

Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: October 1 – December 31, 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, including the passing of a new electoral law to guide the upcoming Council of Representatives (CoR) elections scheduled for April 30, 2014, as well as the decision to hold Governorate Council elections (GCE) in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). The IFES team played key support roles in ensuring the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) preparations for the elections progressed according to the operational timeline.

One notable IFES achievement this quarter was receiving the IHEC's Board of Commissioner's (BoC) approval of the proposed IFES Strategic Communications Plan. This plan codifies the objective and timeline for establishing a sustainable public outreach infrastructure at the IHEC. More importantly, with the upcoming elections, it provides the tools for the IHEC to maintain a transparent and truthful presence in the media.

Another achievement was IFES' successful delivery of operational assistance to the IHEC' preparations for the CoR elections and IKR GCE elections. In addition, IFES played an

important role in the early planning stages of the District and Sub-District Council (DSC) elections expected to correspond with the aforementioned elections. During this reporting period, IFES coordinated a workshop bringing key stakeholders together to begin planning these elections, including members of the Iraqi CoR and the IHEC Commissioners.

Lastly, IFES continued bi-weekly coordination meetings with UN International Election Assistance Team (IEAT) focused on capacity building, public outreach, and management.

There were two notable events this reporting period. First, the IFES Chief of Party (CoP) and Elections Legal Advisor along with two IHEC Commissioners met with the USAID’s Associate Administrator and Deputy Assistant Administrator during their regional Middle East and North Africa (MENA) visit. The Commissioners stressed the importance of IFES’ project, spoke about the electoral timetable and challenges ahead, and requested continuation of the technical assistance provided by IFES. The USAID Associate Administrator pointed out the importance of the IHEC in Iraq’s democratization processes, and suggested the IHEC begin to advise neighboring countries in the region on elections.

In addition, as of December 19, 2013, IFES-Iraq is officially registered as an International NGO in the IKR.

Security issues remain a major constraint to the successful completion of upcoming elections and to building long-term, sustainable infrastructure at the IHEC. However, it is IFES’ experience that the IHEC remains committed to its long-term mission as an institution of transparency in its implementation of elections in Iraq.

Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, October 1 to December 31, 2013.

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
Oct. 21-23	Erbil	External Media and GEOs Writing Skills Workshop	28	5	9/19
Oct. 23-24	Erbil	Political Campaign Finance Workshop – Session 1	26	3	6/20
Oct. 27-28	Erbil	Political Campaign Finance Workshop – Session 2	25	4	5/20
Oct. 29-Nov.1	Erbil	Finance and Audit Procedures Workshop – Session 1	34	3	4/30
Nov. 3-4	Erbil	District and Sub-District Election Preparation Workshop	27	0	3/7*
Nov. 3-6	Erbil	Finance and Audit Procedures Workshop – Session 2	33	4	5/28
Dec. 15-17	Erbil	2014 CoR Elections Media Campaign Workshop	30	5	10/20
Dec. 18	Baghdad	Sub-Grants Compliance Training	2	0	N/A
Total workshop participants			205	24	42/144

** The remaining participants were from the Council of Representatives.*

II. POLITICAL CONTEXT

During this reporting period, Iraq witnessed a sustained high level of violence around Baghdad, where terrorist activities remain concentrated on the civilian population, along with a proliferation of violence in the Anbar region. The arrest of a prominent local Member of Parliament (MP) on December 28 prompted the security situation in the Anbar governorate to quickly decline. This followed on from the dismantling of the protest camps in Ramadi and Fallujah, which sparked heavy fighting between tribal forces and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). As of the writing of this report, militants took and remain in control of Anbar's two largest cities, Ramadi and Fallujah. Anbar was one of two governorates that had the 2013 (GCE) postponed due to escalations in violence around the elections. To date, there has been no discussion of postponing the 2014 CoR elections in the region.

This reporting period began with the finalization of the IKR parliamentary elections and the long-overdue passing of a new electoral law. On October 2, the IHEC announced the winning lists and names of 111 winning candidates. The number of seats per political entity is as follows:

Party	Allocated seats
Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)	38
Change Movement (GORAN)	24
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	18
The Islamic Union	10
The Islamic Group	6
Islamic Movement	1
Social Kurdistan Party	1
Freedom Party (Communist)	1
The Third Direction Party	1
Chaldean, Assyrian and Syriac component	5 out of 5 allotted
Turkmen component	5 out of 5 allotted
Armenian component	1 out of 1 allotted

The appeals period for the IKR parliamentary election ended on October 10, three days after the announcement of elections results. Twenty-three political entities submitted their appeals to the IKR Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP), totaling 60 appeals in all. The EJP issued 60 decisions, dismissing all appeals, mostly due to insufficient evidence.

