

Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: July 1 – September 30, 2013

IRAQ: Elections Support Project
USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 267-11-00001, under the Leader
Cooperative Agreement No. DFD-A-00-08-00350-00

Project Dates: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2014

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
1850 K Street NW , Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: +1 202-350-6700
Fax: +1 20-350-6701
info@ifes.org

I. SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period. A series of important workshops took place (see Table 1), operational assistance continued smoothly, and significant strides were made in public outreach support. These accomplishments sit alongside notable developments in the electoral context, such as the successful completion of the parliamentary elections in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). The IFES team played key support roles in ensuring the Independent High Electoral Commission's (IHEC) preparations for the elections progressed according to the operational timeline.

Throughout the reporting period, IFES provided analytical information on the electoral context and process, as well as technical expertise in information technology (IT), information and communications technology (ICT), and in the development of a new automated voter registration (AVR) system. IFES authored a briefing paper on the IKR parliamentary elections explaining the electoral system and process. It was widely distributed to national and international stakeholders, serving as a primary, comprehensive summary of the IKR election. IFES also conducted a number of meetings and briefings for USAID and the US Embassy Political Section.

A notable IFES achievement this quarter was orchestrating outreach to marginalized communities in Iraq, in particular, to persons with disabilities (PWD). On July 8-9, IFES

facilitated the Right to Political Participation for Persons with Disabilities workshop in Erbil. This workshop brought together key members of the IHEC and stakeholders from the PWD non-governmental organization (NGO) community. The intent behind the workshop was to combat negative stereotypes and to provide a training on how best to improve PWDs' access to their voting rights.

Another achievement was IFES' successful delivery of operational assistance to the IHEC and the Kurdistan Regional Electoral Office (KREO), 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 at the IHEC and the KREO were able to carry out a successful election.

IFES also completed the review of 114 civil society organizations' (CSO) applications for a second round of awards in the sub-grants program. Two projects in the IKR were underway prior to the parliamentary elections, and IFES is finalizing and will issue shortly sub-awards to four other sub-grantees to perform projects in Basrah, Kirkuk, Baghdad, Ninewah, Salah ad Din, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit, Diwaniyah, and Dhi Qar.

There are a number of elections during the upcoming final year of the ESP. Preparations are underway for the 2014 Iraq parliamentary elections, which may possibly correspond with the district and sub-district council elections, and the IKR governorate council elections (GCE). In addition, Kirkuk may hold its first election in history. Security issues remain a major constraint to the successful completion of these elections. However, with continued progress in technological innovations in voter registration, solid infrastructure in IT, ICT, finance, and human resources (HR), and a strong public outreach strategy, the IHEC will continue to navigate this difficult environment.

Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, July 1 to September 30, 2013

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
July 8-9	Erbil	The Right to Political Participation for Persons with Disabilities Workshop	20	4	3/1*
July 10-12	Erbil	Out of Country Voting Workshop	16	2	14/4
August 24-25	Erbil	Electoral Campaign, Polling & Counting Complaints Workshop	22	7	9/13
September 3-6	Erbil	BRIDGE Preparatory Workshop for Voter Education Training	13	3	4/9
September 8- 11	Erbil	BRIDGE Voter Education Workshop	16	2	2/14
September 12-13	Erbil	Automated Voter Registration Workshop	29	0	10/19
September 14	Erbil	Political Campaign Finance Workshop	29	0	10/19
Total workshop participants			145	18	52/79

* The remaining participants were from participating NGOs.

II. POLITICAL CONTEXT

One of the most significant developments in the electoral context this quarter revolved around the continued postponement of the parliamentary session, in which the Council of Representatives (CoR) is scheduled to vote on the draft election law for the upcoming Iraq 2014 parliamentary elections. The law proposes a number of changes, including decreasing the minimum eligible age required of a candidate from 30 to 28 years of age, and increasing the required level of education from high school to at least an undergraduate degree. In addition, the draft stipulates the continuation of an open list system with a change in the seat allocation methodology; the draft law proposes using the d'Hondt seat allocation method. Contrary to the recently adopted Sainte-Laguë (December, 2012) seat allocation method, which was used during the Governorate Council Elections (GCE) held in April and June, 2013, the d'Hondt method favors larger parties and coalitions over smaller parties, and guarantees that the political entity with the highest number of votes will receive half of the seats.¹ Lastly, the draft law suggests the adoption of multiple constituencies in Iraq; by introducing multiple constituencies based on the provinces in Iraq, political entities will have to originate out of each of the constituencies and be elected by that constituency, thereby increasing each provinces' representation in parliament. While to date the session to vote on the draft law has been postponed, on October 7 the CoR announced that if council members fail to pass the election law by October 30, 2013, the elections will be conducted in accordance with the Election Law No. 16 (2009) of the 2010 parliamentary election, and according to the Supreme Court's decisions.

During this reporting period, Iraq witnessed a sustained high level of violence. Unlike the previous reporting period which saw escalations of violence around the GCE, this reporting period included daily sectarian violence throughout Iraq, a coordinated attack on Abu Ghraib and Taji prisons by the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) that resulted in the freeing of 200-400 prisoners, significant threats in response to the now partially retracted US threat of use of force against Syria, and --while the parliamentary elections in the IKR were relatively peaceful--the capital of the IKR, Erbil, experienced its first significant bombing in six years.

