

## Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



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### CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: July 01 – September 30, 2014

**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, 2015**

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## I. SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period despite the deteriorating security situation and IFES team's evacuation from Baghdad. IFES provided the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) with support in the assessment and lessons learned process of the Council of Representatives (CoR) and the Iraq Kurdistan Region (IKR) Governorate Council (GC) elections. A total of nine workshops were implemented to target various aspects of elections conduct and elections management (see Table 1).

On June 17, due to the escalating conflict in Iraq (*please see the security section below*) and following the decision by USAID to send some of its staff to either Erbil, Basrah, or outside the country to work remotely as a precautionary measure, IFES evacuated the IFES expat team based in Baghdad. IFES-Iraq's Chief of Party (CoP), accompanied by the Local National Project Manager, relocated to Erbil to manage project affairs. The CoP returned to Baghdad on September 14. The remaining members of the IFES-Iraq expat team worked remotely until the end of July and beginning of August when they relocated to Erbil. They returned to Baghdad on September 21, 2014.

Throughout IFES' evacuation from Baghdad, IFES' advisors continued the development of IHEC's Strategic Plan outline. They also worked on IHEC's outreach campaign plan for the continuous voter registration (CVR) process, which initially started in the governorates of Najaf and Missan at the end of September and planned to expand to additional ten governorates by the end of this year. Additionally, they developed concept papers, agendas, and training materials for the lessons learned workshops. The IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC) Chairman expressed his gratitude to IFES for maintaining the in-country presence and continuing its work despite the security situation.

Despite the challenges, the quarter was successful given the number of successful workshops and the continued close cooperation with IHEC counterparts on a host of issues.

On July 9, USAID gave the IFES Elections Support Project a no-cost extension for a period of one year from the current expiration date of September 30, 2014 to September 30, 2015.

**Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, July 01 – September 30, 2014.**

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
August 10-13	Erbil	Public Outreach Department Lessons Learned and Continuous Voter Registration Planning Workshop	30	4	13/17
August 17 -20	Erbil	Lessons Learned Workshop for the IHEC's Finance and Audit Departments	34	4	10/24
August 25-27	Erbil	Media Section Lessons Learned and Continuous Voter Registration Workshop	36	4	16/20
September 1-2	Erbil	Lessons Learned Workshop on Political Entities Agents and Observers Accreditation Procedures	30	6	10/20
September 1-3	Erbil	Electoral Complaints Lessons Learned Workshop	29	2	14/15
September 7-10	Erbil	Lessons Learned Workshop for the Central Committee on Polling Staff Recruitment	25	6	6/19
September 8-10	Erbil	Lessons Learned Workshop on Special and General Voting Procedures	34	4	16/18
September 16-17	Erbil	Lessons Learned Workshop on Out of Country Voting (OCV)	28	1	16/12
September 21-23	Erbil	Microsoft SQL training	5	0	0/5
<b>Total workshop participants</b>			<b>251</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>101/150</b>

## II. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL CONTEXT

### *Security*

During this reporting period, Iraq experienced an escalated level of violence and conflict. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) forces increasingly targeted the Government of Iraq (GoI). At the beginning of June, the general security situation in Iraq rapidly deteriorated when ISIS and supporting armed groups began a major offensive in the north against the GoI, following earlier clashes. ISIS and aligned forces captured several cities and other territory. By late June, Iraq had lost control of its borders with Jordan and Syria.

On June 30, ISIS announced the establishment of an Islamic "caliphate" spanning from Aleppo in Northern Syria to Diyala province in Eastern Iraq and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the "Caliph of Islam." ISIS ordered Muslims worldwide to pledge allegiance to their caliph. ISIS also declared the group had changed its name to the "Islamic State" (IS).

At the beginning of July, the IS offensives reduced in tempo with its forces remaining in control of Mosul as well as a number of small cities in the Ninewa and Salah al-Din provinces. The Kurdish Peshmerga forces took over control of Kirkuk, Tuz Kharmatu and Khanaqin.

On July 12, the IS issued a decree offering Christians two options; convert to Islam or; pay a special tax. Those that did not comply by July 19 would be killed. This caused thousands of Christians in Northern Iraq to flee from their homes.

In mid-July, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) began more actively engaging with the IS in the northern and western regions. The ISF demonstrated better use of intelligence and combined resources and were better able to locate and target the IS strategic personnel and strongholds.

At the beginning of August, the IS launched its biggest offensive since the establishment of the 'caliphate' with a series of major attacks in the North, which overran Ninewa and threatened Erbil. It took the Sinjar district and ultimately seized control of Mosul Dam – located on the Tigris River – which provides electricity to the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and is Iraq's largest dam. The IS fighters also took control of Mahmour and Gwar, two small Christian settlements 20 miles west of Erbil, after the Kurdish Peshmerga forces withdrew from the settlements to defend Erbil. This situation incited regional and international alarm over the security of the IKR, and particularly Erbil, which has been traditionally regarded as one of the safest places in Iraq.

