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# ASSESSMENT OF USAID SUPPORT TO THE JANUARY 2011 SOUTHERN SUDAN REFERENDUM ON SELF- DETERMINATION

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## I. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Automated Directives System
BF	Basket Fund
BFSC	Basket Fund Steering Committee
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DIFD	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DG	Democracy and Governance
DoS	United States Department of State
DWG	Donor Working Group
EOM	Election Observation Mission
EU	European Union
GoNU	Government of National Unity
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementation Protocol
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
IRI	International Republican Institute
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCP	National Congress Party
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCV	Out-of-Country Voting
PIO	Public International Organization
PPAC	Political Party Affairs Council
S/CRS	Office of the Coordinator for Crisis Reconstruction and Stabilization Team (US Department of State)
SG	Secretary General
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North
SRSR	Special Representative to the Secretary General of the United Nations
SSRA	Southern Sudan Referendum Act
SSRB	Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau
SSRC	Southern Sudan Referendum Commission
SSLA	Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly
SuDEMOP	Sudan Domestic Election Monitoring and Observation Program
SuGDE	Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections
SuNDE	Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections
SSSR	Support to the Southern Sudan Referendum Project
TCC	The Carter Center
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIRED	United Nations Integrated Referendum and Elections Division
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
USSES	Office of the United States Special Envoy to Sudan

## 2.ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jeremy Eckstein, who has worked in Sudan on political party strengthening programs with IRI in 2006 and 2009 to 2010, led the study team. Mr. Eckstein has conducted program evaluation and special studies on election projects for DFID and UNDP, and worked in Khartoum for UNDP, in the post-2010 elections period and during the referendum period within UNIRED.

Nellika Little, an international election expert, has over 12 years experience in conflict and post-conflict development work, primarily through USAID-funded NGOs and international assistance agencies in Afghanistan. She has experience designing and evaluating programs for local media development and has implemented capacity building activities for local governance bodies in Afghanistan. In addition, Ms. Little has extensive experience managing USAID-funded small grants programs aimed at political stabilization and participatory elections processes.

Monybuny Tim William, the Juba-based consultant, is the former Deputy Director for Research, Policy Development, and Analysis in the Ministry of Education in GoSS. He recently completed a master's degree in Educational Research and Evaluation at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi. Previously he worked for the American Institute for Research on an evaluation of the "Go to School Initiative" in Southern Sudan; for the Sudan Council of Churches; and as lead trainer for civic education and the compilation of a Southern Sudan Referendum Proceedings report in Kenya.

Ali Mohammed Ali, the Khartoum-based consultant, has served as a consultant to the Group for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights Studies a Sudanese NGO based in Khartoum that has been working on democracy and CPA issues since 2005. Mr. Ali headed the training and operations team of Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections (SuGDE), a domestic election observer network, during the 2010 national elections, the Southern Sudan Referendum, and the 2011 Southern Kordofan state elections.

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this assessment is to appraise and document “USAID/Sudan’s comprehensive assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum on Self-Determination.”<sup>1</sup> The scope of this report, therefore, does not address the overall conduct of the Southern Sudan Referendum, nor does it provide an evaluation of the performance of USAID’s implementing partners. Instead, this report assesses USAID’s wider role in the implementation of the referendum.

While USAID’s support, and international support in general, played a critical role in the success of the referendum, the implementation of the referendum was a Sudanese-led process. The execution of the process required first and foremost political will on behalf of the main signatories to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the Government of Sudan (GoS), and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), to carry the process forward. In addition, the semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) considered the referendum a top priority and established an inter-ministerial task force to ensure implementation of the process was successful.

The six-year CPA process was fraught with political tensions, uncertainty, and delays. Throughout the CPA period there was no certainty that the peace process would ultimately succeed. Stakes were high for all partners, and failure of the CPA carried with it the risk of a return to civil war within Sudan. However, while many of the key milestones in the CPA were delayed or unachieved, referendum polling was credibly and peacefully implemented from January 9 to 15, 2011.

Though polling occurred on time, delays early in the process meant that the referendum had to be implemented under an extremely short timeline. Following the appointment of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), there were just over six months remaining to complete the necessary procedural and operational tasks, which included making provisions for voter registration and polling both inside Sudan and in eight other countries with significant South Sudanese populations. This left both Sudanese referendum authorities and international assistance providers with a situation where operational planning had to proceed in tandem with a developing policy framework, which occasionally caused tensions between international assistance providers and the SSRC. Meeting the challenges of the compressed timeline for referendum preparations also required a high degree of flexibility on behalf of the referendum authorities, USAID, its partners, and other international actors.

#### **USAID Strategy and Support Portfolio**

USAID’s strategy to support the Southern Sudan Referendum was born out of long-term engagement in the CPA process. Supporting the CPA had been a foreign policy priority for the United States government (USG) since its early involvement in the peace negotiations. Subsequently, USAID developed a strategy to support the key milestones in the CPA process, including the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan, the census, the elections, popular consultations and the Southern Sudan and Abyei Area Referenda. As part of its strategy, USAID supported the CPA process nationwide.

This continuity of engagement meant that USAID had longstanding agreements with its partners, some of whom had been active in Sudan since before the signing of the CPA. Early assistance included civic engagement, constitutional development, and political party capacity building. Other partners providing technical assistance to the electoral and referendum processes (including international observation) were positioned in advance of the elections. The result of USAID’s strategy was a comprehensive program portfolio situated to provide immediate assistance to the referendum.

The USAID program portfolio for the referendum included all major aspects of electoral support, including technical and material assistance to the referendum bodies, out-of-country voting (OCV), voter

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<sup>1</sup>Assessment of USAID Support to the Southern Sudan Referendum on Self-Determination—Scope of Work.

information, domestic and international observation, and support to political party development. USAID's long-term strategic engagement also meant that its partners were positioned before other international assistance became operational.

USAID's estimated expenditure on the referendum was approximately \$50 million and covered assistance to the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES) for its technical and material support to the referendum management bodies; the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for OCV; the International Republican Institute (IRI) for political party support; the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for domestic observation and voter education and information; and the Carter Center (TCC) for international observation.<sup>2</sup>

### **Other International Support**

USAID delivered its referendum assistance in parallel to other international support, which was primarily implemented through the United Nations Integrated Referendum Assistance Division (UNIRED). UNIRED was established in mid-2010 after the national elections had been held and merged the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with the support of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). Nine donors pooled \$62 million through a UNIRED-managed basket fund (BF) that supported procurement of referendum materials, domestic observation, a voter information campaign, technical assistance to local media, and OCV, and provided training of referendum officials. UNMIS provided approximately \$55 million to complement the BF. UNMIS funding was channeled separately from the BF and supported transportation, staffing, and field support.

### **USAID and Partner Coordination with Donors and Other Assistance Providers**

While USAID had developed its own assistance plans in advance of other international efforts, the need for engagement with other donors was highlighted by the Agency's attempt to communicate a united donor stance on direct funding to the SSRC as well as by its attempt to mobilize complete funding for OCV.<sup>3</sup> Formal coordination between USAID and other donors occurred mostly through three established mechanisms: (i) the Donor Working Group (DWG), an independent initiative of donors; (ii) the UNIRED Basket Fund Steering Committee (BFSC), a body set up to oversee the UNIRED BF; and (iii) the Policy Committee, a committee co-chaired by the Chairman of the SSRC and the Special Representative to the Secretary General of the United Nations (SRSG). None of these mechanisms, however, served as venues to address issues of program prioritization and funding.

Instead, coordination of activities between UNIRED and USAID programs occurred mostly at a working level between UNIRED and USAID's partners—most notably, IFES, which was tasked with delivering technical and material assistance to the referendum management bodies. Despite the absence of any formalized agreement between UNIRED and IFES, coordination on a field level was remarkably effective and tended to rely on working-level relationships. IFES and UNIRED were able to establish a clear division of labor for procurement of critical materials. In addition, they collaborated on the development of materials and training electoral officials. Other partners had less need to coordinate their activities directly with UNIRED.

### **USAID and Implementing Partner Engagement with Referendum Authorities**

The Southern Sudan Referendum was implemented under a decentralized administrative structure. The SSRC, based in Khartoum, had the overall regulatory, policy, and oversight functions (as well as the responsibility to manage operations in the North), while the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB),

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<sup>2</sup>All monetary amounts included in this assessment are given in US dollars, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup>The International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented OCV largely from its own resources until full funding appeared after its activities were implemented. Full funding was finally provided to IOM after the completion of the referendum.

based in Juba, was in charge of logistical and operational responsibilities in the South.<sup>4</sup> As a result, USAID and its partners engaged referendum authorities at two levels, on separate aspects of their work. IFES primarily worked with the SSRB with operations and logistics support and engaged with the SSRC when necessary to ensure that a policy framework was in place for the referendum. Simultaneous operations in two spheres of support occasionally resulted in friction between the international community and the SSRC, which felt that it was being bypassed in the process. Other USAID partners also engaged with the referendum bodies, although to a lesser extent than IFES.

USAID had significant engagement with the SSRC and SSRB and expended considerable effort to build a strong relationship with both bodies. This initiative was greatly appreciated by the SSRC in particular and was an important factor in securing cooperation at all levels.

### **USAID Program Management**

The speed at which the referendum unfolded and the tenuous, or even volatile, political circumstances surrounding it required flexibility and adaptability on behalf of USAID and its partners. USAID facilitated this flexibility by structuring partner agreements with fairly broad programmatic objectives and then fine-tuning and harmonizing annual partner work plans according to priorities and circumstances.

The USAID Democracy and Governance (DG) team also focused on creating cohesive and well-coordinated programming through frequent and consistent information sharing. A highlight of this management approach was USAID's weekly partner meetings that allowed all programmatic stakeholders, North and South, to exchange status updates and build synergies between programs. As a result, USAID's partners were able to develop materials and approaches quickly and to cross-utilize resources.

USAID had significant financial resources at its disposal, which allowed it to flexibly and proactively address emerging needs as they arose. This demonstrated flexibility included the provision of start-up funding for OCV before additional donor support was provided, as well as for payments of poll worker per diems when funding from the Sudanese government did not materialize. USAID was able to identify these and other emerging needs and address critical gaps through effective and close monitoring of the referendum process.

### **USAID Coordination with USG Diplomatic Efforts**

USAID established itself within the United States government as holding technical expertise on the referendum process and leveraged its knowledge to benefit the wider USG effort to support the referendum process. Not only did the Agency make substantial contributions to the official information flow to Washington, DC, but it was also able to collaborate with its USG counterparts in developing approaches to unlock referendum obstacles and to employ high-level diplomacy to unlock potential roadblocks. This relationship was particularly evident by USAID's regular interaction with the United States Special Envoys to Sudan, who served to address key issues of concern at a high level with SSRC and SSRB officials.

### **Lessons Learned**

- USAID's approach to long-term engagement had clear benefits to how programs were delivered, especially in light of the short timeframe available for referendum preparations.
- USAID gained important insights into technical and procedural matters as well as potential pitfalls to the implementation of the referendum. Therefore, USAID was able to channel this expertise to its USG counterparts to facilitate a coordinated and comprehensive approach to referendum assistance.

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<sup>4</sup> The Deputy Chairman of the SSRC was simultaneously the Chairman of the SSRB.

- USAID's clear delineation between partner programs reduced the potential for inter-partner competition, increasing the likelihood that its partners would collaborate and coordinate their activities successfully.
- Under the circumstances of the referendum, fast-paced operational support operating in parallel with policy formulation meant that it was important that the SSRC and international technical assistance providers approach referendum preparations with as much partnership and cooperation as possible. USAID's focus on developing a close relationship with the SSRC was a valuable initiative towards developing such a partnership.
- In Sudan, the exact position of USAID's relationship vis-à-vis the UN effort was not clearly defined. While the absence of such distinctions did not constrain overall referendum assistance, a clear understanding by all parties of the relative roles of USAID and the UN could have contributed to enhanced coordination and cooperation between the organizations.

## 4. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Southern Sudan Referendum was first and foremost a Sudanese-led process. The people and leadership of Sudan and Southern Sudan should be primarily credited for having the political will and putting in the hard work to execute a process that, in and of itself, was ultimately observed as being credible and free of violence, and resulted in a peaceful separation of Southern Sudan.

The six-year CPA Interim Period was fraught with political tensions, uncertainty, and delays. It was not a given that the peace process would succeed. Stakes were high for all players, and the failure of the CPA process risked reigniting a civil war between the North and the South that had resulted in the deaths of an estimated two million people. The separation of the South would cost the North 80 percent of its oil reserves and approximately one-third of its population. The economic, and indeed the psychological, impact of losing the South was very significant for the North. While, amongst other objectives, the CPA sought to present a new, democratic system of governance for the people of Southern Sudan and Sudan as a whole, a “democratic transformation” did not take place during the Interim Period, and Southern Sudanese voters overwhelmingly chose to create a separate state in the South. The peaceful separation of the South was a major achievement for regional peace.

At the time this report was written tensions continued between, and within, the Republic of Sudan and the newly created state of the Republic of South Sudan. Many elements important to achieving comprehensive peace between Sudan and South Sudan remained unaddressed: the borders between Sudan and South Sudan had not been fully demarcated; tensions and conflict in the protocol areas of Abyei, Blue Nile State, and Southern Kordofan State continued; and there was no clear indication of when (or if) the Abyei Referendum would be held nor when the popular consultation process would resume in Blue Nile and begin in Southern Kordofan.

The Republic of South Sudan, the world’s newest state, now faces formidable challenges in building its government structures and democratic systems, maintaining internal security, and delivering services to its citizens. Simultaneously, the political direction in Sudan has taken a turn for the worse. Significant violence was occurring in the states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and the GoS had banned the SPLM-North (SPLM-N), the northern sector of the SPLM, which established itself as independent from the SPLM of South Sudan after the separation of the South. Many of the party’s members were arrested. Recent developments highlight that while the Southern Sudan Referendum has been successfully implemented and the South has peacefully separated from Sudan, the process of maintaining peace between and within the two countries will be an ongoing effort.

## 5. CONTEXT OF USAID REFERENDUM ASSISTANCE

USAID’s specific assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum was delivered in the context of broader support to the multi-year CPA process, wider international support for the Southern Sudan Referendum and CPA, and robust US diplomatic engagement in Sudan’s peace process. The successful implementation of the CPA had been a USAID and USG priority since the signing of the agreement in 2005. As such, USAID committed its strategy to “assist in achieving a just and lasting peace through the successful implementation of the CPA.”<sup>5</sup> While the CPA process contained many elements that were supported by USAID, one senior USAID official stated that the primary milestones USAID had focused on were the national census, national elections, and the Southern Sudan Referendum. In addition, USAID provided technical support to the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) and GoSS, and supported the popular consultation processes in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan.

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<sup>5</sup> USAID/Sudan 2006–2008 Strategy Statement, p. 2. This strategy remained in effect through the referendum.

USAID withdrew from Sudan following the 1989 coup. However, USAID's presence, funding, and program portfolio for and in Sudan began to increase incrementally from 2004 onwards as USAID reestablished engagement. Initially USAID/Sudan was based in Nairobi, Kenya, and in 2006 it officially reopened its Khartoum office as well a satellite office in Juba. USAID moved most of its staff to Juba after the assassination of two USAID staff members in Khartoum in January 2008 and steadily increased its presence on the ground after building office facilities there.<sup>6</sup> To bolster its staff capacity, USAID appointed senior advisors and placed additional support staff on temporary assignment.