As this reporting period began, the GCE in Ninewah and Anbar came to a close. Following the appeals process, which ended on July 7, the IHEC Legal Consultations and Complaints Section (LCCS) received six appeals to the IHEC concerning the implementation of the recent Federal Supreme Court (FSC) ruling on the seat allocation formula used during the GCEs. The Court's ruling altered the third step in seat allocation by reversing the order in which political entities' (PEs) candidate lists were adjusted to accommodate the women quota in each governorate. While this decision did not change the number of women elected in the GCE, which currently exceeds the 25% quota, the IHEC announced that a total of 24 members from 23 different PEs in 14 provinces lost their seats in favor of 24 new members from the same PEs.

On September 21, elections were held for IKR representatives to replace the 111 members of parliament that were elected in 2009. The IKR is an autonomous region in northern Iraq made up

¹ Both the Sainte-Laguë and d'Hondt methods are "highest averages methods" for seat allocation, which requires that the number of votes for each party be divided successively by a series of divisors. Seats are then allocated to parties with the highest resulting quotient until all the seats available are allocated. The difference between the two methods is the divisor used: Sainte-Laguë uses divisors 1,3,5,7, etc., and the d'Hondt method uses 1,2,3,4, etc.

of three governorates: Suleymaniyah, Erbil and Dohuk. The IKR Parliament is the governing body of the IKR and is made up of representatives from various parties and lists elected every four years. It is a 111-member unicameral body with 11 seats reserved for non-Kurdish minority communities of the autonomous region. The Parliament holds two sessions per year, each spanning four months. The IKR Parliament has the right to exercise legislative powers in accordance with provisions of the Iraqi Constitution, with the exception of exclusive competencies of federal authorities of Iraq. It has the right to issue regional legislation, elect the regional Prime Minister, and approve the regional budget, among other powers.

The elections were held in all three governorates of the IKR, and were based on an open list proportional representation system where voters selected either a political entity (PE) and a specific candidate or only a political entity. Seats were allocated according to the “electoral divider method,” or Hare Quota, where the number of valid votes received by all lists competing for the general seats were totaled, and then divided by the number of available seats with the remainder of seats awarded to the highest winning party. The seat allocation for the component seats is calculated separately, using the same method as applied to the general seats. In addition, the law requires at least 30 percent of seats be awarded to female candidates. To achieve this, each general list that wins more than three seats was required to have at least 30 percent of its seats awarded to female candidates. This was achieved by replacing the lowest ranked seated males by the next available female candidate.

On September 19, the IHEC conducted the conditional voting (CV) and the special needs voting (SNV) for the IKR security forces. CV allows voters not included on a voter list, limited to hospitals and prisons, to cast a ballot and have their ballot conditionally accepted while the IHEC verifies their eligibility. In contrast, SNV security forces voter information is submitted by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Peshmerga Forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and other respective authorities. In total, there were 372 polling stations (PS) within 99 polling centers (PC) established for 153,733 SNV voters, in addition to PCs in Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Baghdad Kharkh for an estimated 2,000 Kurdish Security Forces, and one polling station for VIPs in the International Zone. For CV voters there were 63 PSs and 57 PCs. As CV voters were not required to register, the number of voters approximated 2,022 prisoners and 7,195 patients based on the number of hospital beds. The polling proceeded smoothly with PCs opening within the regular voting hours (from 7am to 5pm). Turnout was very high for the CV and SNV election; 144,434 cast their votes, resulting in a 93.9 percent turnout, the highest in IKR history.

On the day of CV and SNV voting, the IHEC announced that there could be approximately 50,000 SNV voters who might not find their names on the register. The IHEC allowed those who could not find their names to vote during the general election. In addition, polling hours were extended for one hour to 6pm due to issues arising from the newly implemented electronic stamp. The stamp was meant to stamp the time, date, and polling station number on the ballot in an effort to prevent electoral fraud; however, there were issues with the size of the ballot, limited ink, and other malfunctions.

General voting for the IKR Parliamentary Elections commenced at 7am on September 21. A total of 6,245 PSs within 1,200 PCs opened for 2,653,743 registered voters. Election materials were distributed to PCs and PSs on time, and no major problems were reported. The IHEC sent one additional person to all PSs to support the ballot issuer to minimize issues resulting from the

electronic stamp and to speed up the voting process. Overall, voter turnout for the general election reached 73.9 percent, with 71.7 percent in Erbil, 76.4 percent in Dahouk, and 73 percent in Suleymaniyah. Polling hours ended promptly at 5pm.

IFES staff observing the general elections in Erbil noted a strong presence of PE agents at the PCs, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Islamic Party, the Socialist Party, and Goran. IFES observers also noted the following issues: some PCs were pre-stamping ballot papers; some voters were denied voting due to variation in second or third family names on their ID card; some voters were wiping off from their finger the semi-permanent election ink used to prevent double voting after their vote was cast; at some PCs, cars containing campaign posters and flags parked next to PC entrances, violating the mandatory 48 hour campaign-free period prior to the election.

As of the writing of this report, the appeals process was ongoing. The appeals period for the IKR parliamentary election ended on October 10, three days after the final publication of elections results. A total of 23 political entities submitted their appeals to the IKR Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP) totaling 60 appeals in all.