On August 17, U.S. President Barack Obama authorized air strikes in Iraq to help retake control of the Mosul Dam, declaring the action to be consistent with his goal of protecting U.S. citizens in the country. Following this decision, the U.S. began conducting airstrikes on key targets. Also,

the U.S. began directly providing weapons to Kurdish forces who started to make gains against the IS. The French government was also openly committed to supplying arms to the IKR.

At the end of August, President Obama revealed the plan for an international coalition against jihadists as a "strong message of support," after repeatedly calling for aid against the militants. Obama outlined the plan at a NATO summit for a broad coalition to defeat the IS jihadist group. At the end of the reporting period, the IS continued to utilize attacks on civilian areas to divert focus from military operations. These attacks included a complex attack likely targeting the Adala Prison in Kadhmiah neighborhood in northern Baghdad and an attack in Baghdad's Iskan neighborhood that likely targeted the offices of the Iraqi Shi'a political group and militia, the Badr Organization. As the U.S. and international air campaign against the IS continues to widen, more such attacks are expected. The Kurdish Peshmerga forces continued their offensive efforts in Ninewa, in the area around Mosul, reoccupying several villages with U.S. and French air support. Fighting also intensified to the west of Mosul, particularly towards Sinjar, as the U.S. air support continued to assist Yazidi fighters. The Kurdish Peshmerga operations also expanded in this area.

On September 30, the United States and Great Britain launched 24 more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, making it the biggest day yet in the air war against the IS. The British forces conducted their first two airstrikes in Iraq since joining the military campaign. The latest strikes in Iraq and Syria showed that the United States will continue to fight the IS as a prolonged campaign is expected. The Kurdish Pashmerga forces in Northern Iraq also captured a border crossing with Syria.

### ***Government Formation***

According to Article 54 of the Iraq Constitution, the President, by a decree, should call upon the CoR to convene within fifteen days from the date of the ratification of election results. Accordingly, the first session should have taken place on July 1 and been chaired by the eldest member, in order to elect the Speaker and his two deputies by an absolute majority. According to Articles 70 and 71, a new President is elected by two-thirds majority within thirty days from the date of CoR first convening.. Finally, according to Article 76, the President should charge the nominee of the largest CoR bloc with the formation of the Council of Ministers (CoM) within fifteen days from the date of Presidential election.

On July 1, the first session of the Iraq's new CoR was adjourned after Members of Parliament (MPs) failed to elect a new Speaker. The acting Speaker Mahdi al-Hafez called off proceedings after most of the Sunni and Kurdish members did not return after a break, causing lack of a quorum. Following this, the Iraqi Prime Minister (PM), Nouri al-Maliki, declared that he would not give up seeking a third term despite allegations of sectarianism and authoritarianism amid a sweeping jihadist-led offensive. Earlier Osama al-Nujaifi, the Speaker in the previous CoR,

announced he would not seek a new tenure, in a move seen as removing a key obstacle to Maliki's ouster despite the two being rivals.

On July 7, the new CoR put off its next session until August 12, following a failure to reach agreement on nominations for the top three posts in the government. However, due to the pressure from the political blocks, especially the Shia'a, the CoR Speaker announced that the next session should be held on July 13.

The relations between the GoI and the IKR Government deteriorated on July 9, when the Iraqi PM accused the Kurds of allowing Erbil to be used as a center for IS operations. The four Kurdish Ministers withdrew from the cabinet meetings in protest at the PM's statement which was described as "provocative branding of the IKR capital as a haven for the Sunni militants."

On July 13, the CoR failed to agree on a new Speaker during its second session. Two hundred and thirty-three out of 328 deputies attended this short meeting, a significant improvement from the July 1 session, when only a third turned up. Although the Iraqi Constitution obliges the MPs to select a Speaker during its first seating, the CoR continued to meet without a new Speaker in violation of the Constitution. Finally, on July 15, the CoR succeeded to elect Salim Al-Jiboory of the Patriotic Alliance as the Speaker of the CoR. Al-Jubouri was elected with 194 MPs supporting his candidacy. Mr. Al-Jubouri was broadly considered more moderate than his predecessor, Osama al-Nujaifi. The CoR also elected Haider Al-Abadi of the State of Law Party as the First Deputy Speaker and Aram El-Shaikh Mohamed of the Goran Party as the Second Deputy Speaker.

On July 23, the CoR elected Mohamed Fwad Ma'asoom as the new Iraqi President. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader was elected after two sessions of voting with 175 votes in the first round and 211 in the second round. Fwad Ma'asoom is one of the PUK founders and is considered a moderate known for keeping good relations with Sunni and Shiite Arab politicians. The vote for President was delayed for a day when the Kurdish bloc requested more time to select a candidate. Under an unofficial agreement dating back to the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Iraq's presidency is held by a Kurd while the PM is Shiite and the parliamentary speaker is Sunni.

The legal period for the President to nominate the new PM to form the new government expired on August 7. However, as the period coincided with *Eid Al Fittr*, the President asked the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) not to count the *Eid* period for the 15-days set by the Constitution. The period was extended until August 11.