On November 4, the Council of Representatives (CoR) signed a new electoral law after a significant period of postponement and deliberation. On November 25, the Iraq Vice President certified the new electoral law, which adopts some changes from the Amended Electoral Law No. 16 used during the 2010 CoR elections, including the following:

Issue	2010 CoR Electoral Law	2014 CoR Electoral Law	Notes
--------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------

Electoral Law	Amended electoral law No. 16 of 2005	Electoral Law No. 16 cancelled	New law enacted once signed by acting president and published in official gazette.
Seat Allocation Method	Highest Remainder	Amended Sainte-Laguë	The new seat allocation method is a variation on the Sainte-Laguë method used during the Governorate Council Elections in April/June 2013; it slightly favors larger parties.
Number of Parliament Seats	325	328	
Component Seats	8	8	Christians and Sabeen Mandeans vote as a single constituency. As such, Christians and Sabeen Mandeans can vote for any candidates anywhere in Iraq running for the component seats.
Women Quota	25%	25%	In 2010, political parties were required to include one woman <i>within</i> the first three candidates and two women <i>within</i> the first six candidates, resulting in 33% female candidacy. In 2014, the political parties have to include one woman <i>after</i> every three male candidates, averaging 25% female candidacy.
Candidate Education Requirement	High school or equivalent	No change	There was debate over raising the level of education.
Compensatory Seating	5%	0	The compensatory seat provision under the 2010 electoral law stipulated that 5% of seats should be compensatory seats, which based on the IHEC regulation No. 21 of 2010, resulted in 7 compensatory seats following the 2010 CoR election. There is no compensatory seat provision in the new electoral law.
Party List Proportional Representation Variant	Open-list	No change	Switching back to a 2005 CoR election closed-list system was considered.
Special Need Voting	Three days before general voting	Two days before general voting	The CoR considered having both the SNV and general voting on the same day.
Constituencies	Single constituency	Multiple constituency	By introducing multiple constituencies, political entities will have to originate out of one of Iraq's

			18 provinces and be elected by that constituency, thereby increasing each provinces' representation in parliament. This applies for out-of-country voters as well who will now be required to show province-of-origin.
Validity of Candidacy	Only the Accountability and Justice Commission is required to respond to the IHEC inquiries concerning candidate's validity within ten days	New law imposes 15 day deadline for additional relevant Ministries and sources to respond to the IHEC's inquiries	It is anticipated that this change will reduce the burden on the IHEC during the review of candidates' eligibility.

In addition, a new provision in the electoral law was introduced regarding the possible use of electronic voting, whereby all instructions on electronic voting and counting processes issued by the IHEC will be adopted. The new election law further stipulates that the elections should be held no later than May 1, 2014; the date of the election will be determined by the Council of Ministers (CoM) in coordination with the IHEC, and the CoR will endorse it. A presidential decree will announce the date through all media outlets at least 90 days prior to that date. Lastly, elections can be postponed in one or more constituencies if the situation necessitates through a request from the BoC, which should be approved by the CoM and the CoR.

During this reporting period, the IHEC began operations for two elections: the CoR elections and the IKR GCE, both of which are scheduled to be held on April 30, 2014. Technical preparations for the CoR elections began on October 8. The registration period for political entities began on October 10, ending on November 20, with the political accreditation process ending on December 15. On November 28, the IHEC announced that 277 political entities registered to run in the CoR elections. On January 1, the IHEC extended the period for submitting political entities' and coalitions' list of candidates for the CoR elections from January 3 to January 9. As of the writing of this report, the IHEC has issued 13 regulations and approved eight (8) procedures regarding the CoR elections.

On November 10, 1082 voter registration centers opened as scheduled, with the voter registration update (VRU) ending on December 9. The IHEC took a number of steps to ensure a comprehensive VRU. The IHEC mobilized teams to reach voters in remote areas. In addition, the IHEC compared an updated Ministry of Trade (MoT) database of Iraqis holding a food ration card with the current voter registry. The provisional voter list distribution, not including the missing records, is as follows:

Governorate	Voter Registration Centers	Regular Voters	IDP Voters	Absentee Voters	Total Voters
Baghdad Rusafa	125	2,888,762	136	1329	2,890,227

Dahok	41	641,321	3	26,269	667,593
Erbil	53	1,026,400	3	7,547	1,033,950
Suleymaniyah	79	1,231,340	53	2797	1,234,190
Ninewah	140	1,953,786	2481	4,897	1,961,164
Kirkuk	43	871,548	30	1,852	873,430
Diyala	41	928,278	1,488	1,920	931,686
Anbar	72	921,847	15	3,970	925,832
Baghdad Karkha	84	2,197,446	1080	310	2,198,836
Babylon	37	1,093,589	51	2,066	1,095,706
Kerbala	34	640,842	1	1,634	642,477
Wassit	31	721,465	5	2,145	723,615
Salah Al-Din	38	800,937	7	1,810	802,754
Najaf	30	791,524	7	1,943	793,474
Qadissiya	41	675,453	0	804	676,257
Muthanna	29	441,091	0	156	441,247
Thi-Qar	44	1,136,976	0	528	1,137,504
Missan	41	632,726	2	1,033	633,761
Basrah	76	1,664,076	6	344	1,664,426
Total	1079	21,259,407	5,368	63,354	21,328,129

The IHEC's Data Management Section (DMS) worked on data entry operations for the VRU for the CoR elections, which ran smoothly and without major issues. As of the writing of this report, data entry has been completed, with auditing currently underway. No final number of registered voters has been determined.