During the CV, SNV, and general elections there were no major security issues reported. This is most likely a result of the precautionary measures taken throughout the IKR, including airport closures and a ban on travel between cities in the three governorates. However, on September 29, one day after preliminary results of the election were announced, a complex attack was launched on the KRG intelligence headquarters in Erbil. The attack was unlikely linked to political rivalries. The last time an attack of a similar scale took place in the IKR was in 2007 when the Ministry of the Interior was attacked.

While preparations for the IKR parliamentary elections were underway, the IHEC began preparations for the IKR GCEs tentatively to take place on November 21, 2013, with the 2014 Iraq parliamentary elections expected to take place no later than April 30, 2014.

In August, the IHEC launched the registration and certification processes for political entities, political coalitions, and candidate nominations for the IKR GCE. As of the close of this reporting period, there were a total of 29 PEs, two coalitions, and 1,129 candidates, including 366 women. A total of 17 PEs are competing for the component seats: six are competing for the five Turkmen seats, six for the five Christian seats, and five for the single Armenian seat. While preparations continue, the IHEC is strongly encouraging the KRG to postpone the elections due to the complications in holding three electoral events in six months, which may negatively impact the quality of the IKR GCE.

On September 29, the IHEC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) announced that the IHEC received an advance payment of 35 billion dinars from the Council of Ministers to begin preparations for the Iraq parliamentary elections expected to be held in March 2014. The CoR announced that the 2014 parliamentary election should be conducted at the exact date mentioned in the Constitution, and no later than April 30, 2014. This decision is based on the provisions of Article 59/item 2 of the Iraqi Constitution. The CoR stated that the IHEC should take the technical steps required to implement the election on time, including the voter registration update, and that the Government

of Iraq (GoI) should provide the IHEC with the allocated budget required to implement the elections.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

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

Activity 1.1.2: Development of a "Strategic Planning Master Plan"

In early July the IFES Organizational Management Specialist arrived to Baghdad and was quickly able to begin building on the successes from January when IFES facilitated the creation of the IHEC's Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). A proposed quarterly action plan was put in place, including a first working session of the SPC, nominating and appointing sub-committees to aid in the development of the Strategic Planning Master Plan titled, "Electoral Operations; Internal Administration; and External Relations." This document will delineate the strategic planning process, including timelines and deliverables.

In late July an official letter from the IFES Chief of Party (CoP) was sent to the Board of Commissioners (BoC) providing an update on the implementation status of these activities and requested the BoC's support in implementing the activities necessary to successfully accomplish these initiatives. IFES' CoP held a number of meetings with individual Commissioners to follow up on necessary actions. However, due to the operational burden of the IKR parliamentary elections, the tentative IKR GCEs, and the early stages in planning for the 2014 Iraq parliamentary elections, the strategic planning process has a very narrow window to proceed before the elections take place. It is anticipated that major strides in the strategic planning process will be made following the 2014 Iraq parliamentary election in March.

Activity 1.2: Support Development of Operational Plans for Electoral Events

IFES provided technical expertise for voter registration, as well as broader electoral operations this past quarter. This expertise was provided in the context of preparations for the IKR parliamentary elections and GCE, the 2014 Iraq parliamentary elections, as well as for a tentative election for the district and sub-district councils in Iraq.

During this reporting period, IFES was approached by the IHEC to assist in preparations of the district and sub-district council elections, which are necessary to establish localized democratic leadership and structures. The IHEC has entered into discussions with the Parliamentary Committee of Regions and Provinces (PCRP) to identify and initiate action on focus areas necessary to conduct these elections. The IHEC requested IFES' support in conducting a two-day workshop in Erbil for the members of the BoC and members of the PCRP at the end of October. The workshop will discuss the resources available and the challenges the IHEC will face. The discussions amongst the participants should produce solutions and clarifications on legal and operational issues.

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

Activity 2.1: Support to the IHEC's IT Systems and Infrastructure

As part of the preparations for the IKR parliamentary elections, IFES deployed a Database/IT Consultant to Erbil to commence working with the KREO. He worked closely with KREO's IT, Voter Registration, Operations, and other Sections to identify priorities, ICT resources, including the hardware, software, and skilled staff required for conducting the upcoming Kurdish parliamentary election. The Consultant also advised on the sustainable IT systems and infrastructure required moving forward.

IFES completed an assessment of the KREO IT system, as requested by the KREO, in order to identify gaps and necessary updates. The assessment focused on the potential hardware, software, and human resources required for running the IT system. The following major issues were found: limited in-house IT capacity; network downtime; virus threat; system security; insufficient information and communication technology; limited maintenance and troubleshooting documents; server room is not fire protected; unstable network; and some outdated software/hardware. The KREO's Operations Departments actively provided input during the analysis. Further discussions were put on hold during the IKR parliamentary elections. However, since completion of the election, discussions have continued to determine the way forward.

Activity 2.2: Capacity Building Support to the IHEC's Database and Software Developers and Staff

During this reporting period, assistance to the IHEC's database and software developers was in the form of elections support, most notably with results tabulation software. Prior to and during the IKR parliamentary elections, IFES consulted on several database and software issues pertaining to the elections. IFES assisted in optimizing certain software procedures and resolved a number of software bugs as the results tabulation software was finalized, tested, and deployed to the production environment.