USAID supported the peace process in the context of charged political tensions as well as great uncertainty about the successful implementation of the CPA. Almost all major CPA milestones had been delayed from their scheduled date, including critical events like the national census and national elections. Even shortly before the Southern Sudan Referendum was held, there was widespread concern among stakeholders that the referendum would not happen or would be delayed. This was an option Southern Sudanese leaders had declared unacceptable and which carried the risk of renewed conflict. It was not until very late in the preparations for the referendum that it finally became clear that the event would begin on time on January 9, 2011. While momentum toward holding a peaceful referendum on time had been building, especially since voter registration, one watershed moment that created confidence in Sudan that the referendum was on track was President Bashir's visit to Juba on January 4, 2011. On this visit he stated he would accept the referendum results no matter what the outcome.

There were also continued concerns among stakeholders and authorities as to how the Southern Sudan Referendum would be funded. An initial budget was developed by the SSRC with technical assistance from USAID, IFES, and the UN. This budget, while described as "nominal" by a USAID official, included contributions from the Government of National Unity (GoNU), GoSS, USAID, BF donors, and UNMIS. According to SSRC and SSRB officials, however, the GoNU did not provide substantial funding for the referendum, leaving it to the GoSS and international donors to provide the bulk of the funding for the referendum. The EU election observation mission stated that "the SSRB regularly complained [ . . . ] that funds from Khartoum did not arrive, and at times there appeared a serious risk that crucial elements of the [referendum] process would have to be postponed."<sup>7</sup>

## 5.1 The Significance of Supporting the Referendum Process

The successful implementation of the Southern Sudan Referendum came at the end of a complex, multi-year peace process that had ended Africa's longest civil war. The struggle for self-determination of Southern Sudanese had plagued Sudan since the country's independence in 1956. Civil war broke out even before independence was obtained because rebels in the South were adamant that they did not want to be under the rule of the North. Numerous unsuccessful peace agreements, some outlining mechanisms for self-determination, punctuated the country's history for the next 50 years.<sup>8</sup>

Each attempt to establish lasting peace ultimately suffered from fractured or competing international support or was too vague to allow for tangible steps forward. The Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 ushered in a temporary break in the conflict through the promotion of various measures for the South to maintain political and economic autonomy. This period of peace dissolved within a matter of years. By the mid-1980s the economic, military, and political autonomy of the South was fully destroyed, and Sudan became an Islamic state ruled under Sharia law.

A brief window of negotiations opened in 1989 but was quickly squelched following a coup d'état by Brigadier General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir. Bashir declared a state of emergency and banned any form of political dissent, rounding up prominent individuals who might pose a threat to his power.

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<sup>6</sup> Previously USAID staff had been working from the residential compound in Juba.

<sup>7</sup> EU EOM Final Report—Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Many factors besides the separation of north and south have fueled the civil war, including longstanding ethnic conflicts, border disputes, and religion. (see: ICG Africa Report N°3928, January 2002, p. 31)

In 1994 the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), set forward a Declaration of Principles, a set of seven principals intended to inform negotiations between the GoS and the SPLM/A.<sup>9</sup> These principals sought to address the main cause of the rift: the distribution of national wealth and resources. The Declaration proposed that if these principals could not be achieved, there should be a referendum for the self-determination of Southern Sudan.

After substantial faltering, and with the strong support of the US Administration, which appointed Senator John C. Danforth to act as Special Envoy to the negotiations, the final chapter of the CPA was formalized and signed in 2005 by the GoS and the SPLM/A. The peace agreement established a series of benchmarks that needed to be achieved, cumulating in a Southern Sudan Referendum, an Abyei Referendum, and popular consultations in the states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.<sup>10</sup> The agreement established new governing institutions, the Government of National Unity, and the semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan. It set guidelines for the appointments of members of the respective legislative assemblies and established how oil revenues would be shared between the North and the South. The political benchmarks established in the CPA were designed to allow for a “democratic transformation” of Sudan that could make the unity of Sudan attractive. However, the Southern Sudan Referendum allowed the Southern Sudanese the option to separate at the end of the six-year CPA Interim Period.

While other important CPA milestone events were significantly delayed from their established timeframes, the Southern Sudan Referendum was held according to the timeline established in the CPA. A number of informants even described the 2010 elections as a “dry run” for the referendum.

Under the CPA, elections were to be held no later than July 2009, but these did not actually occur until April 2010. The elections came so late that the elected government had less than a year to do its work before the referendum vote. Furthermore, international observers highlighted many flaws in the electoral process, including incidents of violence, abandonment of the safeguards intended to protect the integrity of the process, and a “militarized political context.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, the elections resulted in diminished political plurality in governing institutions and entrenched the National Congress Party (NCP) in the North and the SPLM in the South.<sup>12</sup> According to the International Crisis Group, the NCP’s preoccupation with its survival throughout the CPA process and its “failure to make unity attractive” caused Southerners to overwhelmingly vote for succession.<sup>13</sup> A total of 97.6 percent of all registered voters turned out to vote, and of these 98.8 percent voted for separation.

Holding the Southern Sudan Referendum on time was critical to the implementation of the Sudan peace process. The United States Institute for Peace (USIP) highlighted this point in a special report that noted that Northern and Southern acceptance of referendum results was critical to avoiding large-scale violence in Sudan.<sup>14</sup> The Rift Valley Institute also stated that failure to implement the referendum on time could have led to civil war.<sup>15</sup>

## 5.2 The Need for Technical and Political Engagement

There were many challenges to holding a timely and successful Southern Sudan Referendum. The timeline for polling and voter registration preparations was short; the Southern Sudan Referendum Act

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<sup>9</sup> The IGAD is a six-member regional organization composed of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda; The SPLM was the political wing of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and later became the ruling party of South Sudan.

<sup>10</sup> The Abyei Referendum and popular consultations were not completed by the end of the CPA interim period.

<sup>11</sup> EU EOM Final Report on Sudan Elections, p. 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> The CPA provided for an allocation of seats in the National Assembly and the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA). Under this allocation, the NCP received 52 percent of the seats, the SPLM received 28 percent of the seats, and northern and southern political parties received 14 and 6 percent of the seats, respectively. After the elections, the NCP held 70 percent of the seats in the National Assembly, while the SPLM held 22 percent of the seats. The representation of the northern and southern political parties in the National Assembly almost disappeared. In the SSLA the SPLM held 70 percent of the seats the assembly, and the NCP and southern parties held 15 percent respectively. After the elections the SPLM held 94 percent of the seats, while the representation of southern parties and the NCP almost disappeared. (See: Sudan National Election Commission election results: [www.nec.org.sd](http://www.nec.org.sd))

<sup>13</sup> International Crisis Group, “Africa Report N°174,” May 4, 2011, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> USIP Special Report 228 (2009), p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Rift Valley Institute, “Race Against Time,” p. 6–7.

(SSRA) was passed less than 13 months before the referendum, and the SSRC was appointed less than seven months before the date of the referendum, with the appointment of the SSRC's Secretary General (SG) occurring just five months before this date. The delay in appointing the SG caused initial tension between the international community and the SSRC and delayed technical assistance to the referendum process as the SSRC Chairman insisted that advisors engage with the SSRC secretariat rather than directly with the commissioners.<sup>16</sup>

While the CPA signatories ultimately agreed on the formulation of the SSRA, as well as on the appointment of the SSRC commissioners and the SG, the protracted time required for a political agreement on the Act and for appointments tightly compressed the time available for planning and executing the referendum. This shortened timeline required the international community to be especially proactive, particularly in its technical support. This sometimes caused tension between the referendum authorities and international advisors.<sup>17</sup>

The Southern Sudan Referendum was implemented in a particularly decentralized fashion. The SSRC, which had overall oversight and regulatory powers, was based in Khartoum, while the SSRB was based Juba. The SSRB, whose Chairman was also the Deputy Chairman of the SSRC, had a supervisory role over the High Committees in each state in Southern Sudan and was in charge of the logistical operational aspects of the process in the South, where 95.5 percent of the referendum voters were registered. The SG, who was based in Khartoum, was in charge of overall executive, administrative, and financial functions of the SSRC. As a result, international support was focused at two administrative levels, two separate and distant geographical locations and, in terms of technical assistance, two areas of support: policy support as well as logistical and operational support.

The SSRC was required to draft the necessary rules and regulations, establish its headquarters and regional offices, appoint and train staff, and make operational arrangements for conducting the referendum under an extremely pressing timeline. Furthermore, with few paved roads, poor communications infrastructure, and high illiteracy rates, the SSRB faced formidable challenges in implementing the referendum in the South. One key decision made by the SSRC due to the considerable delay in conducting voter registration was to substantially reduce the legal timeframe for publishing the referendum register from three months to one day. Without this decision, it would have been impossible to hold the referendum on January 9, 2011.

Extremely strained relations between the main CPA signatories, the GoS and SPLM, characterized the lead-up to the referendum. These relations were described by one observer as "acrimonious" and were punctuated by confrontational public statements, with the "key areas of dispute" centering on voter eligibility, voter registration procedures, and border demarcation.<sup>18</sup> As early as 2009, the SPLM threatened to unilaterally declare independence from Sudan if agreements were not reached on aspects of the referendum law.<sup>19</sup> Other aspects under debate included the share of Sudan's debts the South would carry if it seceded, the participation of Southern Sudanese residing in the North, and the percentage of votes necessary to allow secession. The NCP was pressing for a 75 percent threshold.<sup>20</sup> As negotiations continued in 2010, the NCP "warned that any attempt by the SPLM to declare independence unilaterally would amount to "political suicide."<sup>21</sup> The NCP avowed that any such declaration of independence would "amount to an act of war."<sup>22</sup>

The interconnected political and technical challenges to the timely implementation of the Southern Sudan Referendum required engagement at both a technical and political level, as resolution of each was a prerequisite to holding the referendum on time. While it was not within the scope of USAID's work to engage the CPA signatories on the political issues endangering the timely and successful implementation of the referendum, the Agency was well informed on the technical issues that could cause political

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with senior SSRC official.

<sup>17</sup> EU EOM Final Report on the Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Rift Valley Institute, "Race Against Time," p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> South Sudan Warns of Unilateral Secession, *Voice of America*, August 11, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Sudan's SPLM threatens unilateral declaration of independence, *Sudan Tribune*, August 10, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Sudan's NCP accuse SPLM of working for secession, *Sudan Tribune*, August 19, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Sudan's referendum body chief threatens to resign, *Sudan Tribune*, August 15, 2010.

roadblocks, as well as the key SSRC-level decisions that were necessary to move preparations for the referendum forward. Some key issues that needed to be addressed at a high level required coordination and interaction between USAID and US diplomatic actors. This approach is envisioned in *USAID's Fragile States Strategy*, which states that, “effectively addressing the complex challenges of fragile states clearly goes far beyond USAID. It will require a coordinated US Government approach.”<sup>23</sup>

This high-level engagement was consistently implemented through the US Special Envoys to Sudan General Jonathan Scott Gration and Ambassador Princeton Nathan Lyman. Both envoys traveled frequently to Sudan to address a range of political issues with key CPA stakeholders and met with the SSRC Chairman, Deputy Chairman, or SG to discuss issues related to the referendum. According to the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs, US officials recognized that “the CPA and the Southern Referendum were in serious peril” and made efforts to “make sure that the North and South Sudan did not return to a state of conflict.” To do so, the United States enhanced “diplomatic engagement with the parties to the [CPA], as well as [USG] partners in the African Union, IGAD, the United Nations, the EU, and others. The President, the Vice President, and the entire national security team were involved in this effort around the clock.”<sup>24</sup>

The following table provides an overview of USAID support within a timeline of the CPA and important political events.

Chronology of Key Events	
DATE	EVENT
June 30, 1989	Omar Al-Bashir comes to power through a military coup
1989	US Embassy closes operations
July 20, 2002	Machakos Protocol signed in Kenya <sup>25</sup>
2004	USAID/Sudan field office established in Nairobi with program implementation in Sudan (IRI and NDI agreements begin)
January 9, 2005	CPA signed between the SPLM and GoS
2006	USAID office in Khartoum and a satellite office in Juba officially re-open
2008	USAID begins to increase the number of staff committed to Sudan
April 22–May 6, 2008	Census conducted in Sudan
July 15, 2008	National Election Act signed
May 2008	An assessment of USAID Election Support Options conducted
2009	USAID receives supplemental funding for elections support
January–February, 2009	USAID agreements established with IFES and TCC
May 12, 2009	Census results are announced
December 31, 2009	Southern Sudan Referendum Act of 2009 is signed by the President of Sudan
April 11–15, 2010	Nationwide executive and legislative elections are held in Sudan
April 26, 2010	Final results are announced and Al-Bashir wins Sudan’s first multi-party presidential election since 1986 , Salva Kiir Mayardit wins as the president of the Government of Southern Sudan, and both the NCP and the SPLM win overwhelming majorities in the North and South respectively
June 30, 2010	Presidency appoints the Commissioners of the SSRC
September 2010	SSRC SG appointed
October 2010	USAID establishes agreement with IOM for OCV
November 14, 2010	Official voter registration rules are released by the SSRC
November 15–December 8, 2010	Voter registration for the referendum is conducted throughout Sudan and in eight other countries with significant Southern Sudanese diaspora populations: Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Australia, the UK, and the United States
December 30, 2010	Revised polling procedures are released by the SSRC

<sup>23</sup>USAID Fragile States Strategy, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Johnnie Carson (Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs) remarks at USIP, Washington, DC, July 14, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> The Machakos Protocol was an agreement signed in Machakos, Kenya in 2002. This agreement, also known as Chapter I, outlined principles of government and governance in the CPA. This was the first of a series of agreements that ultimately formed the CPA.

## Chronology of Key Events

DATE	EVENT
January 4, 2011	President Bashir travels to Juba
January 8, 2011	Southern Sudan Referendum final registration information report released by the SSRC
January 9–15, 2011	Voting takes place for the Southern Sudan Referendum. Besides Sudan, ballots are cast in Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Australia, the UK, and the United States <sup>26</sup>
February 7, 2011	Announced results show almost 99 percent vote in favor of separation
July 9, 2011	The Republic of South Sudan becomes a fully independent country

## 6. SCOPE OF USAID REFERENDUM ASSISTANCE

USAID provided assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum through support to the administration of the referendum, technical and material assistance, voter information, responsible participation of political parties, domestic and international observation, and OCV.<sup>27</sup> USAID’s implementing partners for referendum support were the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the Carter Center (TCC).

While some partner agreements were designed specifically for election and referendum support, several were also designed to support the implementation of the CPA political processes more broadly. IRI and NDI had been implementing USAID-funded CPA-support activities since 2004. The original IRI agreement went through two extensions, the second of which covered the election and referendum period. NDI, which also began activities with USAID prior to the signing of the CPA, was awarded a new agreement in 2009. IFES and TCC were awarded funding prior to the elections. Funding for IOM was unanticipated and resulted from identification of a critical need.

The following table demonstrates the overall lifespan of implementing partners’ activities with USAID funding:

USAID Implementing Partner Program Timeline								
Partner	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
IFES							Election and referendum administration support	
IOM							OCV	
IRI	Political party building, election and referendum support to parties							
NDI	Civic engagement and participation, domestic observation of elections and referendum, public opinion research							
TCC						International observation of the elections and referendum		

<sup>26</sup>Polling in Brisbane, Australia was postponed on January 11 due to flooding. It resumed on January 16 and ended on January 18.

<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of this report, the authors understand the terms “voter education,” “voter information,” and “civic education” as defined by the Electoral Knowledge Network, ACE <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vci>:

**Voter information** “refers to basic information enabling qualified citizens to vote, including the date, time, and place of voting; the type of election; identification necessary to establish eligibility; registration requirements; and mechanisms for voting.”

**Voter education** “typically addresses voters’ motivation and preparedness to participate fully in elections . . . concepts such as . . . the role, responsibilities and rights of voters; the relationship between elections and democracy . . . secrecy of the ballot; why each vote is important and its impact on public accountability; and how votes translate into seats. Such concepts involve explanation, not just a statement of facts.”