On August 11, Iraq's President Fuad Masum nominated Haider Al Abadi as PM of Iraq and assigned him to form a new government. Nouri al-Maliki responded by maneuvering elite military units in Baghdad overnight, most likely in an effort to secure power by use of force.

Also, the *Dawa* party conducted a press conference attended by Al-Maliki and announced that AlAbadi does not represent the party, claiming that 43 members out of 53 still support Maliki for the PM position. Maliki himself announced that he intended to file a complaint to the FSC protesting the nomination of Al-Abadi as unconstitutional. Al-Abadi is a member of parliament in Maliki's *Dawa* Party and was serving as the Deputy Speaker of Parliament. His nomination came after the *Dawa* party reportedly withdrew Maliki's nomination after receiving a letter from the *Marjeya* - Iraq's highest Shi'ite religious body.

On August 17, the PM-designate Haider Al Abadi stated that he would introduce his government for a vote within two weeks, following the completion of negotiations between the various blocs. The government candidates would be selected by specialized committees, which would introduce three nominees for each position, from which Al Abadi would choose the most qualified ones. President Obama urged Iraqis to quickly form an inclusive government to unite against Islamic militants. Obama vowed to avoid the kind of "mission creep" that could deepen the U.S. military's involvement in Iraq to repulse IS militants seen increasingly as a threat not just to Iraq but to the entire region.

On August 22, while Iraq's politicians were struggling to meet the constitutional deadline to form a new government, unidentified individuals attacked a Sunni mosque, killing dozens of worshipers. Within hours, Sunni leaders said they were pulling out of the negotiations, and the political process was jeopardized again by the sectarian rifts.

On September 6, the CoR convened for the twelfth session. The agenda included voting on the CoR permanent Committees and discussing the 2014 budget. None of these issues was finalized during that session, which was adjourned to September 12. The CoR was also to vote on the new government, which, according to the Article 76 of the Iraqi Constitution, should be nominated by September 10.

On September 8, the CoR voted to install a new cabinet to form the government of new Iraqi PM Haidar Al-Abadi. However, the vote for the new cabinet did not include the important positions of Minister of Defense or Minister of Interior. The cabinet maintained well-known politicians in positions known as the "sovereignty ministries": Defense, Interior, Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Oil. Adel Abdul Mahdi from the Iraqi Shi'a Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) became the Oil Minister, former PM and Iraqi Shi'a politician Ibrahim al-Jaafari took the Foreign Affairs Minister position, and former Deputy PM from the Kurdistan Alliance Rozh Nouri Shawes became the Finance Minister. In addition to the cabinet positions, the CoR voted on three Vice Presidents. All three are leaders of political groups that competed in the 2014 elections: former Prime Ministers Ayad Allawi, Nouri al-Maliki, and former Speaker of the CoR Osama al-Nujaifi. The Vice Presidency is more of a ceremonial position and does not have specific political powers. Finally, Sheikh Humam Hamoodi, one of the well-known Shia'a politicians, was selected as the Deputy Speaker.

On September 16, the CoR held its 15<sup>th</sup> session attended by 215 members. The CoR rejected PM Al-Abadi's nominees for the Defense and Interior Ministers, leaving the two crucial posts unfilled. Al-Abadi put forward Sunni lawmaker Jaber al-Jabberi as his candidate for Defense Minister and Shiite lawmaker Riyadh Ghareeb for the Interior Minister. The CoR, which could confirm the nominees with a simple majority, voted 118-117 against Ghareeb, and 131-108 against al-Jabberi. The session was adjourned until September 18 to provide the political blocs with more time to negotiate the suggested names. However, on September 18, the Speaker of the CoR announced the adjourning of the voting on the remaining ministries as the political parties had still not reached an agreement on the candidates for the remaining ministerial positions.

The last CoR session in the reporting period took place on September 24, however there was no discussion on appointing the Defense and Interior Ministers.

### **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 security situation during this reporting period resulting in IFES' evacuation from Baghdad. While IFES had hoped to engage IHEC on this issue, the relocation of IFES advisors from Baghdad made it difficult to keep the Board of Commissioners (BoC) engaged in the process. IFES will work with IHEC to implement this activity in the no-cost extension period.

However, IFES drafted an outline of the strategic plan, which includes an already-developed mission, vision and goals and objectives to be discussed with the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) for their feedback and further development into the strategic plan. The outline is based on examples of modern strategic plans from other election management bodies (EMBs), and IHEC's minutes and resolutions from SPC meetings. These resolutions refer to various strategic planning decisions during the elections and for administrative purposes, and are published on IHEC's website periodically. However, they are not an organized and structured source of information. The outlines' objective is to help IHEC develop a cohesive Strategic Planning Master Plan, inclusive of departmental plans, to be distributed internally and published for external stakeholders.