IFES aided in troubleshooting a series of database issues pertaining to the elections. For example, IFES helped Data Management Section (DMS) staff to develop MS SQL database storage procedures for audit triggers using T-SQL. Furthermore, there were issues with compatibility between the software and the Kurdish political entities names, as there was concern that the database would not register certain Kurdish characters. Following a review of the functionality of the software and a trial run, the issue was resolved. Lastly, the IFES Database Development Advisor addressed an issue with the results tabulation forms. The results tabulation software was unable to register any barcode on a form that had spaces between the numbers. This issue was not communicated to the DMS by the Procedures and Training Department prior to the results data entry operation. The issue was resolved and data entry was successfully completed.

In addition to the above, IFES continued its daily assistance to the IHEC's DMS staff, conducting working sessions to assist in addressing technical issues faced during development and deployment of various IHEC in-house software, and as well continued to provide on-the-job

trainings on CSS, JavaScript, and jQuery. Lastly, during this reporting period, IFES entered preliminary discussions with the DMS team on conducting on-the-job training on Crystal Reports/Microsoft reporting engine tools.

Activity 2.3.2: Support operational planning for voter registration activities

During this quarter, IFES supported improvements to the voter registration process by working intensely with the IHEC on rolling out improved voter registration update (VRU) software for the IKR parliamentary elections in order to ensure that voter data was accurately and reliably captured. In addition, IFES advisors contributed to long-term VRU improvements, in particular, providing expertise in the development of an out of country (OCV) voting operation, offering recommendations on how to navigate operations during the upcoming busy election schedule, and aided in the beginning stages of an AVR system.

IFES facilitated an OCV preparation workshop, which took place on July 10-12 in Erbil. The workshop was organized by IFES and was attended by members of the OCV Committee and the IHEC staff who worked on the 2010 OCV operation. The objective of the workshop was to come to agreement on a timeline for implementing the upcoming 2014 OCV operation and to develop a work plan for BoC approval. Further aims included establishing a directive for selecting countries that would participate in OCV, establishing an administrative and financial structure, and to consider designs and formats for the OCV website.

Correspondingly, IFES has been actively involved in the development of the online out of country OCV registration system. The system's front-end (i.e., forms, data gathering controls, etc.) were developed during this quarter, and the first prototype of the system, with hardcoded functionality, was developed and presented to the Head of the OCV Committee for comments and input. The head of OCV Committee praised the system and requested some screen shots for further discussion with the IHEC's BoC.

On September 5, IFES presented to the IHEC Director of Operations a list of recommendations for operational planning of the upcoming electoral events over the next year. The recommendations focused on the 2014 Iraq parliamentary and governorate council elections in the IKR, the automated voter registration project for the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2014, and the OCV operation. The recommendations included establishing clearly defined tasks for the IHEC staff alongside periodic review of the tasks and timeline, adopting a contingency plan for adjusting work hours and/or adding temporary staff if needed, and establishing a special committee to review all project timelines.

Lastly, the IHEC Electronic Voter Registration Committee (EVRC) requested IFES to provide technical assistance and guidelines in planning and implementing an AVR system—the first of its kind in Iraq. IFES provided samples of the needs assessment, specifications for contractors, and implementation timelines to the IHEC. With the assistance of IFES, the IHEC Voter Registration Section began developing specifications for an AVR system using biometrics

capable of producing a voter registration smart card. As a result of these initiatives, IFES recruited an Electronic Voter Registration Consultant who arrived in Erbil in early September and traveled to Baghdad shortly thereafter. Further discussion of this initiative follows below.

Activity 2.3.4: Advise the IHEC on the implementation of continuous voter registration process and decentralized data entry for voter registration



Figure 1: Automated Voter Registration Workshop, Erbil

In an effort to support the IHEC’s move toward a continuous and decentralized voter registration process, IFES began working with the IHEC on a first-of-its kind initiative: an AVR system.

On September 12-14, IFES held the Automated Voter Registration Workshop in Erbil. The workshop was attended by the BoC, the IHEC General Directors, and the Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) Directors. The EVRC presented an overview of the automation project and the participants discussed the role of the GEOs in the project, the timeline, and the resources required for project implementation. The IFES

AVR Consultant spoke on principles of the AVR system and provided examples from other countries. The IFES Strategic Communications Consultant gave a presentation on the importance of public outreach planning when implementing the AVR, including objective setting, risk analysis, early engagement with stakeholders, messaging, channel selection, and the importance of an integrated campaign with media and social media.

In early October, the BoC made a series of decisions concerning the AVR system. First, the BoC approved the modification of the technical specifications of the Biometric E-Card, changing the capacity of the card from 128KB to 1KB. In addition, the BoC approved the modification of the technical specifications of the printer in the registration kits, making the cutter manually operated instead of automatic. Lastly, the BoC stipulated that the IHEC should inform the bidding companies of these changes. These modifications were a result of a memorandum entitled “Additional Options for the E-Card,” which was developed with IFES’ advice and submitted to the EVRC and the IHEC Chairman toward the end of this quarter.

As a result of the workshop, IFES was tasked with developing and implementing an AVR public campaign plan. Details of the campaign follow below in Activity 3.4.