Two components of the CoR elections preparation have taken precedence during this reporting period: Out of Country Voting (OCV) and the roll-out of the Automated Voter Registration (AVR). On December 7, the BoC made a series of decisions concerning the OCV. First, the IHEC decided to open IHEC offices in the US, UK, and Germany. The IHEC decided to open polling stations (PS) in a number of countries, including three each in France, Spain and Austria, Sweden, and one each in Norway, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Denmark, Turkey, Iran, Jordan, UAE, and Lebanon. Second, the BoC Chairman was assigned to coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in seeking approval from the aforementioned countries. Lastly, the IHEC was assigned to coordinate with the MoFA to approach the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia concerning the possibility of opening PSs there. On December 31, the CEO announced that OCV voters' registration and polling for the CoR elections will be held on the same day. The IHEC is holding a significant workshop in Q2 FY14, which will include Ambassadors from participating countries, to begin implementation of the OCV. IFES will be assisting with the development of the agenda and materials for that workshop.

The IHEC procured the Spanish company Indra for \$129,847,238 USD to provide the required requisites for the AVR project. During this reporting period, some of the GEOs have started conducting training workshops on the new system. The GEOs of Basrah, Suleymaniyah, and Qadissya held workshops for civil society organizations (CSOs) and Iraqi citizens. The biometric registration kits are being deployed to the field. The Data Management Section (DMS) has conducted tests of the biometric registration kits and identified issues that will be communicated to Indra to resolve. AVR is currently scheduled to start on January 30, 2014. However, it is unclear at the moment whether it will be the beginning of a full-scale registration or a test of the equipment. Kit trainings for the AVR project have been confirmed for the following dates:

January 2-4 first delivery; January 7-11 second one; and, final ones on January 15-19 and January 22-26.

The AVR project continues to pose a number of challenges. As is discussed below, understanding of the project in its entirety throughout the IHEC is limited, posing a very serious challenge to any AVR public outreach initiatives. In addition, a series of decisions remain to be addressed, such as whether the IHEC will continue with periodic voter registration or transition to continuous registration. Appendix H offers a short one-page overview of the AVR process as it pertains to the April 30 CoR elections and its full roll-out subsequent to these elections.

Following a series of exchanges between the IHEC and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) about concerns over holding two elections on the same day (CoR and IKR GCE), on November 24, the KRG decided it will hold the IKR GCE on April 30, the same day as the CoR elections. On December 25, the BoC issued five regulations for the IKR GCEs: the accreditation of political entities' agents; the accreditation of local observers; the accreditation of media organizations; the electoral campaign regulation; and the accreditation of international observers.

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"

Developments in this activity have been limited due to the busy electoral schedule. During this reporting period, IFES held meetings with the IHEC Chairman regarding the IHEC strategic planning process. The meeting centered on the need to re-establish a working agenda on the topic as soon as possible. Follow-up meetings are scheduled for early Q2 FY14.

Activity 1.2: Support Development of Operational Plans for Electoral Events

IFES provided technical expertise for CoR voter registration process, and broader electoral operations support this past quarter, including the early planning of the District and Sub-District Council (DSC) elections.

The DSC elections are required by law to be conducted six months after the Iraq GCEs. Iraq conducted two GCEs in 2009 and 2013, but has yet to conduct the DSC elections. Lack of updated census and clear border administration legislation have delayed the holding of these elections. The DSC elections are necessary to establish localized democratic leadership and structures.



In Q4 FY13, IFES was approached by the IHEC to assist in preparations of the DSC elections, and in response, IFES conducted the District and Sub-District Election Preparation Workshop in Erbil on November 3-4, 2013. The workshop

was organized and conducted by IFES in coordination with the IHEC.

The BoC invited ten members of the CoR Committee on Regions and Governorates Not Organized in a Region (CRGR). In addition, a number of the IHEC General Directors and Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) Managers joined, as well as a representative from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The main objective of the workshop was to establish clear definitions on the legal and technical requirements needed to hold the DSC elections.

Figure 1: District-Sub-District Council Elections Workshop, November 3-4, 2014.