After the return to Baghdad, IFES' CoP held a number of meetings on the strategic plan with IHEC Commissioners and staff members. The CoP met with, among others, the Spokesperson Commissioner responsible for the strategic planning process and discussed further steps on

finalizing the Strategic Planning (SP) document. The Commissioner confirmed that the SPC continues to meet on a regular basis and all information regarding IHEC strategic planning process is being published on the IHEC website.

Further, the CoP and IFES' Organizational Management Advisor (OMA) presented the outline of the strategic plan to the Commissioner for his feedback and further development into the strategic plan.

### ***Activity 1.2: Development of Annual Work Plans and Operational Plans for Electoral Events***

The Lessons Learned Workshop on Special and General Voting Procedures was implemented September 8-10 in Erbil. The three-day workshop was attended by 34 participants (including four women), from the National Office (NO) and Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs). Two IHEC Commissioners also participated in the workshop. The discussion focused on the voting procedures, especially those pertaining to the electronic verification devices which were used for the first time in Iraq. The participants identified a number of problems and raised concerns about the short training period, which caused some of the errors made by the verification officers in the polling stations. The workshop ended with developing recommendations to avoid these problems in the future. Other main recommendations included addressing the vendor to resolve the problem of devices overheating and to increase the number of mobile maintenance teams in the field.

IFES conducted the 2014 CoR elections lessons learned workshop on Out of Country Voting (OCV) on September 16-17 in Erbil. The workshop was attended by a total of 28 participants (including one woman) who served as Country Managers during the 2014 CoR elections overseas. The workshop was chaired by the IHEC Chairman and attended by the two representatives from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The recommendations from the workshop included, among others, the importance of coordination and cooperation between IHEC and MoFA, and adding the trainer and legal representatives to the administrative structure of the OCV offices.

IFES' Senior Election Planning Advisor (SEPA) met with the Kurdistan Regional Electoral Office (KREO) operation staff and learned that the work on preparations for the District and Sub-District elections has begun, with IHEC using voter registration centers (VRCs) as a base for distributing polling centers and voters. The discussion included the possibility of creating a new VRC to cover the 31 sub-districts not covered by the current VRC distribution. Proposals are being developed to submit to the BoC for a decision.

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

Under this objective, IFES continued to support IHEC to hone skills that did not receive adequate attention during the preceding years, largely due to the packed electoral calendar.

To enhance human resource capabilities and to strengthen IHEC management processes, IFES, in cooperation with IHEC, conducted the Lessons Learned Workshop for the Central Committee



**Figure 1: Participants of the Lessons Learned Workshop for the Central Committee on Polling Staff Recruitment**

on Polling Staff Recruitment in Erbil on September 7-10, 2014, with 25 participants (including six women) from IHEC's NO, GEOs and KREO attending. The participants were members of the Central Committee for the hiring of polling staff, appointed by IHEC, to manage issues related to recruitment, selection, and the hiring and training of more than 280,000

CoR and Kurdistan Region Governorate Council (GCE) elections pollworkers. The workshop was chaired by the Deputy Director of the Capacity Building Department (CBD) and IFES advisors. The outcome of the workshop was a set of technical and administrative recommendations identified and drafted by the participants, based on the overall performance of the Committee, Sub-Committees and the pollworkers, as well as on the major obstacles encountered during the electoral process. The recommendations include: unifying all the application and registration forms used by the GEOs; establishing an age limit to serve as pollworkers (minimum 18/maximum 75 proposed); creating a list of the polling staff recommended and/or not recommended for work in future electoral events; finalizing the polling staff lists no later than 15 days before Election Day; and improving the selection process of the polling station managers.

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

IFES' Database Development Advisor (DDA) worked closely with the KREO IT/Database staff to identify their training needs. The MS SQL Server, Window Server 2008 R2 Basic, and Windows Server 2008 R2 Advance were identified as the priority training topics. It was agreed with KREO managements to start with providing a training for staff members to get an introduction, basic hands-on experience with installation, configuration and working with SQL as a starting point for persons, who never worked with MS SQL Server before.

As a result, on September 21-23, the DDA conducted the Microsoft SQL training for KREO staff in Erbil. The three-day training for the five KREO staff members aimed at providing introduction, basic hands-on experience with installation, configuration and working with SQL

as a starting point for persons, who never worked with an MS SQL Server before. The workshop was attended by staff members from the Database Management, Operations and Admin Sections of the KREO.

### ***Activity 2.3: Support Improvements to Voter Registration (VR) Processes***

During this reporting period, IFES has continued to support the IHEC CVR project. On September 1, IFES' CoP conducted a meeting with the IHEC Chairman. Among other topics, the status of the CVR was discussed. The Chairman confirmed that due to the security situation and shortage in the required finance allocations from the general budget, IHEC will start the CVR process only in two governorates - Najaf and Missan - during the third week of September.

Previously, it was stated that the CVR was scheduled to start on September 1 in three governorates: Missan, Najaf, and Basrah. However, the training for the registration staff did not happen until mid-September. Also, it was stated that the CVR project would last for three years and all voters are required to be registered during that period, including voters who will reach the age of 18 prior to the next electoral event in 2017. Voters who fail to register during this period will not be included on the voter list. So far, it is unclear how the CVR will affect the District and Sub-District elections, as the date for the elections is not set yet.