Activity 2.5: Support to the IHEC Directorates of Finance and Administration with the Introduction of Financial Controls, Accounting, and Finance Systems.

As a result of the newly adopted campaign finance law (see insert below), the IHEC requested that IFES develop and execute a workshop aimed at developing a plan to implement the law,

including defining the role of the GEO in the process, as well as initiating an informational campaign for electoral stakeholders. IFES is currently recruiting a Political Campaign Finance Consultant to work with the IHEC on establishing an oversight committee, development of procedures, and a draft timeline for implementation of the regulation during the workshops. The workshops are scheduled to be held on October 23-24 and 26-27.

Political Campaign Finance in Iraq

On July 30, the BoC ratified regulation, No. 1 /2013 - "Regulating the Expenditure on the Electoral Campaign." The IHEC is assigned to draft the implementation procedures to be put in place for the 2014 parliamentary elections.

Correspondingly, during this reporting period, IFES worked with the IHEC on developing a series of workshops on human resources and finance and auditing procedures. The first, the Human Resources and Development Workshop, aims to assist in developing the skills of the IHEC's HR section to achieve more accurate and effective overall management skills pertaining to specific areas of responsibility within IHEC's Administrative Department. This workshop will strengthen IHEC's internal HR management processes and systems. IFES will focus on basic managerial and administrative skills for which there has been insufficient or no previous training provided.

The second, the Finance and Audit Procedures Workshop, aims to increase the knowledge of all GEO management by introducing administrative, financial and auditing regulations and instructions, and to discuss and review the GEO internal administrative, auditing and financial procedures, including the procedures out of the national office (NO) that reflect transparency and institutional development.

Both the HR and finance and audit workshops will include two sessions, approximately four to five days each, and will be held in Erbil during the next quarter.

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

This quarter IFES implemented two of four total workshops, including a preparatory workshop for a voter education (VE) project using the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) methodology. The preparatory workshop was held in Erbil on September 3-6, 2013. The aim of this workshop was to prepare the agenda and material needed for the following three voter education workshops to follow later in 2013, one of which took place shortly after. During the preparatory workshop, 13 IHEC BRIDGE facilitators, along with IFES and other international experts, discussed the most suitable topics that would serve the purpose of the voter education project.

After lengthy discussions, the topics chosen were:

- Definition of civic education, voter education and voter information
- Eight steps of voter education campaigns
- Electoral cycle
- Out of country voting (OCV)
- Saint Laguë and D'hondt seat distribution formulas

- Women's quota
- Campaign expenses regulations
- Electronic voter registration
- Role of party agents, observers and media throughout the electoral cycle

These topics were chosen due to their relevance to the current developments in Iraq, which concern the adoption of a new electoral formula for seat allocation, the electronic voter registration project, as well as the newly adopted regulations for campaign financing.

There were 13 IHEC BRIDGE workshop facilitators that participated in the four-day preparatory workshop for the VE project. All of them have wide experience in designing and delivering BRIDGE workshops in addition to their long experience as staff members of the IHEC. The IHEC took the lead on identifying and selecting the participants, covering different governorate offices of the IHEC.

On September 8-11, the first VE workshop was held in Erbil. Participants from the preparatory workshop prepared the workshop materials, which resulted in a full set of facilitators' resources, including facilitator's notes for each activity, power-point presentations, and the participants' folder. All the material were given to the facilitator participants in hard and soft copies for them to use in future trainings and public meetings with electoral stakeholders.

Other valuable resources and references were made available to the participants through a USB flash driver, which included numerous handbooks, guidelines, and reports covering most of the electoral process aspects in Arabic language. The facilitation team comprised four BRIDGE facilitators who participated in the preparation and delivery of this course.

A total of 16 participants from the IHEC national and governorate offices (Kirkuk, Salah ad Din, Anbar, Diyala, and Ninewah) participated in the four-day training course, including two women. IHEC took the lead on identifying and selecting the participants, covering five of the northern governorates of Iraq.

The overall objective of this BRIDGE project series is to promote voter education and awareness in specific areas of the electoral process in preparation for the upcoming Iraq parliamentary elections in 2014.

Activity 2.9.1: Development and implementation of a training module on detecting and combating electoral fraud

Building on the success of past trainings on anti-fraud measures, IFES, in cooperation with the IHEC, conducted the Electoral Campaign, Polling, and Counting Complaints workshop on August 24-25. The event brought 22 participants, including seven women, from the IKR GEOs Complaints Units and the IHEC Legal Consultations and Complaints Section (LCCS).

The workshop aimed to enhance the capacity of the Complaints Units staff of the three IKR GEOs by increasing their efficiency in managing the upcoming elections' complaints process.

This workshop not only aimed to serve the immediate needs of the IHEC, but also to continue to build sustainable initiatives in combating electoral fraud during future elections.

The workshop aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- Prepare a work plan for liaison and internal communications between the NO, the KREO, and IKR GEOs in terms of complaints adjudication processes
- Explain the steps for receiving and processing complaints
- Train the Complaints Units at the IKR on investigation techniques
- Explain how to use the complaints database step-by-step
- Prepare a draft of complaints procedures to be presented to the BoC
- Explain the new complaints form

Participants were given a pre- and post- test to evaluate changes in knowledge during the workshop. The test was made up of ten multiple choice and five short answers and designed by the facilitators. A change in knowledge was an increase in three correct answers, or 20 percent. Of the 22 participants, only 20 completed both tests. Of those that completed each test, 65 percent (13/20) showed a genuine increase in knowledge on the topic of complaints processes.