During the two-day workshop, a series of challenges in conducting the DSC elections were delineated. Challenges include holding the elections in disputed areas between governorates, voter registration list and distribution of the districts and sub-districts voter information, the timing and implementation of the elections, and the lack of a district center in most governorates. The participants agreed to form a joint committee to follow up on the preparation for the elections and produce a timeline proposal for consideration. The committee also agreed to research the options to deal with special need voting and draft regulations to guide candidate registration requirements. The BoC approved all of the recommendations stemming from the workshop. During Q2 FY14, IFES will continue to follow up on the progress of implementing the recommendations.

In addition, IFES began planning a series of workshops to assist in electoral operations. The IFES Senior Elections Planning (SEP) Advisor worked with the Capacity Building Department (CBD) to finalize the concept and agenda for the Electoral Event Preparation Workshop that was planned for January 2014. Participants were to include all the General Directors from the IHEC National Office (NO) and the GEOs Managers. The objective of the workshop was to set plans for implementing the 2014 electoral events, detail each phase of the planning process, identify GEOs' needs and readiness, and analyze issues with prior elections to anticipate and trouble shoot challenges to future processes. As of the close of this reporting period, this workshop has been indefinitely postponed by IHEC's decision.

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

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

IFES continued providing assistance to the IHEC IT and Database Departments. The IFES Database Development Advisor finalized working with the IHEC Data Management Section (DMS) staff on development of the results tabulation software for the IKR parliamentary elections. He assisted in optimizing certain software procedures, resolving a number of software bugs as the software was finalized, tested, and deployed to the production environment. In addition, the Advisor helped DMS staff to develop MS SQL database storage procedures for audit triggers using T-SQL. Lastly, the 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 Section prior to the results data entry operation. The issue was resolved, with data entry successfully completed.

Correspondingly, the Database Development Advisor worked with DMS and Data Entry Center (DEC) staff in preparing for the upcoming VRU for the 2014 CoR election. The Advisor helped check the configuration of the database to provide secure and sufficient storage for scanned images of the VRU forms. The storage is configured in a way that scanned images can be placed on the server, but cannot be deleted by regular users. Scanned images will be available for users even in case of failure of one of the two servers. In addition, the Advisor worked together with DMS staff to address a minor issue with the voter registration update software that was not discovered during the testing period. The bug was addressed and a new version of the software was deployed. In addition, the Advisor helped to address issues with scanning. Due to lack of storage space, scanning computers were not able to upload scanned forms.

With the completion of the IKR parliamentary election, the IFES Database/IT Consultant continued holding discussions with the KREO on the IT system assessment report that was developed by the Consultant during the previous reporting period. The assessment focused on the potential hardware, software, and human resources requirements for running the IT system at the KREO. Discussions are ongoing to determine the way forward. Although KREO management is in full support of implementing the necessary upgrades, the lack of funding and a busy election schedule remain major obstacles.

In addition, the IFES Database/IT Consultant initiated a brainstorming session with the KREO Operations and Data Management Sections on potential improvements to the KREO's call center IT system. While the IT system has been operational and meeting the requirements of the KREO, the participants of the session commented that there are potential upgrades needed to fully or semi-automate the system. Major common drawbacks of the system are the manual entry of call records and the necessary occasional system's reboot only after a few records are entered. Possible upgrade options were discussed, including the redevelopment of the software or the procurement of a complete call center.

Lastly, one key component to the successful implementation of the AVR project is the restructuring of the IHEC IT and Operations Departments. IFES submitted a letter to the CEO with recommendations on and a proposed mapping of this new structure. Discussions on this proposal will continue during the next quarter.

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

In support of the CoR elections VRU, the IFES Database Development Advisor continued discussions with the Head of the DEC on IT infrastructure and software for the VRU, including the acquisition of three new staff. During this reporting period, three new staff were hired with approval for a fourth underway. This change in staffing is very positive as the DMS is highly understaffed. In addition, the DMS inquired about the possibility of using checksum/check-digit for the counting form serial numbers and/or barcodes printed on the ballot paper. Checksum/check-digit is a digit calculated according to a special algorithm and used for detecting errors that may have been introduced during data entry or due to fraud. The Advisor submitted barcode protection algorithms and examples to the DMS for review.

At the closure of last quarter, IFES began preliminary discussions with the IHEC DMS staff on conducting on-the-job trainings on Crystal Reports/Microsoft reporting engine tools. The IFES IT Technical Program Associate met with the Head of the IT Section to discuss issues concerning space for IT training and hardware at the IHEC. The IHEC has started expanding the DEC to create sufficient space for new servers and more end-user computers. Due to limited space, an IT lab cannot be built, and while on-the-job trainings have started, the number of hours staff can commit is limited due to the lack of space. Trainings will continue through next quarter.