**Civic education** “deals with broader concepts underpinning a democratic society such as the respective roles and responsibilities of citizens, government, political and special interests, the mass media . . . as well as the significance of periodic and competitive elections. It emphasizes not only citizen awareness but citizen participation in all aspects of democratic society. Civic education is a continual process, not tied to the electoral cycle.”

USAID’s estimated total expenditure on the referendum process was approximately \$50 million, of which approximately 47 percent was dedicated to supporting the administration of the referendum (including technical and material assistance and OCV). Approximately 39 percent was dedicated to civic participation (including voter information, political party support, and domestic observation), and approximately 4 percent was dedicated to international election observation.

The following table provides an overview of activities under each agreement. The table provides main deliverables but does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of activities.

USAID Implementing Partner Programs and Activities			
Partner	Program Objectives (not all program objectives applicable to referendum support specifically)	Activities Specifically in Support of the Referendum (List is intended to provide scope and are therefore not inclusive of each implemented activity)	Funding Modality and Amount
IFES	<p>To complete the legal and regulatory framework for referenda in a timely and credible manner.</p> <p>To develop the capacity of referendum administration to operate efficiently and independently.</p> <p>To develop the technical capacity of referendum bodies to administer and oversee key functions of referendum administration.</p> <p>To train referendum officials in voter registration, voting, and data processing centers nationwide.</p> <p>To provide essential materials to maximize operational efficiency and public confidence on referenda procedures.</p>	<p>Provided substantive input and recommendations to legal and regulatory framework including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voter registration rules and regulations;</li> <li>• Observer accreditation rules and regulations;</li> <li>• Media campaign rules and regulations;</li> <li>• Polling and counting rules and regulations;</li> <li>• Referendum results data management operational plan;</li> <li>• Referendum complaints and appeals processing plan.</li> <li>• Technical assistance and advice to the SSRC AND SSRB through 19 advisors. These advisors assisted the Election Management Bodies in the establishment of four key functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive management;</li> <li>• Finance and administration;</li> <li>• Operations and logistics; and</li> <li>• Legal and regulatory assistance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Support for procurement and establishment of physical infrastructure of offices.</p> <p>Database management and development.</p> <p>Support the development of operational planning, training materials, and management systems.</p> <p>Support included input to the voter registration system, registration and polling manuals, and ballot design.</p> <p>Provided support on IT, database, software, and management systems to facilitate tabulation operations.</p> <p>Provided series of cascade trainings.</p> <p>Transportation services for referendum officials using chartered aircraft.</p> <p>Design and procurement of voter registration cards.</p>	<p>Task Order under an Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC)<sup>28</sup></p> <p>\$37,769,000 obligated from project inception through the Southern Sudan Referendum for support to the elections and referenda.</p> <p>Project lifespan: February 2009 to September 2012 (lifespan extended once within this timeframe)</p>

<sup>28</sup> An Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) covers a set period of time and establishes overall parameters of an agreement, but does not specify a set quantity of services or procured goods within that scope. A number of organizations might hold a specific IQC and will each bid for a specific Task Order award. The Task Order also allows for flexibility regarding quantities of services or procurements (other than an established maximum or minimum).

USAID Implementing Partner Programs and Activities			
Partner	Program Objectives (not all program objectives applicable to referendum support specifically)	Activities Specifically in Support of the Referendum (List is intended to provide scope and are therefore not inclusive of each implemented activity)	Funding Modality and Amount
		Design and procurement of voting documents, including 4,188 polling kits, 580 training kits, and 20,000 polling manuals.	
IOM	To support the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission in the holding of a credible registration and polling process for eligible Southern Sudanese.	Establishment of a primary liaison office in Khartoum as well as OCV offices and staffing in eight countries. Procurement of essential equipment and staff training. Drafting of operational plans. Implementation of registration process and polling activities in the eight countries.	Public International Organization (PIO) Grant <sup>29</sup> \$3 million (directly) and \$494,708 (via IFES) <sup>30</sup> Project lifespan: October 2010 to April 2011
IRI	Improve the organizational development of political parties. Increase political parties' level of preparation to participate in elections. Improve the effectiveness of political party participation in governance.	Referendum Act briefings and Training of Trainers for political parties. Referendum Campaign, training for political parties on registration procedures, polling sorting, and counting procedures. Utilized NDI voter information flipcharts (400) for Political Party cascade trainings on referendum procedures. Produced informational video for broadcast and training (1800) for Political Party disseminated voter education. Training provided for SSLA on Referendum Act and mobilization. Study tour for the Kenya constitutional referendum for political party members. Training of over 9,000 party poll watchers and development of training materials and observer toolkits (including 20,000 manuals and 27 trainings/briefings). Political Party roundtables (2).	Associate Award under CEPPS Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement <sup>31</sup> \$19.8 million— (not all spent on referendum-specific activities) Project lifespan: September 2004 to December 2011 (lifespan extended twice within this timeframe)
NDI	To support the development, adoption, and implementation of a	Public opinion research conducted on attitudes toward the referendum and briefing of Sudanese officials.	Associate Award under CEPPS Leader

<sup>29</sup>A Public International Organization (PIO) is an international organization composed principally of countries, or any other organization that the Office of General Counsel or the Bureau for Food and Security designates as a PIO. (ADS Chapter 308, "Awards to Public International Organizations," p. 5) A grant is an agreement enabling an organization to carry out a public service (as opposed to acquisition for the direct benefit of the donor). Within a grant agreement, it is not expected that the donor be substantially involved in the execution of the activity.

<sup>30</sup> The final IOM OCV budget was approximately \$15.5 million.

<sup>31</sup>The Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) is a Leader With Associates Cooperative Agreement held by a consortium of three equal partners: IFES, NDI, and IRI. "A Leader/Associate Award involves the issuance of an award that covers a specified worldwide activity. The Leader Award includes language that allows a Mission or other office to award a separate grant to the Leader Award recipient without additional competition and which supports a distinct local or regional activity that fits within the terms and scope of the Leader Award. This is called an Associate Award. With a cooperative agreement, USAID has more oversight than with a grant but less than with a contract." (USAID Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 303, Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations, 303.3.26)

USAID Implementing Partner Programs and Activities			
Partner	Program Objectives (not all program objectives applicable to referendum support specifically)	Activities Specifically in Support of the Referendum (List is intended to provide scope and are therefore not inclusive of each implemented activity)	Funding Modality and Amount
	<p>legal framework and institutions for major political processes conducive to civic participation and consistent.</p> <p>To enable civic participation in key political processes, including referenda called for in the CPA.</p> <p>To enhance the understanding of key civic and political actors in Sudan concerning the viewpoints of citizens.</p>	<p>Voter information and education disseminated through radio and civil society networks, reaching approximately 1.2 million potential voters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ “Let’s Talk” radio programs (4);</li> <li>➤ PSAs (roughly 10 combined);</li> <li>➤ Small grants to sub grantee SuGDE for VE and observation;</li> <li>➤ Educational flyers (235,000);</li> <li>➤ Educational flipcharts (1000);</li> <li>➤ VE events/activities (1,590).</li> </ul> <p>Domestic election observation through assistance to two Sudanese observer networks (SuNDE and SuGDE). Observer networks deployed observers for voter registration and referendum polling, and issued statements on the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Observers in Southern Sudan (2500);</li> <li>➤ Observers Northern Sudan (330).</li> </ul>	<p>with Associates Cooperative Agreement</p> <p>\$44 million (not all spent on referendum-specific activities)</p> <p>Project lifespan: February 2009 to January 2012)</p>
TCC	<p>Conduct an impartial assessment of Sudan’s referenda that will shape domestic and international perceptions of the quality of the referendum process.</p> <p>Provide monitoring and analysis of conflict dynamics.</p>	<p>Deployment of 76 long-term, medium-term and short-term international election observers to observe the referendum process, including voter registration, polling, and OCV.</p> <p>Release of 5 substantive public statements on the referendum process.</p>	<p>Grant</p> <p>\$4.1 million for the elections, popular consultations, and referenda (estimated \$2.5 million specifically for the Southern Sudan Referendum)</p> <p>Project lifespan: January 2009 to November 2011 (lifespan extended three times within this timeframe)<sup>32</sup></p>

## 6.1 Non-USAID International Assistance

USAID and its partners provided assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum in the context of wider international engagement. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) provided approximately \$55 million to support the Southern Sudan Referendum through the United Nations Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED) for logistical support and staffing. UNIRED was established following the 2010 elections in order to merge the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) and UNMIS’ electoral support into one unit. Under the new structure, UNIRED formally managed all aspects of the

<sup>32</sup> USAID was one of six donors to TCC’s international observation mission.

technical assistance as well as the programs of the donor-supported BF.<sup>33</sup> UNIRED held its first operational meeting on September 13, 2010, some two months after the SSRC had been appointed.<sup>34</sup>

Seven donors contributed approximately \$62 million to the Support to the Southern Sudan Referendum Project (SSSR) BF, which was set up to support civic and voter education, strengthen the Sudanese media, support domestic observation, build the capacity of the SSRC and SSRB, procure election materials, and support additional stakeholders in the referendum process. The scope for this BF was later increased to include OCV. Donors included the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the EU, Denmark, and France. The SSSR Project Document was signed by the GoNU’s Ministry of International Cooperation on October 4, 2010. The EU provided additional and separate technical assistance with a budget equivalent to \$2.9 million. USAID, with an approximate contribution of \$50 million towards the referendum process, was the largest individual donor.

In this context, it was important for USAID and its implementing partners to coordinate their programs, activities, and funding decisions with other donors, as well as with UNIRED and other partners, in order to maximize the utility of available resources, avoid unnecessary duplication, and create synergies between activities.

The following table highlights some of the areas where USAID-supported projects overlapped with projects supported by other donors and the UN.

<b>Technical Assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum</b>				
Area of Work	USAID IPs	UNIRED	BF-funded	EU
Technical assistance to the SSRC and SSRB	IFES	UNIRED		EU
Procurement of materials for the SSRC and SSRB	IFES		UNIRED BF	
Training of the SSRC and SSRB	IFES	UNIRED	UNIRED BF	EU
Voter education and information	NDI	UNIRED	UNIRED BF	
Domestic observation	NDI	UNIRED	UNIRED BF	
OCV	IOM	UNIRED	UNIRED BF	
Support to political parties	IRI			
Technical support to media		UNIRED	UNIRED BF	

## **7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this assessment was to document and ascertain the effectiveness of USAID/Sudan’s comprehensive assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum on Self-Determination. Aspects of assistance to be assessed included program design and management; program portfolio integration and complementarity; implementing partners’ performance in achieving program objectives; USAID’s role in program coordination and technical leadership; USAID’s leveraging of diplomacy and donor coordination; and USAID’s direct engagement with the SSRC and SSRB. The scope of the assessment was organized around 13 specific research focus areas. These are:

1. Effectiveness of USAID planning and prepositioning of technical and financial support.
2. Appropriateness of USAID program design and portfolio integration for technical assistance to the referendum process.
3. Success of USAID technical leadership and coordination of implementing partners.
4. Success of implementing partners to carry out programs as per their agreements with USAID.

<sup>33</sup> The Support to the Southern Sudan Referendum (SSSR) project document laid out the new integrated structure. The project document was signed by the director of UNIRED.

<sup>34</sup> Support to the Southern Sudan Referendum External Evaluation Report, UNDP, July 16, 2011, p. 13.

5. Effectiveness of USAID coordination with USG diplomatic efforts to leverage technical and diplomatic influence and to create synergies between the two.
6. Effectiveness of USAID coordination with other donors and the UN to maximize referendum support.
7. Effectiveness of USAID engagement with Sudanese referendum and government authorities to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of the referendum.
8. Effectiveness of implementing partner engagement with Sudanese referendum and government authorities to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of the referendum.
9. Effectiveness of implementing partner coordination and cooperation with other international partners.
10. USAID's ability to adapt and show flexibility to changing circumstances and arising needs in order to support the referendum process.
11. Implementing partners' ability to adapt and show flexibility to changing circumstances and arising needs.
12. Ability of USAID and implementing partners to apply lessons from the 2010 national elections to referendum support.
13. Achievements USAID could consolidate and build upon in the transition period immediately before and after the end of the CPA.

The team reviewed USAID internal and public documents pertaining to its referendum activities. This literature review was followed with interviews in/from Juba, South Sudan between July 27, 2011 and August 4, 2011. Lists of documents consulted and key informants interviewed as part of this study are attached as annexes to this report.

## **7.1 Challenges to Conducting the Assessment**

The most significant challenge faced by the assessment team was that its two international members were not issued visas to travel to the Republic of Sudan. As a result the Khartoum-based consultant was required to conduct interviews with key informants in that location independently of the larger team. Furthermore, the Sudan-based consultant was unable to travel to Juba to meet with the team and therefore all information was relayed via phone calls and emails. Additionally, due the lapse of time between the referendum and the assessment, the team had to conduct many interviews remotely (via telephone and Skype) with key informants who had left Sudan.

## **8. FINDINGS**

### **8.1 USAID Referendum Assistance Program Management and Implementation**

This section addresses findings regarding USAID's program design, integration, and positioning of financial and technical resources to support the referendum. It also explores USAID's role in managing the work of its implementing partners, as well as the partners' ability to carry out their programs. Lastly, the section looks at both USAID's and its implementing partners' ability to address emerging needs in the referendum process.

#### **8.1.1 Program Design, Integration and Prepositioning of Resources**

USAID supported a series of important political milestones in the peace process primarily through USAID/Sudan's Office of Democracy and Governance (DG), of which, as described by a senior USAID official, the Southern Sudan Referendum is the "crowning jewel." According to the official, the DG

program strategy was envisaged to cover a six- to seven-year timeline and included support to the census, the national elections, and the Abyei and Southern Sudan referenda and popular consultations. While the Southern Sudan Referendum was the final achieved milestone in the CPA process, USAID's strategy was to "assist in achieving a just and lasting peace through successful implementation of the CPA."<sup>35</sup>

Beginning in 2004, USAID's strategy approach engaged CPA support at the Southern Sudan level and focused on governance issues and on strengthening the capacity of the GoSS. In 2005, USAID released a Strategy Statement covering the period from 2006 to 2008, which articulated an expansion of USAID support to the CPA at the GoNU level and provided for support to nationwide elections and for supporting the capacity of governing institutions in Sudan's protocol areas. The Strategy Statement did not reference USAID support to the Southern Sudan Referendum, and there was no reformulated Sudan strategy covering the period in which the Southern Sudan Referendum took place; however according to USAID, the 2006–2008 strategy remained in place until 2011. Additionally, USAID's objective for supporting the Southern Sudan Referendum was also not officially formulated, although many USAID and USG officials consistently articulated the objective along the lines of "allowing the Southern Sudan voters to freely express their preference for unity or separation in a process that was recognized as legitimate and was free of violence."

Strong interest in the peace process within the United States—fueled in part by advocacy, popular literature, interest among Christian groups, and even star power—as well as bipartisan foreign policy support to the peace process ensured that USAID activities in support of the implementation of the CPA were well-funded and that the Agency had enough resources to design and implement a comprehensive referendum support program. This undivided support in Washington, DC was demonstrated by the provision of a \$70 million supplemental budget in 2009 for electoral activities.<sup>36</sup> Although the supplemental funding was appropriated prior to the elections, these funds were also instrumental to support USAID referendum activities. In the words of one USG official, "there was never a worry about money, but rather about whether the referendum would take place."