Activity 2.9.2: Review of the IHEC’s anti-fraud mechanisms and proposals of new mechanisms to detect and deter fraud

In early fourth quarter, and building on the IFES report, “Recommendations on the Implementation and Strengthening of Electoral Anti-Fraud Measures Adopted by the IHEC,” IFES and its UN counterparts met with the LCCS to propose a new design for the official complaints form, succeeding in having it approved and implemented prior to the IKR parliamentary election. The original form only listed complaints that pertained to polling and counting processes, and did not include additional sections on complaints concerning candidate nomination, voter registration, electoral campaigns, and data entry. As such, complaints pertaining to these stages of the electoral cycle were lost and/or there was no follow-up. In addition, each new complaint form was coded with a serial number allowing database entry, searching, and retrieval more tailored to each specific complaint category. This new form is anticipated to increase the accuracy and transparency of the complaints process. IFES will conduct further analysis of its implementation in fiscal year (FY) 2014.

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

Activity 3.3.1: Development of a strategic communications plan

Following preparatory work conducted by IFES, an IHEC Commissioner submitted a study of IFES’ proposed communications strategy to the BoC as the first step in the process of approving the proposed plan. Upon comments from the Commissioner, the IFES’ Strategic Communications Consultant finalized a first draft of the IHEC communications strategy. The document includes recommendations, an outlined implementation plan, and sample outputs. Toward the end of this reporting period, IFES submitted a draft of the Strategic Communications Plan to the IHEC Commissioners for their consideration.

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

This quarter, IEFS conducted a series of workshops and drafted a new communications plan, each of which aimed to assist the IHEC in building their capacity to implement comprehensive voter outreach programs. These workshops and public outreach plan were purposed to reach vulnerable communities, build the capacity of public outreach staff, and as well to pave the way for the IHEC to implement new voter registration technologies.

In an effort to aid the IHEC in reaching marginalized communities in Iraq, IFES held The Right to Political Participation for Persons with Disabilities workshop on July 8-9, 2013 in Erbil. The objective of the workshop was to provide information on attitudes toward PWDs and harmful stereotypes, the political participation of PWDs, and to provide an analysis of the IHEC's laws and regulations concerning PWD's accessibility to electoral processes. A working group consisting of the IHEC, representatives from NGOs, and IFES was formed to follow up on the recommendations resulting from the workshop, with the recommendations submitted to the IHEC.

Following, upon request of the Head of the External Media Section (EMS), IFES developed a concept of a workshop for the NO and GEOs to increase staff capacity to write good copy for the media and the IHEC website. The workshop will provide staff with knowledge on the mechanics of different writing styles for the media, and an opportunity to improve their own writing and editing skills.

To facilitate in this workshop, IFES is recruiting a local Iraqi Consultant to lead the sessions. The Consultant will provide interactive writing sessions including evaluation and feedback. The consultant will continue to work with participants following the workshop by coordinating directly with the External Media Section (EMS) and by providing support to the GEOs and KREO media staff remotely. The Consultant will also take the lead on drafting an IHEC Style Guide. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for October 20-23, and will bring together 19 GEO staff and ten staff from the NO, including two staff from the Electoral Media Section.

Lastly, this past quarter, the IHEC began the implementation of a new AVR system. Implementing a new voter registration system is complex and requires significant public outreach to inform voters of new procedures and IFES is playing a critical role in this process. Toward the end of this quarter IFES completed a draft of the communications plan for the AVR system implementation. The plan includes five public outreach campaigns and recommends the pre-planning to start as soon as possible, and to contract with a public relations or marketing agency to bring additional capacity to the IHEC. Upon acceptance of the plan, IFES will conduct a series of workshops on the plan itself.

Activity 3.7: Civil Society Sub-grants Program

In FY13, during Q2 and Q3, IFES issued sub-grants to 11 NGOs from throughout Iraq to implement projects that target women, political candidates, Internally Displaced People (IDPs),

people with disabilities, first time voters, illiterate people, and marginalized communities. Additionally, one of the funded projects was a survey on electoral awareness in an ethnically mixed inner city area in Baghdad. The funded projects also had a focus on the Governorate Council Elections and were **implemented in Diyala, Baghdad, Basrah, Karbala, Suleymaniyah, Dohuk, and Ninewah with a total value of awarded sub-grants at \$298,050.** The following is a summary of their activities and outreach.