Lastly, with the final stages of the OCV website implementation completed, the IFES Database/IT Consultant started coaching the IHEC's programmer on the technology/code/logic of the OCV registration website, covering both the back-end and front-end of the system. The system source code and structure were made available to IHEC programmers for further exploration to enable the programmers to take the lead on the project. Unfortunately, at the beginning of December, the BoC decided not to use web-based registration for the OCV. IFES issued a letter to the CEO expressing disappointment with the IHEC's decision to proceed with the OCV based on the method used during the previous elections and to cancel the electronic process. During the 2010 OCV process, the IHEC had to invalidate over 80,000 votes using the conditional voting and verification process. The electronic pre-registration method would provide more reliable data on number of voters, reduce the cost of the operation, and ensure security of data of the Iraqi voters abroad. IFES highly recommended implementation of the electronic OCV which would be yet another big achievement of the IHEC in terms of introducing technology in elections in Iraq.

Activity 2.3.2: Support operational planning for voter registration activities

IFES provided significant support and expertise in OCV for the CoR elections during this reporting period. Following the completion of the OCV website, IFES Database/IT Consultant began a systems test of the website, checking for application usability, errors, bugs, and interoperability of various components. Bugs were fixed and some taken into account for modifications to the application. The Consultant also tested the website on multiple browser platforms, including Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Safari, and Firefox. In addition, the Consultant developed and tested the email handling component that automatically replies to illegible voters. This component enables both the voters and the IHEC staff to exchange information, and to maintain a file reference of individual applicants. Lastly, the Consultant began in-house, live-testing of the website.

During the testing phase of the OCV website, IFES Database/IT Consultant held a three-day session in Erbil at the KREO on the project with Procedure and Training, Voter List, and Data Management Section staff from the NO. The topics of the meeting included procedural and legal aspects of OCV and anti-fraud measures for the website. While most of the issues



Figure 2: Data entry page - OCV voter registration.

were agreed upon, some, including the establishment of OCV call center, were subject to further discussions and approval by the IHEC's BoC and CEO.

Following the workshop, the IFES Database/IT Consultant worked with Procedures and Training Section staff on drafting OCV registration procedures and analyzed existing documents and facts, including the list of legal documents that are issued by Iraqi Government, to comply with the OCV registration procedures. In addition, the Consultant implemented a series of changes to the OCV website resulting from the three-day training session. Major changes to the website included: accepting terms/conditions/agreements were made mandatory prior to registration; extra identification fields were added; the system was modified to only allow Arabic language data-input; review-before-submission option added, including option to return to previous stage of registration; security protocols to block possible double-registration added; receipt of registration generation developed, rather than just voter ID; and confirmation page printing option added.

The SEP Advisor attended a workshop on preparations for the 2014 COR OCV registration . The workshop was conducted by the IHEC and held in Baghdad on October 29-30. It was attended by Country Managers of the 2010 OCV Committee and the current OCV Committee members. The workshop objective was to debrief the former managers on the documents requirements and recruitment procedures in each country and the challenges they encountered.

In addition, the SEP Advisor continued supporting the IHEC, in particular working with the Logistics Section in developing registration procedures for conditional voting, and in developing the logistics plan for the OCV and the distribution of materials to the countries.

Activity 2.3.3: Support Coordination Between IHEC and other Government Agencies on the Development of Voter Registries

As part of implementing OCV, the IFES SEP assisted the OCV in analyzing the data received from the MoFA regarding the number of Iraqis living abroad.

He also prepared and submitted a list of recommendations to the Director of the Operations Department concerning the voter registry verification process required by the new election law no. 45. The law stipulates that an analysis of the 2013 VRU should be conducted by comparing the data to that of the 2004 VRU, including population variations in mortality, new births, migration between provinces, Iraq Constitution Article 140 affected citizens, and IDPs. One integral component to this process is gathering and comparing data from the Ministry of Health and Central Bureau of Statistics. In past elections, while the law stipulates this process is to take place, the IHEC has not conducted the verification. Should this process move forward, IFES Advisors are ready to assist the Operations Department in compiling and analyzing the data and in developing the final report.

Lastly, following Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's announcement of initiation of the national identification cards project, IFES submitted a letter to the CEO concerning the synergies between the AVR database and the National ID as well as the necessity for data exchange. IFES suggested that the IHEC start coordinating with the Government of Iraq in the planning phases of

these projects to ensure seamless data interchange. IFES also recommended that the IHEC approach the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) as soon as appropriate to explore means of including electoral related information in that national database, in addition to exploring the medium and long-term strategies for cooperation.