With strong interest in Washington, DC, and robust backing for referendum support, USAID planned a comprehensive package of support for the contingency that USAID might be the only donor mobilized to support the referendum on time. The complete USAID referendum support portfolio, as presented above, addressed the major areas of electoral support. These included technical, financial, and material assistance to the referendum bodies; provision of voter information; responsible participation of political parties; and international and domestic observation. One senior UN official found USAID's support to be technically and financially "very much appropriate." In effect, USAID's program ran in parallel with the programs supported by other donors and UNMIS through UNIRED. This was particularly true in areas of technical assistance, procurement, voter information, and domestic observation.<sup>37</sup>

According to one senior USG official, a strong point in USAID's programs was its flexible use of funds and that it at times "went out on a limb" to make the referendum happen. This flexibility and "thinking outside the box," as stated by another USAID official, was demonstrated by USAID's timely provision of funding to IOM for OCV and its response to the perceived crucial need to fund referendum poll worker per diems in Southern Sudan (which will be elaborated in [8.2.1](#)).<sup>38</sup> The same official added that USAID explored "every possible avenue" in order to make the referendum happen, despite the difficulties posed by the fact that the US government had imposed sanctions on Sudan.

With its extensive financial resources, USAID was positioned to be among the biggest players in supporting the Southern Sudan Referendum. While visibility is not always synonymous with key support, during the referendum USAID was both highly visible and provided essential assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum. According to one donor, USAID was seen as one of the most significant players in the overall support to the referendum.

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<sup>35</sup> USAID/Sudan, "Strategy Statement 2006–2008," December 2005, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> According to one USAID official, the total budgeted amount for the 2010 elections was \$95 million.

<sup>37</sup> "Support to Southern Sudan Referendum Project Document," UNDP.

<sup>38</sup> Some informants believed that the SSRC would have provided the necessary funds for payments to poll worker staff, if required to.

In line with its strategy to assist in the implementation of the Southern Sudan Referendum as one of the milestones in the CPA process, USAID maintained longstanding agreements with its partners. Two of these, NDI and IRI, had been on the ground in Sudan since 2004 conducting activities in the lead-up to the signing of the CPA and, beginning in 2005, its implementation. In 2008 USAID commissioned a needs assessment for elections support and, in order to support projects focused on electoral administration and international observation respectively, USAID entered into agreements with IFES and TCC in early 2009.<sup>39</sup> Both agreements remained in force beyond the end of the referendum period. At no point was USAID support to the CPA political processes interrupted.

USAID utilized a variety of mechanisms to implement activities through its partners. Implementing mechanisms were chosen based on the type of activity being carried out and the degree to which USAID oversight was required, as well as with consideration of the time constraints posed by the referendum. Whereas the existing CEPPS Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement was appropriate to ongoing program implementation by IRI and NDI, USAID contracted IFES outside the CEPPS agreement mechanism, utilizing an existing IQC for technical and operational support focused specifically on the elections and referenda. The nature of a task order within an IQC allowed for adjustment of service quantities as needs became known. According to USAID, awarding operational support through an IQC was necessary because a contract agreement ensured considerable oversight, including the approval of key staff recruitment and procurement. Given the political sensitivities of the nature of work (direct support to government institutions and the emphasis on large-scale procurement), USAID deemed this level of oversight a necessary safeguard.

In order to expedite funding to IOM for OCV, USAID employed a PIO grant agreement. As grants to PIOs do not require competition, this ensured that that IOM could receive the urgent funds quickly.<sup>40</sup> While grants and cooperative agreements are similar, the former requires less direct involvement by the awarding body. USAID also employed a grant agreement with TCC, awarded after a full and open competition in advance of the 2010 elections.<sup>41</sup> A USAID official stated that the Agency could have funded TCC completely for the referendum, but that it encouraged other donors to also provide funds in order to protect the independence and neutrality of its election observation mission.

USAID's partner agreements were structured with broad objectives, allowing partners to engage in the CPA process in a flexible and adaptable manner. For the referendum, IRI, for example, engaged political parties as a means for larger civic engagement, NDI shifted its focus from broader civic and voter education activities to voter information activities, and IFES was able to work cooperatively with its main interlocutor, UNIRED.<sup>42</sup>

A review of partners' scopes of works demonstrates that each partner had substantial work to concentrate on within specific areas, with almost no overlap in programmatic activities (see matrix in [Section 6](#)). One country director stated that this clear delineation of responsibilities between partners helped avoid competition. Another partner noted that there was no evidence of territorialism between partners, and that the partners involved cooperated and coordinated better in Sudan than any other country in which she had previously worked.

In addition, and in line with its national strategy, USAID supported partners to open offices in Khartoum prior to the 2010 elections by a negotiating implementation protocols with the GoNU. This allowed referendum support to take a comprehensive and national approach to a national process, allowing all aspects of technical support, including advising the SSRC and supporting civic engagement in the North, to be implemented. For the referendum, activities were focused primarily in the South, where 95.5 percent of the voters in the Southern Sudan Referendum were registered. Subsequently, it was in Southern Sudan that the bulk of the implementing partners' civic engagement and operational support took place.

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<sup>39</sup> USAID was one of six donors supporting TCC.

<sup>40</sup> ADS Chapter 308, "Awards to Public International Organizations," p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Agreement information provided by USAID official.

<sup>42</sup> Interviews with partners and review of partner agreements.

USAID/Sudan DG-support activities were discussed and planned during regular partner retreats that were organized by USAID. These events allowed partners and USAID officials to reflect on ongoing programming, to receive inputs from key stakeholders (such as political party and government officials), and to discuss approaches to supporting upcoming CPA milestones. While specific partners may have adjusted their programs as a result of retreats and lessons learned exercises, overall program objectives remained unchanged. According to a USAID official, the broad structuring of program objectives allowed its partners to remain accountable for specific areas of work while allowing sufficient leeway to address emerging needs. USAID would work with partners to fine-tune and update their work plans according to current USAID strategic priorities. These work plans were then generally shared during the partner retreats.

### **8.1.2 USAID Technical Leadership**

Implementing partners stressed that USAID's leadership role vis-à-vis its partners was prominent through its establishment of communication and coordination mechanisms, its consistent attention to partner needs and progress, and its willingness to get involved when partners encountered obstacles. An IFES official noted that USAID was particularly responsive when IFES flagged issues that required urgent approval due to the time constraints posed by the referendum timeline.

USAID facilitated communication between partners by organizing weekly partner meetings, which were conducted in Khartoum and Juba through video teleconferencing. All partners highlighted these weekly meetings as a beneficial forum where information on developments in the referendum process was shared and program activities were coordinated. One partner described these meetings as an initiative by the USAID/Sudan DG Office to create an environment of mutual support and communication and to establish a goal-oriented environment. Partners highlighted that these meetings allowed staff from North-South programs to be linked so that critical information necessary for the development of materials was shared (particularly by IFES), and that, according to one partner "everyone was on the same page."

Interviews demonstrate that partners also took the initiative to collaborate and coordinate activities beyond the USAID-organized fora. IFES and IRI noted, for example, that they cooperated on producing a training video, which was later broadcast on Southern Sudan TV. IRI and NDI officials also noted that they frequently met to discuss progress on programs. These interactions were particularly facilitated by the fact that the IRI and NDI offices were located in the same compound.

In addition, most partners noted that they had frequent direct and open communication with USAID. According to one partner, USAID was clear about what was expected from the partner, by providing what one informant termed as "political imperatives." Simultaneously, USAID was open to technical feedback from the partners. The same partner noted that this exchange was useful for the implementer to understand developments on a policy level while USAID could acquire information from a technical level. Partners also found that USAID offered consistent support and encouragement. IFES noted that when it faced difficulties in managing its relationship with UNIRED, USAID offered to mediate and facilitate its cooperation with UNIRED. This was particularly the case during a disagreement between the two organizations over the SSRB data center (this is elaborated [in 8.2.1](#)). Another partner stated that USAID would frequently "check in" to assess whether it needed any additional support.

### **8.1.3 USAID and Implementing Partners' Flexibility to Respond to Emerging Needs**

One USG official stated that "a key point in USAID's support was its ability to be flexible in funding referendum support." This level of flexibility was reflected in USAID actions throughout the process including its support to IOM for OCV, funding for poll worker per diems when the SSRB was in danger

of not being able to make payments, and granting IFES a waiver that allowed it to purchase goods outside the US and therefore expedited implementation.

The SSRA called for IOM to organize OCV as well as voting in the North of Sudan.<sup>43</sup> This role was written into the SSRA without consulting IOM. Complete funding for OCV was not secured until after the referendum, however. Donors as a whole did not respond to this need or allow for necessary advance planning, and IOM had to go against its own protocol and begin implementation of OCV without a guarantee of funding.<sup>44</sup> According to one USAID official, USAID approached IOM immediately after the release of the SSRA to discuss how IOM would implement its work. Subsequently, USAID was able to provide needed funds in order for IOM to move forward in implementation. Initially, this support came in the form of close to \$500,000 through a sub-contract with IFES. IOM and USAID noted that this payment took considerable time to process. In the interim, however, USAID provided an additional \$3 million.<sup>45</sup> According to IOM, this early funding set staff at its headquarters office at ease, and was a substantial contribution in allowing IOM to proceed with OCV without full funding.

According to IOM, USAID also played an instrumental role in ensuring that the OCV process moved forward despite last-minute SSRC indecision on the number of polling stations in the United States. The day prior to polling, the SSRC expressed its intent to halt OCV until it had determined whether to add polling stations to locations in the United States. USAID officials were able to convince the SSRC at a Policy Committee meeting to allow polling to occur in the already operational stations while the decision for any new ones was being determined. The SSRC agreed, and ultimately no additional stations were established.

The decision to provide funding for poll worker per diems was another significant response by USAID to an emerging need. According to a USAID partner report, the “SSRB consistently lacked funds throughout the referendum process, especially in the areas of salaries and voter registration and poll worker incentives.” Approximately one month prior to the referendum date, the SSRB stated that it would be unable to fully cover poll worker per diem payments. Although the SSRB claimed that it was able to cover the payments before finally requesting assistance, there was escalating concern among USAID and the US Consulate in Juba that funds would not in fact be transferred to the SSRB.

The SSRB had planned to pay the poll workers’ per diems in two installments. In early January the SSRB approached IFES requesting \$5.7 million to cover the second installment. USAID determined that the need was critical and agreed with the SSRB to reimburse the first installment, provided that the SSRB could ensure financial requirements were met. To this end, IFES worked with the SSRB finance team to retrieve signed receipts from poll workers and establish a payroll tracking system. This reimbursement allowed SSRB to move forward with paying the second installment.

One SSRB official stated that the payment to the SSRB was crucial (albeit a protracted process in itself) and that nonpayment would have had serious repercussions on the referendum process. While a few key informants stated that the payments were unnecessary and that, with enough political pressure, the GoSS would have eventually provided the funds, USAID deemed that the situation warranted immediate action and was able to reallocate the necessary funds from IFES directly to the SSRB.

Other partners also took a flexible approach to supporting the referendum. Due to the short referendum timeline and the delayed issuance of formal rules, regulations, and procedures by the SSRC, IFES prepositioned material prior to the SSRC formalization of rules and regulations. In order to do so IFES, in collaboration with UNIRED and the SSRC and SSRB, moved forward with operation plans, including producing procurement options and timelines and drafting the polling manual. According to an IFES official, IFES received approval from the SSRC for printing materials such as the polling manuals and voter registration cards; however, these materials were printed before the actual rules and regulations were issued. The domestic observer groups, the Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections (SuNDE)

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<sup>43</sup> It was later agreed with the SSRC that UNIRED was better situated to implement voting in the North due to difficulties IOM was facing receiving visas for staff for North Sudan.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with IOM officials.

<sup>45</sup> Other donors provided some start-up funding directly to IOM as well.

and the Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections (SuGDE), supported by NDI, observed that there were initial discrepancies between the polling rules and polling manuals in regard to the opening and closing hours of polling center, as well as to whether ballots without an SSRC stamp were considered valid. The SSRC eventually revised the polling rules to be consistent with the polling manual.<sup>46</sup>

Although impeded by a considerably delayed start, IOM was able to ramp up (and down) operations within a limited amount of time.<sup>47</sup> This was accomplished despite the lack of guaranteed funding and amidst unclear and delayed policy on OCV. IFES provided operational plans and technical advice in order to compensate for some of the initial time lost.

According to the SSRA, all registration and polling staff for OCV were to be appointed by the SSRC. Due to an SSRC delay in appointing representatives to each of the eight countries, IOM proceeded with identifying and training a pool of individuals in anticipation of an eventual appointment and contracting of 1,400 staff members. After registration, IOM decided to downsize its operations through reducing polling staff and stations in order to reflect the actual number of registered voters. Though the number of polling locations did not change, IOM deemed only 88 of the 188 voter registration stations necessary for polling after the registration numbers were known, and the number of stations was ultimately cut for polling.<sup>48</sup>

Early in the process, IRI became aware that the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) had little basic understanding of the Referendum Act. According to one interviewee, IRI addressed this unanticipated need by organizing a briefing and a training of trainers for 58 Members of Parliament. The briefing provided them an overview of the SSRA as well as advice on how to communicate effectively with constituents and mobilize them to vote in the referendum. While it was within IRI's scope to work with the SSLA, IRI's actions demonstrated its ability to respond to specific and unanticipated needs of its national counterpart.

#### **8.1.4 USAID and Implementing Partners' Ability to Learn and Apply Lessons from the 2010 Elections**

By and large, the 2010 elections offered USAID and its partners an opportunity to test their management processes, structures, and program approaches before the referendum. In some cases, lessons that were learned by partners and USAID were formulated during lessons-learned exercises and workshops, including those that were external to USAID facilitation such as an UNMIS, UNDP, and EU exercise in which IFES participated. Several of the new approaches were discussed in light of the organizations' experience during the elections, and included revisiting coordinating mechanisms, planning procurement activities jointly, co-locating advisors at the referendum management bodies, procuring training materials with more lead time, and developing and seeking approval on an operational plan before procuring any materials.

USAID also hosted a post-election Strategic Planning Retreat in May 2010. The retreat provided an opportunity for reflection on the elections as well as for discussions on how to move forward to the referendum. The first day of the retreat included a wide variety of stakeholders, including USAID/Sudan DG Office and its partners, UNMIS, observation groups, and political party representatives, to reflect on the weaknesses and strengths of the concluded elections, encompassing the entire process (including legal framework and institutional capacity of electoral bodies). The retreat was also a forum to build consensus between stakeholders on approaches to topics such as political party involvement and civic and voter education versus voter information.

The second day was attended only by USAID/Sudan DG Office staff, partners, and sub-partners and was an opportunity for partner experience and advice to influence USAID program priority focus and

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<sup>46</sup>SuNDE and SuGDE Pre-Polling Statement, January 4, 2011, p. 1–2.

<sup>47</sup>IOM signed an MoU with the SSRC on October 4, 2010.

<sup>48</sup>The downsizing did not affect the number of centers/locations, as voters were still obligated to vote in the center that they had registered in.

address potential gaps in support to the Southern Sudan and Abyei referenda and popular consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. The nuances of support to civic education and political party involvement were topics of particular importance. USAID and partner coordination with, and relationship to, other main players was also discussed, including ways to improve existing coordination mechanisms such as the DWG, Policy Committee, and Technical Committee, as well as how to clarify overall roles in the process through Memoranda of Understanding.

An IFES official observed that one of the most important lessons learned from 2010 election was that delinking its operational work from its policy would allow for improved operational preparations and flexibility. This shift of operational focus to Juba was emphasized during the May 2010 retreat and entailed significant increasing or relocating of staff to the Juba IFES office, including the IFES country director.<sup>49</sup>

In an attempt to provide enhanced operational and logistical support to the referendum, IFES put forward a request for a chartered airplane that could be used for SSRB operations in order to cover areas otherwise unreachable due to poor infrastructure and/or weather. According to an IFES official, the 2010 elections demonstrated that it was important for election officials and IFES to have mobility in the South, where road infrastructure and communications were especially weak. An airplane was hired through Air Serve in November 2010 and operated until early 2011. Between November and February, it made 70 flights, including deliveries of poll worker per diems. SSRB informants repeatedly stated that the airplane allowed them to have “grassroots”-level coverage and to travel to areas that would have otherwise been unreachable.