- **Al-Ajial Association for Intelligence and Creation** (Diyala; \$14,980). The project trained 120 women (i.e., women with a legal background, legal activists for civil society organizations, and women in the media) in a training-of-trainers (ToT) course on the electoral process in Iraq in order to raise awareness amongst marginalized women (i.e., divorcees, widows, IDP women, etc.) of the importance of exercising political rights.
- **Al-Erada Organization for Relief And Development** (Diyala; \$10,425). The project funded electoral education activities for displaced people. It began with the fielding of a survey to determine the target audience—people who have not participated in elections before and are not aware of their political rights. The survey found that 64% of the respondents did not participate and were not interested in participating in the GCEs. Youth and women were the most marginalized group and their intent to participate was the weakest. What followed was an information awareness campaign that reached 300 IDPs (187 female and 113 male). The organization distributed brochures with information on the election process. Al-Erada reported coordinating with the IHEC in the implementation of their activities.
- **Al-Noor Universal Foundation** (Diyala; \$30,093). The project funded electoral education activities for people with disabilities and those from marginalized communities. The organization distributed electoral awareness booklets, pamphlets, and posted educational banners. Additionally, Al-Noor’s project also had an electoral visitors’ component, which consisted of the conduct of electoral awareness visits to more than 385 families or a total of 1183 people (573 female and 610 male).
- **Iraq 2020 Assembly** (Baghdad; \$26,200). The project funded electoral education activities and a survey on electoral awareness in an ethnically mixed inner city area in Baghdad-Mahala (738) in Rusafa. The location was chosen due to the cultural, social, economic, ethnic, and religious diversity of its population. The survey showed that 87% of the respondents would participate in the 2013 Governorate Council Elections (GCE). Additionally, 68% of the respondents said the 2013 GCE were important; 95% of respondents were able to correctly identify the date of the election; 75.5% think the IHEC is an institution that is either independent or independent to some extent; 63% think the IHEC provided them either with all the necessary information for the elections or with the necessary information to some extent; and only 13% had a poor or bad overall evaluation of the IHEC. The survey was presented at a press conference that was also attended by IHEC representatives.
- **Al-Rafidain Peace Organization** (Baghdad; \$14,500). The project funded dialogue seminars between voters and candidates to develop a culture of trust and partnership

between these two stakeholders, and reached out to a total of 307 people (165 female and 142 male). The seminar sessions revealed a crisis of confidence between voters and candidates, as well as the candidates' lack of preparedness and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the positions they are running for. Seminars were also attended by youth who took active part in the discussions.

- **Al-Manahil Association for Women's Development** (Basrah; \$26,300). The project funded electoral education activities (electoral education forums; face-to-face sessions; symposiums; mock elections and radio spots) for marginalized communities in and around Basra. The project also produced and distributed various printed materials and CDs raising electoral awareness. It directly engaged 468 people (243 female and 225 male).
- **The Arab Forum for Human Development (AFFHD)** (Karbala; \$27,995). The project funded electoral education activities for people from marginalized communities in and around Karbala. The project began with the fielding of a survey to assess the background of people and the most important topics that need to be focused on during the awareness sessions. Additionally, AFFHD also conducted awareness workshops, produced and aired radio spots and a radio program, and distributed electoral awareness posters. The direct beneficiaries of the workshops were 469 people (163 female and 306 male).
- **The Civil Development Organization (CDO)** (Suleymaniyah; \$23,255). This project funded electoral education activities and material for first time voters and illiterate people in Suleymaniyah. CDO produced a short film (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0xKII4FwXI>) on the electoral process, in coordination with the IHEC. The organization also conducted a training-of-trainers (ToT) course on Iraqi and Kurdish election and provincial law, the role of civil society to observe elections, the IHEC structure and management of elections, and media and elections. Additionally, CDO conducted awareness sessions for first-time voters (512 beneficiaries) and illiterate persons (266 beneficiaries) on how to vote and participate in elections, released articles as part of a media awareness campaign on the election process, and distributed DVD copies of the short film it produced on how to vote.
- **Darya Organization for Developing Women and Community** (Dohuk; \$14,840). This project funded electoral education activities for illiterate people and people with visual impairments in the Shikhan district in Ninewah. Conclusions of the trainings included lack of awareness concerning the election process, marginalization of voters from the political process due to the disconnect between citizens and decision-makers after the elections, the poor security situation in the country, and youth unemployment. The project had 499 direct beneficiaries (225 female and 274 male).
- **The Human Rights Center** (Ninewah; \$24,130). The project funded electoral education activities for vulnerable women in the Telaffar community, including banner posting, radio spots, and workshops. The project also had an election observation component. The project had 1012 direct beneficiaries (all female).

- **Iraqi Al-Mortaqa Foundation for Human Development Iraq** (Baghdad; Basrah; Diyala; \$85,332). The project funded electoral education symposiums and material for marginalized communities in Basrah, Baghdad, and Diyala. The project had 638 direct beneficiaries (384 female and 254 male) from the symposiums. Al-Mortaqa also organized meetings of local leaders attended by 115 people, including parliamentarians. The project produced voter education brochures, banners, and radio programs. Mobile teams visited more than 600 houses, delivering brochures and encouraging people to participate in elections.