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

During this reporting period, IFES has continued to support the IHEC automated voter registration (AVR) project. Following a preliminary analysis of the project to date, the IFES AVR Consultant observed that the long term success of the AVR project is unlikely unless more proactive management of the IT environment is instituted. These changes will require a certain level of restructuring; work is ongoing in finding suitable options that are acceptable to the IHEC. In addition, IFES sent a letter to the CEO recommending field testing prior to the implementation of the AVR system as currently the system will only be tested at the factory site. Testing at the factory identifies hardware issues, but does not detect system problems associated with the environment it will be implemented in. Such issues can only be detected by site validation testing.

Lastly, the AVR Consultant submitted a letter to the IHEC recommending an audit of the voter register. The objective of this audit is to create a baseline upon which to conduct an evaluation of the new AVR system. The audit consists of three elements: list-to-people test, people-to-list test, and a computer audit. Following the completion of the AVR, a similar audit will be conducted, and the success of the AVR exercise will be evaluated.

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

As a follow-up to the IFES Political Campaign Finance Workshop in June 2013, which resulted in the development of the Campaign Finance Regulation No. 1 for 2013, IFES conducted a workshop with two sessions on the new regulation on October 23-24 and October 27-28 in Erbil. Participants were introduced and trained on the regulation, with an analysis of each component of the regulation conducted to collect recommendations on how to proceed with its implementation.



Figure 3: Political Campaign Finance Workshop, October 23-24 & 27-28.

The participants of the first session were from the Political Entities Section of the NO POD and the Political Entities Units at the GEOs. The participants of the second session were from the NO Finance Department and the Finance Units at the GEOs. The total number of participants over both sessions was 51, with 26 total in the first session (3 of whom were female), and 25 total in the second session (4 of whom were female).

This workshop was facilitated by the Director of Al Najaf GEO and by Dr. Khalil Gebara, IFES Political Campaign

Finance Consultant. In order to fulfill the objectives of the workshop, the participants were divided into groups according to the different sections of the campaign finance regulation. Each group presented a section of the regulation, highlighting the challenges and the steps required for the proper implantation of the relevant section of the regulation. The audience and the facilitators discussed the findings and the suggestions of different groups and the main outcome of the workshop was a set of 17 recommendations that aim to help implementing the campaign finance regulation.

These workshops are considered to be the first workshops that were prepared in the context of the campaign finance regulations, and of particular importance in light of the forthcoming elections expected to take place in April 2014.

In an effort to build the capacity of the IHEC Finance and Audit Departments, IFES held two workshops at the end of October and beginning of November, which were a follow-up to introductory workshops previously held in January 2012. These workshops went further in depth on finance and audit related topics, and assisted in the development and enhancement of the IHEC's finance and audit staff skills to achieve more accurate and effective overall management skills, specifically pertaining to their field of responsibility within the IHEC's Audit and Internal Control and Finance Departments.



Figure 4: Finance and Audit Procedures Workshop, October 29 - November 1, November 3-6, 2013.

The workshops were divided into two groups. The first session consisted of participants from the IHEC's NO and Northern Iraq's GEOs; the second session participants also came from the IHEC's NO and from Southern Iraq's GEOs. Two senior staff members from the IHEC participated in each of the groups as leading figures and facilitators for the debates sessions: the Director of the Monitoring and Internal Audit Department and the Director of the Finance Department.

The teaching and outreach methodology used was interactive lectures with practicum exercises. The workshops' learning objective was to provide a suitable baseline of knowledge covering procurement operations and effective management of procurement financial and operational controls. Specific topics covered included:

- Financial management;
- Monitoring and internal audit;
- Human resources and financial management;
- Contracts and tenders, including financial requirements;
- Special procedures and waivers for upcoming elections processes.

The training materials, including practicums and test



Figure 5: Group Exercise Session, Finance, and Audit Procedures Workshop

keys, were assembled by the IFES Organizational Management Team and presented to every workshop participant on a flash drive.

The workshop exceeded expectations in its accomplishments. Much thought and effort went into the preparation and execution of the workshop materials to include practicums and homework developed and distributed by the Iraqi training partners. All participants completed all of their assignments to the satisfaction of the trainers. The participants determined additional areas which should be included in the IHEC Internal Control System and set targets for the introduction of Standard Operating Procedures within the IHEC procurement system and processes. Such Standard Operating Procedures will enhance the IHEC System of Internal Control and lead to more efficient and transparent financial operations by providing detailed requirements and responsibilities for key operations within the IHEC and the GEOs.

A change in knowledge was measured by the average score of the pre-test in each group to that of the post-test in each group. The first workshop demonstrated a 10.74% increase in knowledge of the materials presented, and the second workshop demonstrated an 8% increase in knowledge.