On September 21, IHEC announced the start of the CVR process in Najaf with 15 registration centers opened. The Commission proceeded with the Missan governorate on September 24. The Najaf GEO Manager announced that there will be 60 mobile teams sent to visit universities, official institutions, and religious leaders. He urged people to visit the centers with the required documents: national ID, citizenship certificate, ration-food card and electronic voter card. Finally, he encouraged people who did not collect their electronic cards before the elections to do so now.

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

In the reporting period, IFES conducted the Lessons Learned Workshop for the IHEC Finance and Audit Departments on August 17-20 in Erbil, with 34 participants attending from the IHEC NO, the GEOs and KREO. The purpose of the workshop was to help IHEC solidify an advanced level of financial, accounting and auditing procedures as well as to improve the



**Figure 2** Participants of the Lessons Learned Workshop for the IHEC Finance and Audit Departments

performance in these fields by its staff, based on the expected results. IFES' OMA delivered a presentation on the importance of the lessons learned process. The workshop's outcome was ten recommendations, based on the overall performance of both Departments during the COR and the IKR GC elections held in April 2014. These recommendations will be presented to the IHEC BOC for approval and implementation.

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

IFES continues to provide assistance to IHEC by strengthening its financial planning, monitoring and execution capacity, as well as its internal financial management processes and systems. IFES also supports the improvement of IHEC's capacity to improve accuracy, efficiency, accountability and transparency in its procurement activities. IFES cooperated closely with the Finance and Administration Departments of IHEC.

One of the weaknesses identified recently is the lack of experience and skills of the IHEC staff in preparation and execution of bids, contracts and budgets. To address this issue, IFES developed, in cooperation with the CBD, the concept of a series of workshops targeting staff at the NO and the GEOs to train them on the procurement, tenders and government contract procedures recently updated by the GoI. The series of four workshops will be conducted in Q1 and Q2 FY15 for the Finance Department and the Audit and Internal Control Department as well as for various GEOs. The targeted audience will be the GEO's Managers and the financial, audit and legal Sections Heads.

IFES has started the contracting process of an Iraqi national consultant to facilitate the workshops and to work with the Finance, Audit, and Internal Control Departments on developing the necessary training curricula and reference materials for the workshops.

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

In August, IFES advisors conducted an organizational management needs assessment of KREO, through meetings with their KREO counterparts, to identify specific areas for support in the upcoming year. It was agreed that KREO needs capacity building assistance in the area of IT/Database and support for the Legal Unit in order to meet the requirements of upcoming electoral events. As an immediate result, on September 21-23, the DDA conducted the Microsoft SQL training for KREO staff providing introduction, basic hands-on experience with installation, configuration and working with SQL.

Also, IFES' External Relations Advisor (ERA) and Technical Associate (ERTA) conducted a number of meetings with the Head of the KREO Media Unit to discuss the performance of

KREO public outreach and media campaigns for the CoR and the IKR GC elections. The discussions covered the on-going issues with the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) for broadcasting the public service announcements (PSAs) in the IKR, a review of the media operation publicizing the electronic cards, as well as outreach to NGOs and CSOs.

### ***2.9.2 Review of IHEC's Anti-fraud Mechanisms and Proposals of New Mechanisms to Detect and Deter Fraud***

The Electoral Complaints Lessons Learned Workshop took place September 1-3 in Erbil with the participation of 29 representatives (including two women) from the NO and GEO's Complaints Units and investigators from the Legal Consultations and Complaints Sections. The participants discussed the obstacles faced during the CoR elections. The first day discussion



**Figure 3 IHEC Chairman, Head of the Legal Section, and IFES ELA at the Electoral Complaints Lessons Learned Workshop**

focused on the voter registration process complaints and challenges received by IHEC. The second day was dedicated to the complaints concerning the candidates' registration and accreditation process, in addition to the electoral campaign complaints. During the final day, the participants discussed the polling day and database complaints. A set of recommendations were outlined at the end of the workshop, including designing a special form for the appeals, working with the Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP) on their appeals procedures, and creating a special unified form for ballot box opening.

### **Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key External Stakeholders is Improved**

IFES continued its technical assistance to IHEC to improve its ability to engage external stakeholders.

#### ***Activity 3.2: Conduct of National Surveys***

The anticipated start date for the the second public opinion survey, gauging knowledge and understanding of the electoral process and also to inform the forthcoming CVR process fieldwork, was the end of May/beginning of June 2014. However, given the deteriorating security conditions, IFES terminated the survey company contract until it was determined that the fieldwork would be possible.

At the beginning of September, IFES resumed discussions with the survey company, the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS) to conduct IFES' second Iraq nationwide survey, and IFES finalized the process of setting up a new contract with the company at the end of the reporting period. Due to the security conditions, the survey is being considered for 15 out of Iraq's 18 governorates, with a possible booster sample of Sunnis in Baghdad. The field work is scheduled to commence at the beginning of October 2014. Accordingly, IIACSS finalized pre-testing the survey questionnaire and presented the pre-test results to IFES.