According to a TCC official, increased funding during the referendum allowed for a larger body of observers, who in turn could cover a wider area of observation. While USAID was one of multiple donors toward TCC observation efforts, USAID increased its financial support to TCC during the referendum from the 2010 elections. The overall result of increased combined support was an increase from 70 observers during the 2010 elections to over 100 during the referendum.

TCC, for its part, made an effort to share findings with the SSRC and SSRB in advance of their public announcement. According to a TCC informant, TCC had not shared its statements in advance with the National Elections Commission during the 2010 elections, which led to occasional conflicts with the Commission when it felt blindsided by the reports. SSRC and SSRB officials stated appreciation for this approach, noting that it gave them an opportunity to address issues or problems and that ultimately it allowed for a more open relationship by avoiding scenarios involving surprises or sudden statements.

Informants noted that the elections offered NDI's domestic partner organization SuNDE a chance to learn and to improve the mechanisms for communicating observation results from the polling center level to the state level. The result was a much smoother process during the referendum. SuNDE also increased communication with security forces during its work in the referendum. According to SuNDE, an increase in communication with the security forces reduced the interference by security personnel in its work. This was an improvement from the 2010 elections when a number of staff had been arrested.

By and large, partners noted a significant improvement with regard to USAID-partner and inter-partner coordination from the elections to the referendum. While according to USAID officials there was consistent partner coordination before the referendum, there was consensus among USAID's partners that much of the improved coordination was due to USAID's leadership and approach to information sharing. According to a number of partners, the weekly meetings were more frequent and regular during the process than they had been during the elections. Furthermore, they were instrumental in ensuring that partners were consistently informed and “on the same page.” Partners also noted that open and prompt information sharing by IFES allowed them to prepare material in advance and thereby positioned them for quick implementation when policy and procedures were eventually formulated or finalized in Khartoum.

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<sup>49</sup> IFES maintained an office and functions in Khartoum as well.

### 8.1.5 Implementing Partners' Success in Implementing Programs as Per Their Agreements with USAID

Officials at the SSRC and SSRB emphasized that the technical and financial assistance provided by USAID and other donors was “indispensable” and that without this support it would have been difficult to run the referendum processes successfully, particularly given that sufficient financial support from the GoNU did not materialize. Despite mutually experienced constraints, such as a compressed timeframe and late policy frameworks, USAID partners were able to implement their programs in line with their agreements. The implementation of referendum assistance was undertaken as a collective effort. This renders it impossible to single out any specific organization for credit for a successful referendum process.

Donors, partners, referendum officials, USG officials, and UN officials frequently mentioned the constructive and high-profile role played by IFES throughout the referendum process. This emphasis is not evident in monetary terms; USAID estimates that it spent close to the same amount of money on referendum administration assistance as on civic participation. The prominent role played by IFES is highlighted by its high-level engagement in the referendum process and its provision of critical operational support that would have otherwise been lacking. One senior USAID official noted that utilizing IFES within the support portfolio was “fundamental to the success” of USAID’s referendum support program. The EU Election Observation Mission final report states that IFES “provided vital technical support.”<sup>50</sup> SSRB officials noted that IFES did a “tremendous job,” providing around-the-clock assistance. In their support, IFES acted as a prominent interlocutor with Sudanese stakeholders, the UN, the donor community, and (through USAID) other parts of the US government.<sup>51</sup>

The efforts of the international community were focused on providing voter information on the referendum process and avoided discussions of referendum options. One key informant noted that donors treated referendum support as a purely technical exercise, and that, as a result, larger questions about the “meaning” and “implications” of the referendum were not addressed in civic and voter education. TCC observed “the absence of a large-scale voter education and non-biased civic education.” In its assessment of the voter information campaign, the EU EOM reinforced this finding, stating that “much of the voter education effort focused on maximizing voter participation, with few voter education activities addressing the consequences of either options in terms of post-Referendum arrangements.”<sup>52</sup>

Many informants argued, however, that the political space to deliver civic and voter education messages on the referendum options could have been interpreted as campaigning for either option. Furthermore, given the charged and tense political atmosphere, civic educators conducting discussions on referendum options would have put themselves at substantial risk. One USAID official expressed that it was not up to the international community to support civic and voter education on the referendum options, and that doing so might have caused the Agency to appear biased in its support.

Overall, the EU EOM also noted “low knowledge of basic voting procedures among voters” in the referendum.<sup>53</sup> However, according to a UNDP report, UNIRED conducted a survey that found “levels of knowledge and awareness of the referendum process to be high among the population regardless of location.”<sup>54</sup> NDI and UNIRED (with BF support) were the main actors in providing voter information. As with overall support to the process, it is not possible to assign relative credit or criticism to how voter education and information campaigns were conducted. It is also important to note that there was no systematic effort in place to measure the impact of the campaign. It was clear, however, that NDI made a strong effort to reach voters with voter information messages and utilized innovative approaches to do so.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> EU EOM Final Report, Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> All IFES interaction with other parts of the US government was through and with USAID.

<sup>52</sup> EU EOM Final Report, Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> EU EOM Final Report, Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Support to the Southern Sudan Referendum External Evaluation Report, UNDP, July 16, 2011, p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> The assessment team was not tasked with assessing UNIRED support to the effort and therefore this is not a comparative statement.

One particularly innovative approach was to deliver messaging through faith-based institutions in the South. This was conducted through Catholic Relief Services and utilized face-to-face meetings and community events. In addition, NDI supported its domestic observation partners SuNDE and SuGDE to conduct voter information activities through face-to-face meetings. National and local radio programming supplemented each of these face-to-face mechanisms, such as the longstanding program *Let's Talk* (through its partner Sudan Radio Service) and Public Service Announcements.

IRI also supported voter education and information efforts through its program to build capacity of political parties. While the core beneficiaries of IRI's programming were intended to be the members of political parties, it found that political parties could bolster voter education and information activities and that material could be disseminated to the wider public. One example of this add-on effect was that a video that IRI produced to train party agents on voting procedures was subsequently edited to be shown on Southern Sudan Television. However, both the EU EOM Final Report and one informant noted that there was little political space for opposition parties to freely conduct referendum activities, despite their official participation in the GoSS-sanctioned Referendum Task Force.<sup>56</sup>

Each USAID partner had a presence in both the North and South of Sudan. While their program activities more or less maintained consistency across Sudan, partners faced different dynamics in each area. In the North, IRI conducted its work in partnership with the Political Parties Affairs Council (PPAC); NDI managed a program through which its partners had to target specific populations of Southerners located in specific geographical areas; and IFES engaged directly with the SSRC.

According to an IFES official, the relationship between IFES and the SSRC was more "difficult" than its relationship with the SSRB. The official mentioned that at one point USAID intervened to smooth relations with the SSRC. IFES officials noted that their work in the North with the SSRC was focused on ensuring that a legitimate policy framework for the referendum existed and that IFES received necessary clearances and approvals in order to allow its operational work to move forward. In its work with the SSRC, an IFES official stated that IFES was a "junior partner" to the UN, and that the SSRC had to be approached diplomatically, as the relationship with the SSRC was more "rocky" than the relationship with the SSRB in the South, where the work was fully focused on operations.

According to an IRI official, working with the PPAC "changed their work," and required it to carry out its activities in partnership with the government body. One of the consequences of working through the PPAC was that IRI was not able to develop direct relationships with the political parties in the North, as any interactions between IRI and the parties were channeled through the PPAC. Another consequence was that the PPAC insisted that invitations to IRI events be extended to all political parties. As a result, IRI's training sessions were attended by over 60 political parties and over 160 participants, which made it "difficult to work in small groups." Another IRI official stated that IRI would have had a better impact on northern political parties had it been able to work either in smaller groups or directly with the parties.

## 8.2 Coordination and Engagement

This section addresses the efforts of USAID and its implementing partners to coordinate their work with other key stakeholders in the Southern Sudan Referendum. This includes USAID's engagement with the UN, donors, and Sudanese officials, as well as other USG actors. It also addresses implementing partners' coordination with the UN and referendum authorities.

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<sup>56</sup> EU EOM Final Report, Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 38.

## 8.2.1 USAID and Implementing Partner Coordination with other Donors, the UN, and other Assistance Providers

In addition to bilateral discussions and meetings, USAID engaged with the international community through three established fora: the Donor Working Group, the Policy Committee (co-chaired by the UN SRSG and the Chairman of the SSRC), and the UNIRED Basket Fund Steering Committee.

Participants described the DWG, a forum in which a wide range of donors participated, as a venue for information sharing, but also a venue where few coordination-related decisions were made.<sup>57</sup> USAID, along with DFID, was described as being an active and willing contributor of technical updates at the DWG meetings. Participants perceived USAID as being “on top of the issues” and providing valuable inputs to the group. However, it was also made clear that the forum did not coordinate the implementation of, or funding for, project activities, as this fell outside the scope of the group. Instead, any coordination efforts among donors at the DWG were limited to establishing common stands on issues to be channeled to the Policy Committee. One USAID official stated, however, that even this function of the DWG was not always effective. According to one participant, the five donor representatives to the Policy Committee were elected at the DWG.<sup>58</sup>

The Policy Committee was a high-level forum co-chaired by the SSRC Chairman and the UN SRSG. Participants included the SSRB Chairman, the SSRC SG, representatives from the GoNU, GoSS, the five representative donors (at the Ambassadorial or donor agency head level), the UNDP Country Director, and observers from IFES, IOM, and the Assessment and Evaluation Commission.<sup>59</sup> Although the stakeholders interviewed displayed a variance in opinion concerning the function of the Policy Committee, there was general agreement that the committee did not serve as forum for decision-making but instead was a venue where, according to one donor, “the SSRC could go on record on key issues.” One USAID official noted that it was important that meetings take place at such a high level, regardless of the specific outcome.

The third mechanism for donors to come together was the Basket Fund Steering Committee (BFSC), a body set up to oversee the UNIRED SSSR Project. As USAID funding for the referendum was not channeled through the basket fund, USAID held observer status in the BFSC. UN and participating donors stated that USAID overstepped its status as observer on several occasions. One UN official stated that USAID’s engagement at the BFSC was “not pleasant” and that USAID made untimely suggestions for changing the Project Document on the issue of providing funding for OCV through the BF. A USAID official stated that USAID had made attempts to convince other donors at a BFSC meeting to provide funding to IOM for OCV, and had engaged members to the BFSC behind the scenes as well.

Despite USAID’s engagement in the coordination mechanisms described above, several donors noted that they did not have a complete understanding of the scope of USAID’s support to the Southern Sudan Referendum and that they found the Agency not fully open in regard to its activities and levels of financial support. One donor stated that having the largest single donor provide funding outside the basket fund created a competitive environment between USAID and the BF donors. This was further exacerbated by other donors’ perceptions that USAID did not share the details of their budget support for the Southern Sudan Referendum.<sup>60</sup> Some donors, however, also expressed appreciation for USAID’s ability to step in and address emerging needs quickly.

A USAID official also stated that two major donors had approached the Agency in order to discuss possible ways of channeling support for the referendum through the USAID mechanisms. According to the official, a practical solution for USAID to apply their funds to the existing USAID mechanisms could not be found, and the donors contributed to the UN BF.

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<sup>57</sup> According to the DWG Terms of Reference, membership of the group was “open to all members of the donor community that are or plan to provide assistance to the referenda and popular consultation process in Sudan.” The DWG was co-chaired by the EU in Juba and CIDA in Khartoum.

<sup>58</sup> The five donors were CIDA, the EU, DFID, the Netherlands and USAID.

<sup>59</sup> Some informants expressed concern that the US government’s level of representation shifted from meeting to meeting; “Final Report—Donor Working Group,” Robin Heffernan, January 31, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> A USAID official clarified that USAID typically does not share these details with outside parties.

One UN official found that it was difficult to gauge what USAID was “putting on the table” and that UNIRED had a hard time compiling an overall budget for the referendum due to a lack of clarity on USAID’s contribution. Another UN official stated that he felt USAID and its partners did not acknowledge the UN’s leadership role in the referendum process under United Nations Security Resolutions SCR 1919 and 1950.<sup>61</sup> Both USAID and UN officials, however, stated that there was considerable communication in developing a SSRC budget in the earlier stages of the referendum preparations. Coordination on developing this budget ended after some time, with an initially incorrectly entered USAID contribution remaining in the budget until after the referendum.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the frictions over budgets and communications with the SSRC, a senior UN official noted that overall there was significant cooperation between UNIRED and USAID, and that that USAID helped resolve a number of “political issues” with the SSRC.<sup>63</sup> According to USAID, UNIRED engaged USAID for help from the US Special Envoy to address the SSRC’s concerns over the printing of ballots (funded by the BF), an issue that threatened to derail the referendum process. USAID was, according to the UN official, also responsive in mediating coordination issues between UNIRED and IFES.

Extensive coordination and cooperation between UNIRED and IFES was required, given that the two organizations engaged with the same national organizations and technical areas of support. As there was an absence of formal division of labor or formal assignment of responsibilities, it was required that IFES and UNIRED coordinate their work on a working level. A USAID official noted that the Agency had attempted to engage the UN in formalizing the relationship between IFES and UNIRED through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Such an MoU would have served as a safeguard against the effects of any breakdown in working-level relationships. Securing this MoU, however, proved too bureaucratically difficult, and the document was never signed.

Outside informal working-level meetings, UNIRED and IFES coordinated their work primarily through regular weekly advisors meetings chaired by UNIRED. In addition, UNIRED co-chaired a Technical Committee with the SSRC and SSRB at which technical issues were discussed and flagged for follow-up. According to one IFES official, the working-level coordination mechanisms could have been greatly enhanced through IFES’ participation in daily meetings that took place in the UN. The official stated that participating in those meetings would have “avoided some of the anxiety, lack of understanding, and communication deficits that sometimes were created during the week.”

A UN official noted, however, that procurement and technical responsibilities were clearly and distinctively divided between IFES and UNIRED, and that agreements on procurement and activities were worked out between the partners even before the appointment of the SSRC and SSRB. According to another UN official, IFES and the UN began to make procurement plans based on their experience of elections, and these plans included details as specific as how materials would be packed and labeled. While there was consistent friction around the UNIRED perception that it was to take a lead role in referendum support, most issues were addressed and coordinated on a working level, a fact acknowledged by both IFES and UNIRED officials interviewed for this report.

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<sup>61</sup> Security Council Resolution 1919 stated that “UNMIS [should] be prepared to play a lead role in international efforts to provide assistance to support preparations for the referendums,” and Security Council Resolution 1950 stated that UNMIS should “provide guidance and technical assistance to the parties to the [CPA], in cooperation with other international actors, to support the preparations for, and conduct of, elections and referenda.”

<sup>62</sup> The budget included a \$5 million contribution by USAID to “staffing.” According to a USAID official, this amount was initially entered incorrectly, but never removed.

<sup>63</sup> In one instance, USAID’s response to the SSRC’s request to the international community for direct funding, particularly for the payment of salaries, caused a notable, though short-lived, misunderstanding between USAID and some donors and the UN. According to a USAID official, there had been considerable discussion and collaboration among USAID and other donors on this issue and how to communicate to the SSRC Chairman that international partners would not transfer funds to the SSRC directly. Subsequently, and based on an understanding that donors were in agreement not to fund the SSRC directly, USAID transmitted a joint letter to the SSRC stating this position. According to a UN official, the issue required intervention by the SRS as the SSRC Chairman was perceived to have withdrawn from engagement with the international community. Despite the technical and material assistance provided by donors, the issue of transferring funds to the SSRC bank account remained a source of friction. The international community was under pressure, especially in the month of October 2010 when the controversy became toxic with press allegations that donors failed to meet their commitments to the SSRC, thus prompting donors to react with a clear message to the SSRC on reservations against a cash transfer.