Overall, the sub-grants program had 6,026 direct beneficiaries (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Summary of Direct Beneficiaries by Gender from IFES' First Round Sub-grants

NGO (Province)	Training activity with direct beneficiaries	Total	Female	Male
Al-Ajial Association for Intelligence and Creation (Diyala)	Training-of-Trainers courses	120	120	N/A
Al-Erada Organization for Relief And Development (Diyala)	Electoral awareness workshops	300	187	113
Al-Noor Universal Foundation (Diyala)	Total direct beneficiaries	1235	573	610
	<i>Electoral visitor team workshop</i>	15		
	<i>Media workshop</i>	37		
	<i>Electoral awareness visits</i>	1183	573	610
Al-Rafidain Peace Organization (Baghdad)	Dialogue seminars	307	165	142
Al-Manahil Association for Women's Development (Basrah)	Total direct beneficiaries	468	243	225
	<i>Electoral education forums</i>	250	60	190
	<i>Face-to-face sessions</i>	93	58	35
	<i>Mock elections for women</i>	125	125	N/A
Arab Forum for Human Development (Karbala)	Electoral awareness seminars	469	163	306
Civil Development Organization (Suleymaniyah)	Total direct beneficiaries	863	508	355
	<i>Training of Trainers</i>	15	4	11
	<i>New voters training</i>	512	238	274
	<i>Illiterate people training</i>	336	266	70
Darya Organization for Developing Women and Community (Dohuk)	Electoral education trainings	499	225	274
Human Rights Center (Ninewa)	Electoral education trainings	1012	1012	N/A

Iraqi Al Mortaqa Foundation for Human Development Ira (Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala)	Total direct beneficiaries	753	384	254
	<i>Electoral awareness symposiums</i>	638	384	254
	<i>Local leaders meetings</i>	115	N/A	N/A
TOTAL		6,026		

In FY13Q4, as a result of a competitive RFA sub-grants application process initiated in the previous quarter, IFES selected six projects for a second round of sub-grant awards for funding out of a total of 114 applications. Two projects are based in Kurdistan, and the remaining four are based in Basrah, Kirkuk, Baghdad, Ninewah, Salah ad Din, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit, Diwaniyah, and Dhi Qar. The awards to the Kurdistan-based NGOs were issued in Q4FY13, with the awards to the remaining four organizations to be issued in early FY14Q1.

The selected projects range in duration from five to eight months. They target women, including rural women, widows, IDPs, disabled and illiterate women, first time voters, youth (i.e., college students; non-schooled adult youth; rural youth; youth without IDs), students, PWD, elderly voters, as well as the general public. The funded projects focus not just on raising awareness about the electoral process prior to scheduled electoral events, but also to conduct civic education in between electoral events. The projects utilize various outreach methods, including electoral awareness sessions, symposiums, TV and radio spots, telecasting of cartoons, targeted text messaging, talk shows, mock elections, a bus tour campaign, social media, visitor teams, election observation, and brochure distribution.

IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Table 3: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, October - December 2013²

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Writing Skills Workshop	GEO Public Outreach Staff	Erbil	3 days	October 20-23
Political Campaign Financing Workshop (two sessions)	NO and GEO Staff	Erbil	4 days	October 23-24 and 26-27
District and sub-district elections preparatory workshop	IHEC NO & GEO Staff	Erbil	2 days	November 3-4
Human Resources Workshop (two sessions)	IHEC NO HR staff	Erbil	10 days	November 2-6 and 8-12
Finance and Audit Procedures Workshop (two sessions)	NO Staff	Erbil	8 days	December, TBD

V. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

² This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

VI. CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

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

In this 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 the IHEC* was not challenged during the IKR parliamentary elections. However, with the continued postponement of the parliamentary session in which the draft electoral law will be voted on, and with questions concerning Prime Minister al-Maliki's extending his mandate in office, upcoming elections may prove problematic.

In addition, IFES has taken steps to minimize potential challenges to the critical assumption that *IFES staff and consultants will be able to obtain the necessary visas or permits to work in Iraq*. IFES has acquired long-term visas, including multiple entry visas for all current staff members after several months of attempt. However, recently there have been delays in the IZ badging process. Currently, all IFES staff IZ badges are technically expired, and while extensions have been made, there is no clear determinate date when they will be renewed.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

IFES' accomplishments in Q4FY13 continue the successful implementation of the Elections Support Project. IFES provided essential support to the IHEC during the IKR parliamentary elections in the form of IT/Database and software development, advice on public outreach campaigns, fostering of stronger ties between the IHEC and external stakeholders, and the implementation of anti-fraud tools. In addition, IFES contributed to the long-term sustainable future of the IHEC by providing assistance in strategic communications, political finance, out-of-country voting, AVR implementation, and general VRU improvements. The IHEC management and staff have praised IFES' ability to react quickly to training needs and to implement high quality workshops.

Given the brief period of time before the next elections, during the next quarter, IFES anticipates significant progress on the IHEC strategic planning process. This is partly due to IFES functioning with a full staff. However, the tide of electoral events scheduled might once again influence the implementation of long term institutional capacity building.

Considering this context, a couple of conclusions can be formulated from the past three months of programming. First, with the successful implementation of the IKR parliamentary elections, the IHEC once again proved to be capable of conducting smooth and effective preparations for an electoral event. In addition, with the push for the new AVR system, the IHEC is demonstrating a desire to build upon its past experiences and initiate innovation. This speaks to capacity building and will hopefully lead to a revived commitment to the strategic planning process.

Lastly, the complicated political environment in Iraq is not sustainable. Iraqi politicians remain fragmented and sectarian tension is still high. This influences the overall security situation, which continued to deteriorate as of this reporting quarter, and it is not expected to improve prior to the parliamentary elections in spring 2014.