Representatives from the NO and the Erbil GEO attended IIACSS' interviewer trainings held on September 24 and 25 in Baghdad and Erbil to expose IHEC staff to survey methodology work and in particular the interviewer training stage.

### ***Activity 3.3.1: Development of a Strategic Communications Plan***

The credibility of IHEC as the institution for managing elections depends on its ability to proactively present itself to the media and to other stakeholders. To enhance its ability to do so, IFES advisors have worked with IHEC on a Strategic Communications Plan.

The External Relations Technical Associate (ETRA) attended the session on Media Planning at the OCV workshop held in Erbil. The session raised a number of critical issues about the planning and campaign, which will be included in the Communications Strategy.

IFES' External Relations Advisor (ERA) and ERTA conducted two meetings with Commissioner Gulshan Ali Kamal, in charge of the Strategic Communication Plan, to discuss reinvigorating the strategic communications planning process. It was agreed that the Communications Strategy Committee would be formed as per the recommendations of the Communications Strategy Workshop held in January 2014. A Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Committee was drafted by the ERA and was agreed to with minor amendments by Commissioner Gulshan. The ToR will now go to the BoC for approval and formation of the Committee as soon as possible. The Commissioner also asked for the papers produced by the ERA, for the Communications Strategy to be updated in light of the elections having taken place and the recommendations from the Lessons Learned Workshops and for a more detailed strategy for building relationships with external stakeholders, as this will be the first priority of the Communications Strategy Committee.

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

IFES' ERA and ERTA facilitated the Public Outreach Department (POD) Lessons Learned and CVR Planning Workshop, which took place on August 10-13 in Erbil. There were 30

participants (including four women) who attended from the IHEC NO, KREO, and GEOs. The workshop discussed the positive and negative aspects of the CoR and IKR GC electoral campaigns, covering the voter registration, electronic cards, and motivation to vote campaigns, with particular emphasis on the national PSAs. The workshop also provided the participants with an opportunity to strategically plan the upcoming CVR campaign, which will last three years, and included discussions on planning, messaging, audience segmentation and selection of delivery channels and ideas using the methodology discussed in the Strategic Communications workshop. These ideas were shared and commented upon by facilitators and participants.

This session also included a practical demonstration of the biometric registration process by a senior staff member from the Operations Department, which means that the Public Outreach staff are able to provide authoritative briefings to their external stakeholders and produce effective information materials. This is a positive development to have this level of preparation in advance of the start of the campaign and contrasts with the planning for the CVR campaign.



**Figure 4 IFES ETRA during electronic registration device demonstration at the POD Lessons Learned and CVR Planning Workshop**

Recommendations included improving the selection process for companies for PSA production, more specific audience segmentation for messaging (particularly for people with disabilities, young people and women), creation of a photo bank for images to reflect Iraqi society, more prominence for the IHEC logo on materials, testing media campaigns before implementation and exploring the use of graphics in procedural messages.

Recommendations have been sent to the BoC and if agreed will feed into the Communications Strategy.

### ***3.4.1 Training Program on Voter Education Methodologies and Use of New Media for Public Outreach***

IFES' ERA and ERTA facilitated the IHEC Media Section Lessons Learned and CVR Workshop in Erbil on August 25-27. Thirty five participants (including four women) from the NO, KREO, and GEOs discussed the media performance in the CoR and IKR GC elections, brainstormed ideas for the CVR campaign, reviewed the new IHEC website and discussed ideas to increase voter engagement through social media. The booklet, which was produced by the Media Section as a result of the IFES GEOs writing skills workshop (held in October 2013), was distributed to all participants.

IFES' ERA and ERTA provided considerable input into the agenda, methodology of the workshop and interventions during the sessions. Several longstanding IFES recommendations were incorporated such as a commitment to whole cycle electoral communication with voters, the use of pre-broadcast testing for PSAs, more specific audience segmentation, more training for journalists and more prominent use of the IHEC logo on materials into the recommendations.

Recommendations included: working with the media to provide whole electoral cycle communication with voters; better planning and preparation of press conferences and events; continued training in news writing for GEO staff; a campaign to increase the profile of IHEC's social media platforms and plans; and upgrading IHEC's facilities to monitor and observe the media. Continued training of journalists – through the new Electoral Education Institute (EEI) - in electoral law and IHEC procedures was also discussed and approved as a recommendation. These recommendations will be sent to the BoC for approval.

**Activity 3.5: Outreach to Political Entities**

In January 2014, the BoC approved establishing the Electoral Educational Institute (EEI) at IHEC. The BoC also identified a potential location for the EEI, outside IHEC, in Baghdad-Rusafa, which is easily accessible to the public. However, the overall goal, objectives, strategy, equipment needs, activities and programs of the Institute are yet to be considered and decided.