One issue where IFES-UNIRED tensions were not contained at a working level involved the establishment of the SSRB data center. The data center, supported with technical and material support of IFES, put “IFES advisors at the very center of the management of its data,” including the processing of voter registration data and polling results.<sup>64</sup> An IFES official noted that IFES took a lead on establishing the data center since that organization was already operational and on the ground well in advance of UNIRED and had the necessary resources positioned for immediate assistance. According to a USAID official, IFES’s role in managing the data center made the UN uncomfortable, and the dispute over who would take the lead advisor role on management and technical aspects of the center escalated to the level of the SRSG and the US Special Envoy. According to the USAID official, however, the US Special Envoy felt the dispute should be resolved at a working level, as it ultimately was.

IFES and UNIRED’s support to the SSRC and SSRB required more coordination, cooperation, and flexibility than was required by most other partners. Whereas NDI’s observation and voter information campaign activities could be conducted in parallel with UNIRED-led efforts, IFES’s technical assistance to the SSRC and SSRB could not. Any lack of coordinating would have risked duplication of procurement and material development or resulted in conflicting advice to referendum officials. Despite the institutional frictions between IFES and UNIRED, both organizations were able to maintain a united front when dealing with the SSRC and SSRB. An IFES official noted that the two organizations were cognizant to sort out their differences behind the scenes in order to avoid referendum authorities “playing one of the partners against the other.” A senior referendum official acknowledged, as noted above, that international support to referendum appeared well-coordinated. A SSRB official also noted that UNIRED and IFES provided “assistance in a coherent and transparent” manner.

IRI and NDI engaged with UNIRED and the SSRB through a forum established by the SSRB, targeting all partners managing voter information activities. UNIRED (which implemented voter information with BF resources through a grants mechanism managed by IOM), NDI, IRI, SuNDE, and SUDEMOP (a domestic observer group sponsored under the UNIRED BF and managed by TCC) participated in these meetings. According to NDI officials, NDI coordination with UNIRED was limited to this forum, as NDI’s own activity plans and material were finalized in advance of those of UNIRED. However, according to one UNDP informant, the SSRB-led forum gave the partners an opportunity to discuss messaging but also provided a venue for interaction with the UN. Partners and the SSRB noted that voter information content approval occurred smoothly between the SSRB and relevant partners.

TCC, for its part, coordinated its international observation activities with other international observer groups on a weekly basis. According to TCC and other informants, these coordination meetings were co-hosted by the EU and TCC, and served to share findings and coordinate deployment plans. However, while NDI and TCC officials stated that they coordinated and cooperated effectively in regard to their domestic observer programs, both of their respective sub-grantees, the domestic observer groups themselves, stated that they had very little direct contact and did not coordinate their activities on an institutional level. A TCC official noted that this was possibly due to institutional competition between both observer groups.

## **8.2.2 USAID and Implementing Partner Engagement with Sudanese Authorities**

The SSRC and the SSRB highlighted USAID’s regular and consistent engagement with the two institutions and expressed appreciation for the fact that USAID was always approachable and open in its communications. A senior SSRC official stated that USAID objectives in the referendum were clear: “to get the job done on time and as efficiently as possible in the circumstances.” Another SSRC official was less clear about USAID objectives and stated that there was no protocol between the SSRC and USAID.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> EU EOM Final Report, Southern Sudan Referendum, p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> While there was no implementation protocol between USAID and the SSRC, the SSRC signed off on implementation protocols between itself and IFES, IRI, and NDI.

According to one senior SSRC official, all “international experts,” including USAID at least initially, tended to deal with the SSRB as a separate body from the SSRC. He stated that in bypassing the SSRC, the credibility of the process was jeopardized. He also stated, however, that a few weeks into the process USAID became the “singular exception” and began to maintain continuous communication with the SSRC about its engagement with the SSRB.

A number of UN officials expressed concern regarding the nature of USAID’s direct engagement with the SSRC, perceiving the engagement to be technical and therefore duplicating the role of IFES. One informant, noting that the nature of engagement was “unwelcome,” stipulated that there was no existing mechanism suitable for coordination with a donor providing technical assistance. Other donor and UN informants did not see the level of engagement by USAID to be as problematic. One informant stated that “although USAID’s technical advice crowded the space of advisors, it did not cause too many problems” and that furthermore, USAID was extremely responsive in resolving political issues with the SSRC and smoothing out relations between IFES and UNIREC. SSRC and SSRB informants did not perceive USAID to have overstepped its mandate nor to have provided parallel or conflicting technical advice to the two management bodies.

One USAID official noted that the Agency also regularly engaged political leaders to flag emerging technical issues and to assess the authorities’ level of support to referendum authorities. According to the official, USAID met with GoSS leaders to highlight issues such as the need to establish offices for the SSRB.

IFES’s direct engagement with referendum authorities, as part of its mandate, was extensive. SSRB officials consistently commended IFES for being thoroughly engaged with the referendum process and noted that coordination between the Bureau and IFES was effective. The SSRB noted that IFES was available “around the clock” and always willing to assist. A few SSRB staff members noted, however, the lack of formalized relationship structures between the SSRB and implementing partners, and that an MoU between the SSRB and IFES would have been helpful.

IOM experienced difficulties in obtaining visas and permits for staff members to operate in northern Sudan and as a result it was necessary for IOM to establish a coordination office in Nairobi, Kenya. To supplement the coordination office, IOM maintained a small liaison office in Khartoum to act as a conduit for communication with the SSRC. Specifically, the liaison office was to keep the SSRC abreast of all key activities, seek necessary approval on key matters, and relay SSRC decisions to the field. IOM noted that they “enjoyed friendly and increasingly constructive relationships” with the SSRC OCV focal point(s).

Overall, IOM believed that one of the main challenges that it faced was the need to balance operational practicalities with SSRC ownership. IOM reported that “expectations on the extent of the Commission’s engagement in decision-making on OCV matters were not clearly defined from the beginning and contributed to the Commission’s belief that, at times, there was insufficient Sudanese ownership of OCV.” This issue was specifically evident in regard to staffing. IOM noted that some SSRC country representatives, for example, made decisions, made promises to staff, or appointed new staff without consulting IOM (who ultimately held the contracts for each position).

### **8.2.3 USAID Coordination with United States Diplomatic Efforts**

According to various USG officials, there was considerable interest in and concern for the success of the referendum within the US government. A USAID official stated that it was at times a challenge to manage the demand for reporting. Daily meetings were held at the White House to discuss progress on the referendum. This in turn required a consistent flow of information from the field. This was provided for through regular status updates, which were eventually generated twice a day. USAID and DoS officials stated that the Agency worked with the DoS to prepare these frequent updates; USAID drafted portions of the reports and provided technical reviews of cables before they were sent to Washington, DC.

The Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Crisis Reconstruction and Stabilization Team (S/CRS) team fed field information into the updates. An S/CRS team was placed in Southern Sudan to monitor and report on developments regarding the referendum and, according to a DoS official, S/CRS had up to 27 members in the field. The S/CRS team received training on election observation principles and referendum procedures from IFES, facilitated by USAID. While the S/CRS team fed its monitoring information into updates, USAID officials stated that internal USAID electoral experts had the technical lead on editing and clearing the updates before transmission to Washington. During the 2010 elections, USAID had also had the primary role of collecting field information in Southern Sudan, and subsequently, according to USAID officials, the S/CRS relieved a data collection burden in the South for the period of the referendum. However, USAID officials stated that they frequently had to correct and clarify reporting, as S/CRS team members were not always aware of the technical aspects of the referendum processes.

Officials at USAID and the Office of the United States Special Envoy to Sudan (USSES) also reported that the two offices had a close relationship and that it was helpful that this relationship existed on a staff level, which had been developed during and sustained from the election period. The Special Envoys conveyed key messages and asserted formal diplomatic pressure, while USAID worked behind the scenes to push the process through roadblocks. According to another USAID senior staff member, USAID emphasized informing USSES on key issues and messaging as well as managing expectations on the referendum process. USAID, frequently with IFES and UNIREC experts, regularly provided briefings for the Special Envoys and their staff in order to provide technical background to the on-the-ground situation. According to officials, critical aspects of the referendum process that required urgent action by the SSRC, such as the need to approve the ballot design, were communicated to the Special Envoys to be addressed with the SSRC Chairman.

In at least one instance, the UN contacted USAID to ask the US Special Envoy to address the SSRC Chairman when, for example, a specific roadblock to the referendum appeared on the issue of printing of referendum ballots. In addition, in November 2010, the UN asked USAID to raise the need to deploy vehicles to the Southern states for referendum preparations, as well as the need to rapidly disburse poll worker payments to the county level. The Special Envoy was to address these issues directly with senior GoSS leadership.

Additionally, one Embassy official stated that USAID and Embassy officials met on a weekly basis in Khartoum to discuss referendum preparations and potential actions for the US Embassy to move the referendum process forward. In Juba, Consulate and USAID officials also met very frequently, though on a less formal or regularized basis. The interaction was, according to one senior Consulate official, facilitated by the co-location of the two bodies.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

USAID's referendum assistance was framed by several dynamics that shaped how its support to the referendum unfolded in 2010 and 2011. While some of these dynamics may be unique to Sudan, others may help USAID apply its experiences in supporting the Southern Sudan Referendum to improve electoral assistance elsewhere (including future elections in the Republic of Sudan and Republic of South Sudan).

First and foremost, it was necessary for USAID to deliver referendum assistance under a very constrained timeline. There were just over six months available from the date of SSRC appointment to polling day to produce operational plans, develop rules and regulations, and organize staffing. As noted throughout this report, all significant legal steps necessary to the implementation of the referendum were extremely delayed. The delay required USAID, its partners, and the international community as a whole to hurriedly

assemble support and yet remain extremely flexible as referendum authorities established implementation mechanisms and procedures.

While USAID's support mechanisms were positioned in advance, the mechanisms of the SSRC and SSRB were not. It was important therefore that USAID and its partners strike a delicate balance in their support: proceeding with activities so as to avoid a delay of the referendum while simultaneously allowing Sudanese authorities to take the lead (sometimes with diplomatic encouragement from USAID and the Special Envoys). This balance was particularly evident in the juxtaposition of rapid operational support to the more steady and time-consuming effort of developing relationships with national counterparts.

The referendum process was conducted in an environment characterized by severe political uncertainty. Negotiations on key issues continued between CPA parties throughout the referendum and post-referendum periods. As such, the obstacles faced by USAID and its partners during the implementation of the referendum were not only technical but also political. Ensuring an on-time referendum, therefore, did not only require technical engagement and support, but also considerable political negotiation with, and encouragement to, a range of stakeholders. The very active US Special Envoys, who made frequent trips to Sudan to meet with and encourage the key referendum stakeholders, took predominant roles in this effort.

Additionally, the success of the Southern Sudan Referendum and the CPA was a critical foreign policy priority for the US government. There was strong and bipartisan support in the US Congress for USAID support for the referendum. As a result, USAID benefitted from robust funding for its support to the implementation of the CPA, including the referendum. This strong directive from Washington and subsequent level of funding propelled the Agency into a key position within the larger international community supporting the referendum, making it by far the largest individual donor supporting the referendum.

USAID undertook its efforts in parallel to, and independently of, the UN's referendum support effort (to which other donors provided funding). Given the scope of USAID's programs as well as its positioning throughout the CPA process, it was not a junior partner to the UN effort. However, USAID sought to be engaged with the UN and other donors, recognizing the common goal in the international effort as well as to ensure complementarity of programs and to address gaps in programming. USAID engaged regularly with the UN and wider international community through bilateral meetings, as well as through three formal mechanisms, two of which were chaired and co-chaired by the UN. The three mechanisms did not in fact serve to coordinate programs or allocate resources, and ultimately, coordination occurred at a working level between partners. Furthermore, the UN perceived itself to hold the mandate to take the leadership role on donor coordination. While USAID accepted this role, it did not consider itself to be under the direction of the UN.

USAID maintained a long-term approach to support for the key milestones in the CPA. As such, the Agency had most of its programs and partners well positioned prior to the elections in 2010, unlike the UN electoral support mechanisms that needed to be reestablished in mid-2010. This made it difficult for USAID to fully coordinate activities with the UN in advance, as its UN counterpart was not yet in position.

Another important dynamic that shaped USAID support was the decentralized manner in which the referendum was implemented. The two main branches of the referendum management body, the SSRC and the SSRB, were located almost 750 miles apart, a distance that was made more significant by the infrastructural constraints and political polarities of Sudan. As a result, USAID and its partners engaged the referendum process at two levels, in Khartoum and Juba. Working with the two institutions and engaging in the referendum process at the two respective geographical levels carried unique challenges, opportunities, and constraints to be addressed by USAID and its partners.

As a result of these dynamics, USAID and its partners had to approach referendum support in a flexible, adaptive, and diplomatic manner, finding ways to maximize their effectiveness through engagement with national and international counterparts.

## 9.1 USAID Referendum Assistance Program Management and Implementation

USAID's strategy to support the referendum process as part of much wider support to the CPA process proved effective. As a result of this, USAID was able to field partners from the elections (and earlier) for referendum support. These partners were positioned to provide immediate operational and policy support early in the referendum process, a particularly important advantage given the highly compressed referendum timeline. USAID's partners, in particular IFES, were able to provide immediate start-up assistance to the SSRC, whereas UNIRED did not hold its first operational meeting until two months after the SSRC had been established and the UN Basket Fund SSSR Project Document was not signed by the GoNU until early October 2010.

USAID's strategy, while proven successful in terms of its referendum support, was not, however, clearly formalized in any specific documents. While USAID had a strategic framework in place that prioritized support for the implementation of the CPA process as a whole (including engagement in both the North and the South), the framework does not specifically mention support to the Southern Sudan Referendum nor was the objective of supporting the referendum clearly articulated in other USAID documentation. This did not, however, prevent USAID from implementing a targeted, comprehensive, and successful referendum support program.

In addition to continuity, USAID's programs benefited from very robust funding. This ample funding for USAID support for the implementation of the CPA process was a result of bipartisan foreign policy interest and priority. The resources available to USAID allowed the Agency to support a program that was intentionally designed to cover all major aspects of referendum support, including technical and material assistance to the SSRC and SSRB, voter information, domestic and international observation, as well as support for responsible participation by political parties. With the financial resources at its disposal, USAID could flexibly and proactively address emerging needs such as OCV and payments for poll worker per diems when funding from the Sudanese government did not come through. USAID was able to identify emerging needs and address critical gaps through effective and close monitoring of the referendum process. The effectiveness of this monitoring effort was born from close relationships with referendum officials, networks within the US government, and consistent coordination with its partners on the ground.

Given the volatility, or unpredictability, of the referendum and CPA process, it was important for USAID to allow its partners a certain degree of flexibility in their programs. USAID facilitated this flexibility by structuring partner agreements with fairly broad programmatic objectives and then exerting a significant effort to fine-tune and harmonize annual partner work plans and through regular USAID partner retreats. Additionally, USAID program objectives were structured in a way that ensured there was no competition between partners or overlap of activities. USAID also made appropriate choices in terms of contractual mechanisms. While some of the choices were needs driven, such as the employment of a PIO grant for IOM, the decisions to not be the sole donor supporting TCC's observation mission, and to contract IFES through a mechanism that allowed for a higher degree of oversight, were appropriate to the circumstances.