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

Activity 3.3.1: Development of a strategic communications plan

Late in September 2013, IFES submitted a draft of the Strategic Communications Plan to the BoC for their consideration. A number of consultations and discussions to finalize a draft was conducted with the IHEC Commissioners and the POD. The draft has been approved and a workshop on its content will be held in Q2 FY14 to begin its implementation. It is additionally expected that this plan will be tailored to aid in both the AVR project and upcoming elections in FY14. There is a high expectation that the IHEC will be exposed to political and public criticism, both from within Iraq and potentially from other states in the region. The elections in April are already highly anticipated and being focused on by the international community as the first Parliamentary elections since the US withdrawal in 2011, and with the challenges of the security situation.

The Communications Strategy contains a series of detailed planning documents which are based on propagating the vision and guiding principles of the IHEC, which include transparency and honesty, as well as increasing the awareness of the IHEC and branding it as a professional and independent electoral body. The three goals are:

- Increase awareness of the IHEC's role in managing elections and building democracy;
- Build trust and credibility in the IHEC, locally and internationally;
- Increase management capacity to deliver the above goals.

Within these goals are a number of objectives. The Communications Strategy also contains two documents which are designed to manage and mitigate any potential political and public criticism. Firstly, there is a detailed stakeholder analysis and management plan which provides a framework for engaging with stakeholders and the messages to deliver against each of the

engagement objectives. Secondly, there is a risk audit and risk register for the IHEC, which leads the crisis planning and mitigation of risks by early identification of risk and prepared and timely interventions. Both of these will be discussed at the Strategic Communications Workshop to be held in Q2 FY14.

The Strategic Communications Workshop for key IHEC staff and GEOs Managers will not only provide an opportunity to review the strategy, goals and objectives, and start to plan the implementation process, but will also provide an explanation of the planning mechanisms used, which are designed to provide tools and models to staff attending and encourage them to use these in their work. It is hoped that this will increase the capacity of the IHEC to deliver more effective public relations activities and identify further training needs.

Following the workshop, IFES will continue monitoring the implementation of the strategy and as well provide assistance as the need arises.

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



Figure 6: External Media and GEO's Writing Skills Workshop, October 21-23, 2013.

On October 21-23, IEFS conducted the External Media and GEOs Writing Skills Workshop in Erbil. The workshop brought together public outreach staff from the IHEC External Media Department and GEOs. The goal of the workshop was to build the capacity of the participants to write publishable copy for the media and for the IHEC website as well as to streamline the process through which copy is published on the IHEC website. The participants learned about different types of writing styles for the media, how to differentiate between media audiences and their needs, and basic mechanics of different writing styles. During

the workshop, participants were given a pre- and post-test to evaluate the impact of the workshop; 84.21% of the participants demonstrated a 20% increase in their test score.

After the workshop, IFES continued to provide feedback on participants' progress in writing copy throughout the end of the quarter via an IFES News Media Writing consultant that worked with both NO and GEO staff. The News Media Writing Consultant provided that assistance via Facebook and direct phone calls.

During this reporting period, the POD requested IFES support in planning campaigns for the AVR and CoR Elections public outreach campaigns. In response, on December 15-17, 2013, IFES held the 2014 CoR Elections Media Campaign Workshop in Erbil. The workshop provided the IHEC senior managers and GEOs Managers with an opportunity to:

- Discuss the communications issues raised by the AVR campaign and finalize the plan for sign off by the CEO;
- Finalize the plan for the CoR Elections 2014 for sign of by the CEO;
- Discuss the individual GEOs media plans for the AVR and CoR 2014 campaigns and ensure that they align with the IHEC NO plan.

The workshop was facilitated by the POD staff and IFES' External Relations Advisor. The main objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Understand as fully as possible, the impacts and implications of the AVR and plan the campaigns as effectively as possible for delivery from both NO and GEOs.
2. Discuss and finalize the CoR Election 2014 plan and ensure there are cohesive messages in both the NO and GEOs.
3. Understand the planning and workload organization implications of the AVR and CoR Election 2014 campaigns running at the same time.

Participants expressed concerns with the lack of sharing of the general AVR plan as the GEO's now have a planning role which is highly decentralized. Recommendations from lessons learned workshops on previous election campaigns were rehearsed again as little or no action seems to have been taken within the IHEC. This was also raised during the session on the public outreach material for the recent VRU.

IFES raised the concerns about lack of information on AVR with the BoC, which has resulted in a Commissioner speaking at the Strategic Communications Workshop, planned for Q2 FY14, on AVR and empowering GEOs staff to speak to the media.

In addition, IFES was approached by the IHEC Electoral Skills Section to assist in developing and conducting a workshop on election observation. The workshop will utilize an abbreviated BRIDGE methodology, and will be held in two sessions in Baghdad in late February 2014. The target groups will be national NGOs chosen by the IHEC. The objective of the workshop is to delineate the principles of the local observers accreditation processes, to clarify the role of local observers in the electoral cycle, to discuss the rules of conduct on polling day, strengthen the role of the NGOs in electoral observation, and to discuss the mechanisms needed to ensure transparency and credibility in the electoral process. While the event is sponsored by the IHEC, IFES Advisors assisted the two IHEC BRIDGE certified trainers to prepare the workshop concept, agenda, and materials and will serve as trainers for eight training sessions.