The successful establishment of the EEI at IHEC is of crucial significance towards the realization of the broader goal of reforming and improving the management and administration of the electoral process in Iraq. Therefore, IFES has been supporting the successful establishment of the EEI at IHEC through advice on the structure, roles and objectives of the institution. IFES will also assist in developing educational and training materials in-house and focusing on modular curricula using the BRIDGE methodology.

IFES' ERA and ERTA, and Deputy Chief of Party (DCoP) met with the Acting Deputy Director of the POD to discuss progress on the setup of the IHEC EEI. The Institute will undertake all the strategic communications work with external stakeholders and will also issue a magazine twice a year to publish research and developments in the electoral process. IFES discussed and will follow up on areas for support.



**Figure 5 Screenshot of the IHEC website report on the Lessons Learned Workshop on Political Entities Agents and Observers Accreditation Procedures**

IFES CoP submitted to the IHEC Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) the concept of the proposed IFES assistance to the EEI. The proposed activities include: a BRIDGE Train the Facilitators (TtF) workshop for EEI staff members in an effort to develop their training capacity

and gain a deeper understanding of the electoral process and the international standards; assistance in developing educational and training materials in-house, focusing on modular curricula using the BRIDGE methodology; supporting incorporation of research programs focusing on the role and needs of specific groups, such as women, youth, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and minorities in relation to elections; establishing a centralized resource center for access to information about elections and referral for both IHEC's personnel and other stakeholders; and assistance in obtaining elections-related publications, including the latest International IDEA Arabic publications.

On September 1-2, in cooperation with IHEC, IFES conducted the Lessons Learned Workshop on Political Entities Agents and Observers Accreditation Procedures in Erbil with the participation of 30 representatives (including six women) of the IHEC NO, GEOs, and KREO Domestic and International Observers Committees. The workshop was presided over by the Chairman of IHEC and the acting General Secretary of the BoC. Representatives of the IKR Ministry of Interior and the Office of Foreign Affairs also attended the workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to review the regulations and procedures for the accreditation of the political entities agents, domestic and international observers, and to identify possible future improvements. The outcome of the workshop was a set of specific legal and administrative recommendations based on the overall performance of the Committees and major obstacles encountered during the CoR and the IKR GC elections. The recommendations include, among others: revision of the regulation regarding the deadline for registration, which can generate serious inconvenience when it is extended close to the election day; improvement of the observer badge's security features; strengthening the coordination with government security agencies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; continued engagement in an inclusive manner with local civil society organizations (CSOs) ahead of any elections to promote their participation in the electoral process and facilitate their access to information, as well as access to and an overall better coordination with IHEC and the GEOs. The recommendations from the workshop were agreed upon and will be submitted to the BoC for approval.

### ***Activity 3.7: Civil Society Sub-grants Program***

IFES is implementing a sub-awards program in an effort to strengthen civil society engagement in the civic and voter education process, as well as to strengthen partnerships between CSOs and IHEC.

As part of its second round of sub-grants, IFES selected six NGOs throughout Iraq to implement projects that target women (including rural women, widows, IDPs, disabled and illiterate women), first time voters, youth (including rural youth and youth without IDs), the rural population, vulnerable communities (such as widows, IDPs, elderly voters, people with disabilities), and the general public.

The projects were implemented in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Basrah, Kirkuk, Dhi Qar, Baghdad, Nineveh, Salah ad Din, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit and Diwaniyah. The total value of the awarded sub-grants is \$595,732. Below is a brief synopsis of the funded projects.

- **Women Empowerment Organization (WEO)** is an NGO based in **Erbil**. Under the award, WEO aimed to target rural women and first time voters in the towns, districts and sub-districts surrounding Erbil to enhance their ability to fully exercise their voting rights and get access to election information. The project aimed to achieve that through electoral awareness sessions, TV and radio shows, targeted text messaging, social media and printed materials distribution. This project included a focus on the parliamentary and GC elections in Kurdistan. Also, the project targeted raising awareness about the IHEC call center and the voter cards. The value of the award was \$98,250 (period of performance: September 4, 2013 through May 31, 2014).
- **Bustan Association for Children Protection and Education** is an NGO based in **Sulaymaniyah**. Under the award, Bustan aimed to target youth, students, men and women in all three Kurdistan governorates to increase knowledge about elections and election processes through a variety of means including outreach and awareness sessions, telecasting of cartoons and brochure dissemination. This project included a focus on the parliamentary and GC elections in Kurdistan. Also, the project targeted raising awareness about the IHEC call center and the voter cards. The value of the award was \$99,393 (period of performance: September 4, 2013 through May 20, 2014).
- **Al-Manahil Association for Women Development** is an NGO based in **Basrah**. Under the award, Al-Manahil aimed to target women (and in particular widows, IDPs, disabled and illiterate women) as well as youth (college students, non-schooled adult youth, rural youth and youth without IDs) to assist them to effectively participate in the electoral process and create a mechanism for IHEC and civil society to work to raise awareness and understanding of the electoral process. The project aimed to achieve that through radio talk shows, mock election sessions and a bus tour campaign. The value of the award was \$56,900 (period of performance: January 2, 2014 through June 2, 2014).
- **Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (FUAD)** is an NGO based in **Kirkuk**. Under the award, FUAD aimed to target vulnerable and marginalized groups such as IDPs, the rural population, illiterate women, widows and divorcees and first time voters to educate them about the electoral process and their rights in that process. The project aimed to achieve that through workshops, film clips, awareness sessions and distribution of educational materials. The value of the award was \$53,139 (period of performance: January 10, 2014 through June 10, 2014).