While USAID was proactive in its management of its partners, it did not interfere with, or constrain, their actions. The USAID/Sudan DG office focused instead on creating a cohesive and well-coordinated program through frequent and consistent information sharing and evaluation of priorities. The highlight of this management approach was USAID's weekly partner meetings, which allowed all programmatic stakeholders to exchange status updates and build synergies between programs. As a result, USAID's partners were able to develop materials and approaches quickly and were able to cross-utilize resources. It was particularly useful for USAID's other partners to get an insight into the quickly developing procedural framework from IFES.

As noted earlier, the USAID program portfolio provided funding for all major aspects of electoral support. Within this portfolio, IFES and IOM provided critical technical, material, and operational assistance, as they supported the referendum process to take place as required by the SSRA. NDI worked to support voter information, which served to help ensure that voters were aware of relevant procedures. NDI and TCC, through their programs to support domestic and international observation, helped to secure overall legitimacy to, and acceptance of, the process. While, according to observer reports, there was limited space for political party activities during the referendum, IRI found a way to leverage its work with political parties to further complement and enhance voter education and information and provide added transparency by training party observer agents.

Partners were by and large successful in implementing their programs. They managed to implement activities despite the constraints posed by tight political timelines as well as varying dynamics and political space between the North and the South. One benefit to having partners situated prior to the elections was that partners could draw on lessons from supporting that process. The experience of the elections allowed USAID and partners to improve their programmatic activities, strategic engagement, and approaches. While USAID held a number of different lessons-learned gatherings, these exercises tended to focus on strategic planning rather than specific lessons for partner programs during the elections. USAID and partners could have benefited from distinct lessons-learned processes with clear and tangible documentation.

IFES, in partnership with UNIRED, developed materials and plans in parallel to, or in advance of, an evolving policy framework. While the separation of operational progress from policy development is not always ideal, given the circumstance of the referendum it was the only way to ensure that materials and plans were positioned on time. This is evidenced by the SSRC revision of polling procedures shortly before polling day in order to ensure that referendum rules were in accord with printed material. While making operational preparations in parallel with supporting an emerging policy framework for the referendum sometimes caused tension between the partners and the SSRC, IFES and its UN counterpart managed to strike a delicate diplomatic balance between their respective spheres of support.

IOM should be credited for managing to implement OCV activities within a severely short timeframe, with unformulated procedures, and despite an absence of full funding. In addition to USAID funding, IOM drew on its own reserve funds, at considerable risk, to ensure activities were accomplished. Within extremely tight deadlines IOM ramped up operations in eight countries, often moving ahead with preparations while the SSRC determined procedure.

International observers noted an absence of wide-scale civic or voter education or campaigning on the referendum options. While there were noted ongoing debates between USAID and its partners on the relative risks and benefits of supporting a public discussion on the referendum options, in the end a decision was made not to support this kind of programming. While supporting a public information campaign on the referendum options would have fit within the programmatic scope of NDI, the decision to focus on an information campaign was appropriate, given the polarized political environment in Sudan. As much of NDI's programming relied on face-to-face, community-level engagement, putting partners in the field to organize public discussion could have put them at risk and jeopardized the public perception of USAID's neutrality. The decision to focus IRI's work on less-controversial programs, such as party agent training and voter education and information, rather than referendum campaigning was similarly appropriate.

## **9.2 Coordination and Engagement**

While some international partners perceived USAID to be overstepping the traditional role of a donor agency with its consistent, direct engagement with the SSRC, this level of engagement was appropriate and needed. Given the need for technical support providers to move very quickly in order to ensure an on-time referendum, a real challenge existed to ensure national ownership of the referendum process. A

senior SSRC official noted that “fault-finders were [ . . . ] rumoring that the process was in effect undertaken by international experts.” Such a perception would have undercut the credibility of the referendum process. While the SSRC asked for direct financial support—a modality of assistance that USAID and the international community did not provide—USAID’s consistent and direct engagement with senior leadership of the SSRC went a long way to ease tensions and develop an understanding for the kinds of activities that USAID could support.

An appreciation and understanding by the SSRC of the constraints of the support that USAID was able to offer was critical, given the accelerated pace at which referendum preparations were unfolding. As noted throughout this report, the international community needed to develop its operational support in parallel to, or advance of, SSRC policy formulations. Under these circumstances, it was important that the SSRC and international technical assistance providers approach referendum preparations in partnership and cooperation. USAID’s efforts to develop a close relationship with the SSRC were a valuable initiative towards developing such a partnership.

USAID’s partners also engaged directly with the SSRC and SSRB, primarily on a working level, in order to jointly develop materials and plans and to seek required approvals. While IFES had a direct and day-to-day partnership with the SSRC, this relationship was more strained, possibly due to the complexities of balancing the urgent operational priorities of the referendum with the need to ensure national ownership of the process. At the SSRB, IFES’s engagement seemed to have been less difficult, perhaps because at that level it did not have to seek to balance its policy work with its operational priorities and could focus solely on the logistics of making the referendum happen. Other partners engaged primarily with the SSRB through an established coordination forum, which also served to connect NDI with the UN’s voter information effort.

While NDI’s cooperation with UNIREC in regard to developing consistent messaging was in principle also important, this level of engagement was also hampered by the fact that NDI had an advanced start in designing and producing material as compared to its UN counterpart. However, coordination was much less critical in terms of voter information than it was in regards to direct technical assistance to the referendum.

In principle, coordination is a critical component for success for any international electoral support of comparable size and number of actors, especially when implementing bodies are involved in similar sectors of support (such as direct support to an electoral institution). Coordination of the South Sudan Referendum assistance, however, was mostly conducted at a working level. It was at this level where most gaps were bridged and differences resolved. Mechanisms established for donors to coordinate among themselves, as well as with the SSRC, did not function to coordinate program activities, acting instead as vehicles for information sharing.

While USAID’s program had already been developed and was fully operational well in advance of that of UNIREC, the need for cooperation, engagement, and coordination with the wider international community was demonstrated by USAID’s effort to communicate a unified stance on direct funding to the SSRC. It was similarly demonstrated through USAID’s efforts to engage donors at an early stage to address the lack of funding for IOM to conduct OCV. USAID’s efforts to gain consensus on these issues through direct discussions with other donors and through engagement in the BFSC were unsuccessful, however, and in fact appear to have caused rifts between USAID and the international community.

Several factors may have influenced the level and quality of coordination between USAID and the wider international community, including the absence of an established “decision-making” forum where key decisions on programming and funding priorities could be made. Other factors may have been that USAID ran an established and comprehensive program in parallel to UNIREC and the BF, to which the other donors contributed, and USAID’s inability to provide specific financial data to other donors on the levels of its support (which was perceived as USAID not being transparent in its activities).

Furthermore, by the time these intended coordination mechanisms were established, the foundational programming decisions had already been made by USAID. The advance planning was accelerated by fact

that USAID had a strong and clear mandate from the US government to ensure the referendum was held on time (within the ongoing support to the CPA) and therefore a directive to move forward. However, any lack of coordination with other stakeholders resulting from this position was not for lack of trying, but rather due to deeper institutional dynamics that were at play. The issue of lagtime may have exasperated UN perceptions that USAID did not respect the UN mandate for overall leadership of the process or did not coordinate effectively.

In the end, with established programs operational and running in parallel, coordination was most critical at the working level, particularly for IFES and UNIRED on technical support. This coordination was channeled through UN and SSRC and SSRB mechanisms such as the weekly advisors meetings, the Technical Committee, and the SSRB voter information forum, but happened primarily on an ad hoc basis between IFES and UNIRED. For the most part, both organizations did an exceptional job of dividing labor between them and maintaining a consistent message with the SSRC and SSRB, especially given that no formal agreement existed between the organizations. In the end, the organizations managed to support a comprehensive and robust referendum assistance program, as both partners had comparative advantages.<sup>66</sup>

One exception to this generally cooperative relationship concerned the SSRB data center. IFES's role in the establishment and operations of the data center infringed on the UN's mandate, as outlined by the UN Security Council, to take the lead in referendum support. The frictions on this issue reverberated up to a policy level.

Furthermore, USAID established itself as holding technical expertise on the referendum process and leveraged its knowledge to benefit the wider USG effort to support the referendum process. Not only did the Agency make substantial contributions to the official information flow to Washington, DC, but it was also able to collaborate with its Embassy in Khartoum, Consulate in Juba, and USSES counterparts to develop approaches to unlock referendum obstacles and employ high-level diplomacy to unlock potential referendum roadblocks. USAID and the Embassy, Consulate, and USSES sought to keep each other well informed of status and details of developments. The direct link between the two bodies allowed for rapid action and created an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to referendum support.

## 10. LESSONS LEARNED

In similar recent electoral processes, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq—countries of relatively comparable US foreign policy interest—USAID support to the processes was in a supporting role to overall UN electoral leadership. In Sudan, the exact position of USAID's relationship, vis-à-vis the UN effort to which other donors contributed, was not clearly defined. While the absence of such distinctions did not constrain overall referendum assistance, a clear understanding by all parties of the relative roles of USAID and the UN could have contributed to enhanced coordination and cooperation between the organizations. Further, while the lack of a formal division of labor between IFES and UNIRED did not hamper referendum assistance overall (as a result of well-established relationships between individuals), a formalized agreement between the partners would have mitigated risks of coordination breakdown.

USAID's approach to long-term engagement had clear benefits to how programs were delivered, especially in light of the short time available for referendum preparations. This approach, combined with broad partner program objectives and an initiative to adapt workplans to reflect political circumstances, was an effective way to manage partner programs.

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<sup>66</sup> For example, UNIRED benefitted from a nationwide and decentralized network of staff and had the clout to organize coordination meetings, such as the Technical and Policy Committee meeting that brought various stakeholders to the table. IFES could rapidly initiate procurement actions and had a strong degree of flexibility and maneuverability.

The USAID DG team was staffed with technical experts from within USAID. Through its interactions with its implementing partners that directly supported the referendum process, USAID gained important insights into the technical and procedural issues as well as potential pitfalls to the implementation of the referendum. The DG team was able to channel this expertise to its US government counterparts to facilitate a coordinated and comprehensive approach to referendum assistance.

USAID's clear delineation between partner programs reduced the potential for inter-partner competition, increasing the likelihood that its partners would collaborate and coordinate their activities successfully.

While USAID, implementing partners, UN agencies, electoral bodies, and stakeholders conducted review of election activities in preparation for the referendum, it appears that the donor community in Sudan as a whole did not conduct this kind of valuable activity. A similar exercise on the donor-UN level could have fostered improved overall coordination and facilitated the early establishment of program priorities.

While multiple fora existed for coordination between USAID, other donors, and the UN, these fora did not serve to coordinate programming, make funding decisions, or divide labor between donors and implementers. Furthermore, there was no forum at which a larger range of stakeholders, such as civil society members and political parties could regularly engage with referendum officials, the UN, and donors. Expanding the coordination fora on a donor level to include early discussion on program priorities and "who does what" could have further streamlined referendum assistance. Similarly, the establishment of a forum at which a wider range of national stakeholders were present may have enhanced the overall transparency of the referendum process.

Policy development was addressed at the SSRC level in tandem with the mobilization of technical and material support, rather than sequentially. This approach was partly the result of supporting a decentralized electoral process with separate electoral institutions or branches, not to mention within an extremely compressed timeline. However, the success of this approach makes it a candidate for replication in similar electoral contexts elsewhere. The success of any such replication would rely on active and continuous engagement between electoral bodies and support providers to ensure that national ownership of the process is not jeopardized and that technical solutions are indeed synched with the evolving policy framework.

## 10.1 Recommendations for Other Elections Assistance Projects

While the Southern Sudan Referendum imposed very specific circumstances on how USAID's referendum assistance could be applied, there are some general lessons learned that could benefit electoral assistance elsewhere.

- In so far as possible, USAID should seek to maintain continuity in programming between electoral events. This will allow electoral processes to be addressed in a timely manner and will afford USAID the benefit of established field relationships and experience.
- Coordination between partners is ultimately facilitated through strong channels of consistent communication, as well as by clear delineation between programs. Similar approaches to cohesiveness in partner programming should be replicated in other electoral assistance packages where multiple DG partners are active.
- Relationships with electoral officials are crucial to the success of any elections process. USAID should ensure that these relationships are developed at all levels of assistance.
- During referendum support, the US government demonstrated substantial commitment to mobilizing all levels of engagement (from a USAID partner-level to a Special Envoy level) for the process. This multi-level approach was enhanced by cohesive information sharing between the government agencies. While this approach can be recommended for a wide variety of international support initiatives, it is particularly recommended for electoral support initiatives where technical and political aspects are interconnected.
- USAID should make every effort possible to coordinate programming and priorities well in advance of an electoral event. Where mechanisms for coordination are lacking, USAID should take the initiative to invite donors and the UN to the coordination "table" and ensure USAID DG program priorities and plans are clearly communicated.

## II. ANNEXES

### II.1 List of Key Informants Interviewed

CIDA	Naher, Suraiya: First Secretary- Development
DFID	Patterson, Mervyn: Governance Conflict Advisor
DFID	Osborne, David: Governance Advisor
DoS	Moran, Roger: Deputy Principal Office S/CRS
DoS	Regan, Martin: Country Team Leader S/CRS
Dos	Walkley, Ambassador R. Barrie: U.S. Consul General Juba (later, U.S. Charge D’Affaires to South Sudan)
DoS	Law, Dawson: Political Officer
DWG-R	Heffernan, Robin: Coordinator
EU	Longatti, Ambra: Deputy Head of Office
EU	Corman, Stefan: Technical Advisor
GOSS Task Force	Kuyok, Kuyok (02/08/2011): Director
IFES	Leyraud, Jerome: Country Director
IFES	Irish, Robert: Program Coordinator
IFES	Patel, Ajay: Referendum Technical Advisor
IFES	Nance, Darren: Deputy Country Director
IFES	Kabel, Niklas: Operations Officer
IOM	Helke, Jill: Chief of Mission
IOM	Labovitz, Jeff: OCV Coordinator
IRI	Antonic, Lazar: Country Director
IRI	Bonner, Franklin: Program Officer
IRI	Milham, Abbas: Deputy Resident Country Director Sudan
Japanese Embassy	Tabuchi, Yusuki: Second Secretary for Political Affairs
NDI	Ghani, Tarikul: Senior Director of Programs/Juba;
NDI	Zeweever, Ans: Country Director-North Sudan.
NDI	Cook, Tracy: Former Acting Country Director
NDI	Stigant, Susan: Former Deputy Country Director
Netherlands Embassy	Docsvic, Nicole: Second Secretary
Netherlands Embassy	Meyer, Dinere: Policy Officer
SPLM	Wani, Henry: Secretary for Training, Research and Planning
SSDF	Richard, Ayine: Member of Executive Committee of the Party
SSRB	Majok, Barnabas: Financial Advisor/Auditor
SSRB	Thich, Biel: Head of Communication Unit
SSRB	Reec Madut, Justice Chan: Vice-Chair SSRC and Chair SSRB
SSRB	Macar, Samuel: Head of Public Outreach
SSRB	Awel, Yolanda: Assistant to SSRB Chairperson
SSRC	Khalil, Mohammed Ibrahim: Chair SSRC
SSRC	Alnjomi.M.O: Secretary General
SUdeMOP	Merekaje, Lorna: Secretary General-South Sudan/Juba
SuGDE	Hussein, Samah: Board Member
Sunde	Rot, Loni: Chairperson
Sunde	Taban, Siliva: Policy and Advocacy Officer;
Sunde	Said, Zarah: Program Officer
Sunde	Asiki, Omer: Finance Officer
Sunde	Elis: Civic Education Officer
TCC	Smith, Barbara: Country Director
TCC	Van de Bergh, Sanne: Former Deputy Director
UNDP	Malik, Azhar: UNIRED Basket Fund Project Manager;
UNDP	Pilapitiya, Thusitha: Advisor/Team Leader, Democratic Governance Unit
UNIRED	Kadima, Denis: Director
UNIRED	Fitzgerald, Meaghan: External Relations Advisor
USAID	Aloui, Lazhar: Elections & Political Processes—Senior Advisor
USAID	Choe, Kyung: Former DG Team Leader
USAID	Da Siliva, Brian: Policy Advisor