Activity 3.7: Civil Society Sub-grants Program

Bustan and Women's Empowerment Organization (WEO), two IKR sub-grantees, continued implementing their voter education projects in the region this quarter. Bustan developed brochure and billboard designs, along with four cartoons on elections. Additionally, it conducted election awareness sessions for youth and broadcast a voter education cartoon via Jamawar TV, Hawler TV, Parwarda TV and NRT TV.

WEO developed and disseminated 10,000 text messages targeting youth and women to participate in elections; disseminated voter awareness messages through their newly established Facebook and twitter pages; printed and began disseminating voter education poster and brochures. Additionally, WEO conducted eight electoral awareness sessions by December 2, 2013 in the rural areas surrounding Erbil. In each area, two simultaneous sessions were held (with two separate trainers); one for the rural women and the other for first time voters. Each session was attended by 30 participants and focused on the provincial council election in Kurdistan region, as well as the Iraqi parliamentary election, which are both scheduled to be held in April 2014.

WEO is also presenting TV and radio programs on local channels in Kurdistan about the significance of the participation of rural women and first time voters in the coming elections. WEO's spot was aired by Hawler TV, Aro TV, and Chara HD TV. The radio programs were presented in Helen Radio Station. The TV and radio programs focused on voters of the provincial council election in Kurdistan region as well as the Iraqi parliamentary election.

To follow up with these projects, the IFES Grants Manager Assistant conducted two sub-grantee site visits in the IKR to monitor the activities of the WEO and. He participated in voter education seminars held by both organizations. The Bustan CSO held its session at the University of Erbil, College of Literature with the participation of 80 students (60 male and 20 female). WEO conducted two voter education sessions at Daratoo High School in Erbil, attended by 27 and 28 female students, respectively. Each of these sessions informed students about the voter registration process and encouraged them to participate in the upcoming elections.



Figure 7: Bustan Billboard: "Being certain that your name is in the voters' register, especially for those who recently reached 18 years, guarantees your vote and participation in your government."

Lastly, IFES finalized the signing of a sub-grant to the Iraqi Al-Mortaqa Foundation for Human Development, which will implement a project in eight provinces throughout Iraq. As such, IFES conducted a sub-grants compliance training session on December 18 at the IFES office for the new sub-grantee. Sub-grants to Al-Manahil, South Youth Organization (SYO), and the Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (FAUD) will be issued during Q2 FY14.

IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Table 2: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, January - April 2014¹

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Strategic Communications Workshop	NO, GEOs Public Outreach Staff	Erbil	3 days	January 7-9
OCV Procedures and Auditing Workshop – 2 sessions	NO Staff and OCV Country Managers	Erbil	4 days	January 21-24 & 25-28
Electoral Budget Workshop	IHEC NO & GEOs staff	Erbil	4 days	January 27-29
Training on Accreditation Procedures Workshop – 2 sessions	NO & GEOs Staff	Erbil	2 days	March 2-5
Electoral Observation Workshop – 2 sessions	NO & GEOs Staff	Baghdad	4 days	February 2-6 & 9-13
Seat Allocation for CoR Workshop – 2 sessions	IHEC Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD
HR Management and Development Workshop	NO & GEOs HR Staff	TBD	TBD	TBD

V. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

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, particularly as the elections grow nearer and violence escalates in Anbar and other Governorates.

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. To date, there is no evidence to suggest that there will be any challenges during the CoR elections and IKR GCEs.

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*. However, IFES has not been able to acquire long-term visas for all current staff members.

¹ This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

IFES' accomplishments in Q1FY14 continue the successful implementation of the ESP. IFES has provided essential operational and IT/ITC support to the IHEC during the CoR elections VRU, and was pivotal in the early planning stages of the District and Sub-District Council elections. In addition, IFES provided forums to streamline the public outreach campaign for the CoR elections and corresponding AVR project. IFES also contributed to the long-term sustainable future of the IHEC by providing assistance in strategic communications, political finance, OCV, 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 communications planning. After months of discussions, the BoC's approval of the draft plan has opened the way for its implementation.

Considering this context, two conclusions can be formulated from the past three months of programming. First, with the successful implementation of the VRU, and the IHEC's dedication to adopting new technologies in Iraqi elections, the IHEC once again proved to be capable of conducting smooth and effective preparations for an electoral event, and also demonstrated a willingness to implement innovations. 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 an ongoing issue of concern. 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, nor is it expected to improve prior to the CoR elections in spring 2014. Should elections be postponed in Anbar (and possibly elsewhere once again), it can be expected that incidents of terrorist attacks and armed conflict will remain high, if not increase.