IFES support. One of the main issues was getting the various IHEC Departments involved in their creation to reach a consensus on content. Early formats were disjointed and provided confusing information. For example, one early PSA gave the impression that voters would receive a car and a house for casting their vote. IFES' External Media Advisor, serving as interlocutor, enabled the IHEC to refine the announcement for added clarity. IFES expects that the PSA development process, though tedious at times, will provide a lasting impression on the IHEC. With staff now fully aware of what makes an effective outreach tool, future voter information products will hopefully be more effective.

Activity 3.5: Outreach to Political Entities

IFES supported the IHEC's efforts to include political entities in the electoral process, most notably by encouraging these groups to enhance their outreach for people with disabilities (PWDs). IFES will be working with the Public Outreach Division next quarter on methods for encouraging PEs to include PWDs in voter information campaigns.



IFES Sub-grant Information Session, 23 October 2012 (Baghdad)

Activity 3.7: Civil society sub grants program

In October 2012, IFES hosted four information sessions for potential subgrant applicants. Two of the sessions took place in Baghdad, one in Erbil and another in Basrah. A total of 140 organizations attended the training sessions. The organizations were extremely diverse, with dozens of women and youth, cultural, scientific, and sporting-focused organizations represented.

The Request for Applications (RFA) was released on 11 October, 2012 and was originally set to close on 11 November 2012. The deadline was extended twice. The first extension (till 18 November) aimed at allowing organizations to have sufficient time to review the released Q&A from the information sessions so organizations that were not able to attend would see the questions and answers from these sessions. The second extension (till 26 November) was related

to technical issues (IFES had to increase the capacity of the application email mailbox) due to the overwhelming interest in the subgrants. At the close of the application period, over 200 civil society organizations had applied. Applicants were put through an initial stage of eligibility vetting, after which approved organizations were sent to the selection committee for final decisions on funding.

In February 2013, IFES will host compliance training sessions for the successful applications. These sessions will include instruction on financial management, contract compliance, and monitoring and evaluation. The session will be conducted in Basra, Erbil and Baghdad.

IFES expects to release funding in FY2013Q2.

Table 2: CSO Application Numbers

Total Applicants	Total Eligible Applicants	Total Successful Applications
202	156	TBD

IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

IFES will continue standard on-the-job assistance and training, supplemented by formal training events when necessary. The Strategic Planning Induction event, specifically, is likely to be followed by smaller events to ensure the process does not stall. The following activities are on the immediate horizon:

Table 3: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, October – December 2012⁴

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Strategic Planning Introduction	BoC (TBD)	Erbil	4-5 Days	6 January
BRIDGE: Introduction to Elections Management	TBD	Erbil	4-5 Days	20 January
BRIDGE: Introduction to Elections Management	TBD	Erbil	4-5 Days	27 January
Sub-grant Training	CSOs	Basrah, Erbil, Baghdad (2x)	1 day each	20 – 31 January

V. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

VI. CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

This past quarter presented ESP with no major challenges to its critical assumptions. However, this may change in the months to come.

⁴ This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

In the political context, the assumption that *major political parties will peacefully and constructively engage in the political process even as they reach decision points over the status of disputed territories; the timing and content of local elections, referenda, and provincial elections; and, other contentious policy issues relevant to Independent Commissions* may be challenged during the GCE and the KRG elections.

At the end of December 2012, public dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Maliki resulted in localized demonstrations against his leadership. These protests were centered in the Sunni governorates, but indicate that the Prime Minister is unsuccessfully reaching across sectarian lines to foster a greater sense of belonging among Iraq's minorities. In terms of the influence of this on elections, some of the Sunni-dominated provinces which previously called for referenda on their status as independent regions may again press their demands.

Outside of this, IFES has taken steps to minimize potential challenges to the critical assumption that *IFES staff and consultants will get the necessary visas or permits to work in Iraq*. IFES has acquired long-term visas, including one multiple entry visa for the CoP, after several months of attempts. This will make travel in and out of Iraq easier for consultants and staff, given that they will be able to stay for at least 90 days at a time in country. Previous visas were good for one month only and required numerous extensions for longer term stays.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

IFES' accomplishments in Q1FY13 continue the successful implementation of the Elections Support Project. The importance of convincing the BoC to commence the strategic planning process alongside GCE preparations cannot be underestimated. If the IHEC went into the 2013 calendar year without a firm commitment to strategic planning, it would have run the risk of operating in ad-hoc mode for the rest of the year, given that KRG elections are possible in July 2013. It will be easier to maintain strategic planning momentum than it was to initiate it. At the end of December 2012, IFES had indications that the January Strategic Planning Workshop would yield the development of a Strategic Planning Committee. Should this occur, IFES will be able to immediately support the development of a mission statement and strategic objectives.

Given that, three conclusions can be taken from the past three months of programming. First, with the seemingly successful conclusion of the VRU, the BoC has demonstrated that its collective experience will translate into election administration competence. With only a handful of complaints, alongside useful advancements such as the inclusion of a section to indicate IDP file number on VR forms, the BoC should be proud that initial election operations are running smoothly. The election itself will, of course, prove how capable the IHEC's new leaders are. This capability will also be tested in how they handle the issue of female representation in the GCE and potential complaints after the spring election.

Second, the subgrants program will be a vitally important outreach activity. The sheer number of applications that IFES received indicates not only a successful RFA process, but the enthusiasm that exists for civil society engagement in Iraq. Though initial impression indicates that there is a large gulf in ability between Iraqi CSOs, a number of applications offer genuine opportunities for engaging stakeholders in Iraqi elections.

Finally, the IHEC needs to do more to implement successful stakeholder engagement with the media and PWDs. Historically, the outreach activities carried out before elections targeted the people most likely to vote. This makes sense for a transitional democracy, but turnout in past elections has been relatively impressive. The IHEC should recognize that it needs to engage with traditionally neglected groups, such as the mentally ill and physically disabled. but that engagement by itself is not enough. More than this, the IHEC should actively work with the media and civil society organizations to remove the barriers that prevent these neglected groups from exercising their right to vote. IFES and the UN are both pushing the IHEC to do this and are collaborating on ways to execute this. With PWD outreach already occurring, IFES hopes to see a higher turnout from these groups in the GCE next April.

VIII. ANNEXES TO NARRATIVE

1. Appendix A— Cover Memo
2. Appendix B— Performance Data Tables
3. Appendix C— Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS)
4. Appendix D—Communications Strategy Tool Kit
5. Appendix E – Subcontract Nationality Table
6. IFES Organizational Chart
7. Security Personnel Contracts Table
8. Sub-Activity Reporting Table