USAID	Reed, Allan: Special Advisor
USAID	Taylor, Sara: Senior Democracy and Governance Advisor
USAID	Freeman, Andrea: Sudan Program Analyst
USSES	Flacks, Marti: North/South Team Leader
USSES	Tucker, Joseph: North/South Team Member
Rift Valley Institute	Aly Verjee: Senior Researcher

## 11.2 List of Documents Consulted

Donor Working Group Report. January 2011

Aegis trust, African centre for Justice and peace studies, Arab coalition for Darfur, Cairo Institute for human Rights Studies, Collaborative for peace in Sudan, Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (Sudan), Cordaid, Darfur consortium, The Enough Project at the Center for American Progress, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Global Witness, Human Rights First, ICCO, International Federation for human rights (FIDH), International Refugee Rights Initiative, Italians for Darfur, KacE - al-Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment and Human development (Sudan), Pax Christi IKv Refugees International standard Action Liaison Focus (Sudan), Save Darfur Sudan democracy First Group Sudan, Forum Global Campaign Members (Norway), Sudan Human Rights monitor Sudanese, & Network for Democratic Elections Waging Peace. Renewing the pledge: RE-engaging the Guarantors to the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement. 2010

Chatham House. Decisions and Deadlines A Critical Year for Sudan. January 2010

European Union (EU). Election Observation Mission(EOM) Final Report Southern Sudan Referendum. 9–15 January 2011

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Government of Southern Sudan. Background Note on GoSS Aid Strategy—Final. 2011

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## 11.3 Scope of Work

### Assessment of USAID Support to the January 2011 Southern Sudan Self-Determination Referendum

#### Scope of Work

Estimated Evaluation Period: June 6—August 20, 2011

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this evaluation is to document and ascertain the impact and effectiveness of USAID/Sudan's comprehensive assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum on Self-Determination. Aspects of assistance that must be evaluated include program design and management, program portfolio integration and complementarity, implementing partners' performance in achieving program objectives, USAID role in program coordination and technical leadership, USAID leveraging of diplomacy and donor coordination, and USAID direct engagement with the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and the South Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB). Evaluation findings and recommendations will focus on identifying lessons learned, possible gaps and successful practices that could inform future electoral assistance in the Sudans and elsewhere.

#### *Assistance Provided*

USAID support for the Southern Sudan Referendum on Self-Determination was part of USAID's overarching goal of supporting the implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This included support for the political processes mandated by the CPA, including the 2008 Southern Sudan census, the April 2010 nationwide elections, and the Southern Sudan Referendum. USAID approached the CPA political processes not as individual events, but as a multi-year, comprehensive progression of events with an end goal of democratic transformation. Therefore, USAID designed programs that could foster the building blocks of democratic practices and culture while at the same time supporting each of the CPA processes. As a result of this approach, USAID resources and implementing partners were prepositioned to provide timely support for the Southern Sudan Referendum.

USAID support directly related to the planning and conduct of the Southern Sudan Referendum was nationwide and covered all main areas of electoral assistance under referendum administration, voter outreach and referendum observation and included:

- technical and material assistance to the SSRC (based in Khartoum) and SSRB (based in Juba) to enable them to prepare for, administer, and oversee the referendum process;
- support for civic participation, including voter education and domestic observation; and
- support for international observation.

#### **I. Referendum Administration**

USAID implemented this component through its partner the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). USAID also contributed timely funding to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support the conduct of out-of-country registration and voting (OCRV). OCRV was implemented in accordance with the Southern Sudan Referendum Act (SSRA) in the eight countries of Australia, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, United Kingdom, and the United States.

## **Technical Advice and Expertise**

IFES expert staff, including part-time and full-time technical advisors, advised the SSRC and SSRB on any and all matters related to referendum planning and implementation. IFES also traveled throughout Southern Sudan to advise state- and county-level committees. The provision of technical assistance was coordinated with the United Nations and other international contributors through regular formal and informal consultative sessions.

## **Material Assistance**

IFES provided and furnished office space and all necessary office and ICT equipment for the SSRC and SSRB in Khartoum and Juba. IFES also provided ICT equipment to State High Committees and County Sub Committees in Southern Sudan, including reliable, high quality internet connectivity. In close coordination with the SSRB, IFES has also equipped and furnished Data Centers in Juba and Khartoum that allowed critical voter registration and vote tabulation services and dissemination of results. In addition, IFES provided a chartered fixed-wing aircraft to facilitate the travel of the SSRC and SSRB throughout Southern Sudan to oversee referendum activities and troubleshoot as necessary.

## **Capacity Building and Training**

IFES designed (in coordination with the UN technical advisors) and printed voter registration and polling and counting training manuals, training voter registration cards, and polling training kits to instruct referendum officials in correct voter registration and voting and counting procedures. Working closely with the UN, IFES organized training sessions at the Khartoum level in the North and the Juba and state levels in the South to prepare referendum officials for the conduct of voter registration and polling duties.

## **Voter Registration**

With USAID funding and under IFES's direction and supervision, fraud-proof voter registration cards for the referendum were designed and printed for use both inside and outside of Sudan. The cards and accompanying forms were developed in conjunction with the SSRC and SSRB and other international advisors and included adequate security features to ensure registration integrity. IFES procured and supplied specified quantities to all registration locations, including through IOM to OCV centers. The unquestionable success of voter registration was a key factor in ensuring a timely referendum and discrediting calls for referendum delays.

## **Polling**

USAID funded the procurement of polling kits used during the voting period. The kits contained nearly 40 items in adequate quantities and quality to ensure orderly voting. Kits included indelible ink, numbered ballot box seals, and various forms and supplies. The procurement of polling materials was a race against time given the extremely compressed referendum timeline.

## **II. Voter Awareness**

USAID-funded voter outreach was implemented through the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). In addition, USAID funding allowed the International Republican Institute (IRI) to work in partnership with the Sudanese Political Party Affairs Council and offer information and training on legal frameworks, campaigning, and observation guidelines. Given the extreme logistical challenges in Southern Sudan and high illiteracy rates among the electorate, educating voters was exceptionally important to ensure an inclusive and successful process. Equally important was awareness among political parties to ensure their responsible participation in the referendum process within the framework of the SSRA, which provided "registered political parties . . . the right to explain, express, disseminate, and announce their views on the two referendum options through various media and publication channels."

## **Referendum Act Discussions and Briefings**

Between July and October 2010, NDI conducted Referendum Act Discussions in each of the 10 southern state capitals to educate and engage citizens and citizen groups on the SSRA. These one-day dialogues covered key provisions in the Act and encouraged civil society organizations to think about their role in the referendum process. IRI briefed political parties in all ten southern states on the SSRA and explained key provisions on important topics such as voter registration, structure and role of the SSRC, referendum observation and information campaigns. The IRI briefings were accompanied by a brief SSRA guide, which was distributed throughout the South. IRI conducted similar briefings and distributed Arabic language copies of the guide in all ten northern states.

## **Voter Information Dissemination**

NDI, in collaboration with Sudan Radio Service (SRS) produced 13 programs and 13 public service announcements to educate audiences about the Southern Sudan and Abyei referenda. The programs, produced in English, Simple Arabic, Khartoum Arabic, Nuer, and Dinka, were broadcast on SRS short-wave, Miraya FM, and 13 other community stations. NDI also worked in consultation with the SSRC, the SSRB, and civil society networks to develop and distribute voter information materials on the registration and polling processes. These materials included nearly 700 flipchart training kits, 46,000 education supplements, and 95,000 fliers to encourage citizens to register and vote. Through NDI, USAID provided more than 50 small grants to NGOs to conduct market day activities, road shows, community leader briefings, and public events. A sub-grant was also issued to Catholic Relief Services to carry out voter information dissemination through faith-based networks, including the seven catholic dioceses of Southern Sudan, 28 dioceses of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), and various interchurch committees.

## **Referendum Campaign Training**

IRI assisted political parties in their campaigns under this provision of the SSRA with regional and state-level trainings on referendum campaign planning and implementation. The trainings were grassroots-focused and emphasized activities parties could conduct to mobilize the supporters of their referendum choice to register and vote.

## **Code of Conduct and Party Forums**

IRI worked with the major political parties in the South to develop a Code of Conduct for referendum campaigns. The Institute also used such multi-party forums at the state-level to help parties better coordinate activities and share information, discuss important referendum issues, and introduce parties to other stakeholders in the referendum process including state referendum officials, civil society organizations, and observer groups. IRI also provided political parties in northern Sudan with unique opportunities to meet and consult on the referendum process.

## **Party Agent Trainings**

IRI used USAID funding to provide party agent training in the North and the South for party representatives acting as domestic observers on behalf of one of the two referendum options during voter registration and polling. IRI developed a party agent manual and training video in collaboration with IFES for use in the trainings.

### **III. International and Domestic Observation**

Robust and credible observation by both international and domestic observers is important in any electoral process, but was even more critical in the context of the Southern Sudan Referendum where commitment to the process and predisposition of all stakeholders to accept results were in doubt. USAID supported the Carter Center to conduct independent, long-term international observation in what was the Center's largest mission in its history of worldwide electoral monitoring. USAID also supported NDI's partnership with the Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections (SuGDE) in the North and the Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections (SuNDE) in the South of Sudan to conduct domestic observation.

## **International Referendum Observation**

16 Carter Center long-term observers (LTOs) deployed in teams of two throughout Sudan to monitor preparations and track the progress of referendum-related political developments. LTOs were on the ground throughout the referendum process, arriving prior to the start of voter registration, and will remain in place until the formal conclusion of the CPA in July 2011. To augment the LTO presence, the Carter Center deployed an additional 30 medium-term observers (MTOs) to assess the political environment before, during, and after the voter registration period. Additionally The Center deployed more than 40 short-term observers (STOs) to monitor the voting, counting, and tabulation periods. The Center also deployed an additional 30 MTOs and STOs to monitor OCRV in all eight countries.

The Carter Center issued numerous public statements at key intervals of the referendum process. The Center's delegation was led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, and former Prime Minister of Tanzania and Judge on the East African Court of Justice Joseph Sindi Warioba. The delegation's profile and engagement during polling contributed to the confidence of the SSRC and acceptance of referendum results by all stakeholders.

## **Domestic Referendum Observation**

With USAID funding, NDI assisted SuGDE and SuNDE in their coordinated observation activities throughout Sudan. SuGDE recruited, trained, and deployed observers for the voter registration and polling periods in all 15 states of northern states. SuNDE developed all training materials and managed the communication center for the polling and counting period. SuNDE and SuGDE also developed and released joint statements for the voter registration and polling periods.

SuNDE and SuGDE deployed 500 observers in the South and 200 in the North to monitor voter registration. During polling, SuNDE deployed 2,500 observers to 76 of the 79 counties in Southern Sudan, including some particularly hard-to-reach counties. SuGDE deployed more than 300 observers in all 15 northern states.

## ***Scope and Tasks***

The primary task of the evaluation team is to produce a report for USAID/Sudan that 1) maps out financial and technical assistance provided, 2) probes USAID and implementing partner effectiveness in using material assets and expertise in furtherance of program objectives, 3) identifies gaps and significant achievements that may inform future assistance, 4) examines the appropriateness of USAID programmatic assistance and decisions taken, including funding decisions, that contributed to project outcomes; and 5) recommends immediate and long-term actions to either rectify or replicate particular development practices in the context of Sudan and future USAID assistance to electoral processes.

The evaluation will need to map out all USAID activities and engagement supporting the referendum and assess their impact on the achievement of a peaceful and internationally recognized process. Themes guiding the evaluation effort, and possibly structuring the evaluation report, consist of the following:

1. USAID planning and prepositioning of technical and financial support.
2. USAID management, oversight, and coordination of related project activities.
3. Appropriateness of USAID programmatic assistance and decisions taken, including funding decisions, that contributed to project outcomes.
4. Engagement of USAID officials and technical experts with Sudanese stakeholders in support of assistance provided.
5. Synergies of collaboration with U.S. Government diplomatic efforts.
6. USAID and partner coordination with other donors and implementers in the international community.
7. USAID innovation and agility in taking actions and measures in response to emerging needs during a very short referendum timeframe.
8. Individual implementing partner performance against set objectives.

9. Achievements USAID could consolidate and build upon in the transition period immediately before and after the end of the CPA.

## **Methodology**

The evaluation will first be informed by a desk study of existing documents and reports, including project documents and agreements, project periodic reports, implementation protocols, referendum planning and operations documents, observer statements and reports, USAID documented interviews, USAID and partner public information, and external analysis regarding the political, social, and technical context of the referendum, etc.

Immediately following the desk study, the evaluation team will present USAID with a detailed field research methodology. The methodology will be expected to largely rely on interviews with key informants from, *inter alia*, the SSRC, the SSRB, USAID, USAID implementing partners, Sudanese counterparts (such as SuGDE, SuNDE, the Political Party Affairs Council, the Government of Southern Sudan), and the international community, including other donors, the UN, and other international technical assistance providers. The list of key informants must be coordinated with and approved by USAID in the course of methodology discussions.

## **Deliverables**

1. Detailed evaluation plan including schedule of activities and team composition
2. Annotated bibliography based on desk review conducted by evaluation team.
3. Methodology, including detailed list of key informants (as informed by the desk review)
4. Annotated report outline (before debriefing or presentations take place)
5. Draft final report for USAID comments (before consultants leave Sudan)
6. Final report

## **Team Composition**

At minimum, the evaluation team must include:

- 1 USAID staff member with expertise in elections and political processes.
- 1–2 senior electoral experts, each with significant knowledge and experience in at least one area of electoral assistance (electoral administration, observation, education, etc.). At least one of the experts must be familiar with the Sudan context and operational environment.
- 2 Sudanese with knowledge of and experience in development assistance, in particular as relates to the CPA and electoral processes. Ideally, one of the two experts would be based in Khartoum.

## MSI Estimated Level of Effort (LOE)

LOE is approximately 25 days for the Sudanese experts and 30 days for international experts. MSI, in consultation with the expert team, will present for USAID approval a schedule with dates for preparatory work, field research and report writing. MSI will be responsible for taking the lead in making any logistical arrangements (i.e., accommodation and transportation) as well as setting up meetings for team members (in both Khartoum and Juba).

<b>Tasks</b> <b>Work Days</b>	<b>International Experts</b>	<b>Sudanese Experts</b>	<b>Timeline for Completion</b>
(6-day weeks in Sudan) 5 day work weeks outside Sudan			
<b>Initial Preparation</b> Review advance background documents, prepare desk review and in-country methodology, travel days	2 - travel 10 - prep (JE = 10 days; NL = 10 days)	7 - prep—desk review and setting up interviews (AM = 7 days; TWM = 7 days)	Desk review period - June 6–June 24
<b>In-Country Evaluation</b> Initial briefings, meetings, field visits, draft report preparation and debriefings.	12 (additional days TBD as per desk review)—JE = 12 days; NL = 12 days	12 (TBD)	Tentative dates: July 25–August 6
<b>Return Travel</b>	2		
<b>Final Report Preparation in U.S.</b> Incorporate collective Sudan feedback, complete final report, and submit to USAID Education Team Lead.	4	1	
<b>Total for each Evaluation Team member</b>	30	20 (TBD)	

## Period of Performance

May 25, 2011—August 30, 2011.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> This end date takes into account the submission of the consultants' final report (incorporating feedback from USAID and others as appropriate).