- **South Youth Organization** is an NGO based in **Dhi Qar**. Under the award, South Youth Organization aimed to target first time voters and vulnerable communities (such as widows, IDPs, elderly voters and people with disabilities) as well as the general public to enhance knowledge and understanding of the electoral process, support the exercise of the right to vote by secret ballot, promote the participation of marginalized groups and promote transparency and democracy by observing the parliamentary elections in Dhi Qar. The project aimed to achieve that through awareness sessions and election observation. The value of the award was \$61,000 (period of performance: January 15 through June 15, 2014).

### Cross- Regional

- **Iraqi Al-Mortaqa Foundation for Human Development** is an NGO with headquarters based in Baghdad and branch offices in Kirkuk, Salahidin, Karbala, and Basrah as well as with coordinators in most Iraqi provinces. Under the award, Al-Mortaqa aimed to target youth, widows, people with disabilities as well as the general public to raise awareness about the importance of participating in elections. This was a cross-regional project implemented in 8 governorates (Baghdad, Nineveh, Salah ad Din, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit and Diwaniyah). The project aimed to achieve that through symposiums, visitor teams, and radio station programs. The value of the award was \$227,050 (period of performance: November 13, 2013 through May 13, 2014).

Overall, the sub-grants program had 9,161 direct beneficiaries (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Summary of direct beneficiaries from IFES second sub-grants round**

NGO (Province)	Training activity with direct beneficiaries	Estimated per final awards and/or Mods	Actual
Bustan Association for Children Protection and Education (Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Duhok)	<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	1,800	1,655
Women's Empowerment Organization (Erbil)	<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	1,140	1,145
South Youth Organization (Dhi Qar)	<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	1,800	1,800
Al-Manahil Association for Women Development (Basrah)	<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	715	925
Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (Kirkuk)	<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	500	517

Iraqi Al-Mortaqa Foundation of Human Development (Baghdad, Nineveh, Salahddin, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit, Diwaniyah)	<b>Total direct beneficiaries</b>	4,100	3,119
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,055</b>	<b>9,161</b>

## II. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

**Table 3: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, October – December 2014<sup>1</sup>**

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Training on T-SQL database language	KREO IT and Database Sections (5)	Erbil	2 days	October 19 - 20
Lessons Learned Workshop on Voter Registration and Data Management	No and GEOs VR and Data Management Sections staff (33)	Erbil	2 days	October 21 - 22
Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Training (4 sessions)	No and GEOs Finance and Audit Departments staff (25 each session)	Erbil	4 days	November 9-12 (first session)

## III. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

## IV. CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

This past quarter presented the ESP with major challenges to one of its critical assumptions due to the escalated violence in the country.

The assumption that *a secure environment is key to successful implementation of project activities* came to the forefront this quarter when external factors influenced the implementation of the project. During the period, a substantial part of the country's territory was controlled by Sunni extremists, thus sparking national, regional and global alarm over the security and political situation in Iraq.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

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

During FY14 Q4, IFES continued to successfully implement the ESP despite spending part of the quarter working remotely (out of country and outside of Baghdad). While working remotely IFES advisors prepared for a series of lessons learned workshops and follow-up on other activities as well as work with KREO. IFES provided essential support to IHEC during the the CoR and IKR GC post-elections period and was pivotal in the implementation of the elections learned workshops, paving the way for future activities and improvements. IHEC management and staff have praised IFES' ability to react quickly to training needs and to implement high quality trainings and workshops.

In addition, IFES provided assistance in the strategic planning and strategic communication processes. However, IFES' anticipation that significant progress on the IHEC strategic planning process would be achieved immediately after the elections results announcement and complaints adjudication has not materialized.

Finally, IFES resumed work on the conduct of the second nationwide survey gauging public opinion on the election process in 2014 as well as fielding information that will inform the biometric registration process.

As reported previously, IHEC must remain focused on building the institutional capacity of the Commission, in addition to advancing its operational capacity. Strategic planning, strategic communication, financial systems, and, perhaps most critically, technology in the electoral process and information technology, are all in various states of development. IFES has made considerable strides in improving each of these areas and will continue to create a demand for its assistance in this regard. However, IHEC must remain aware that the sustainability of the institution will only be ensured when it is run efficiently and transparently.

Additionally, with the overall security situation in Iraq it can be expected that incidents of terrorist attacks and armed conflict will remain high, if not increase, thus possibly influencing implementation of the project.