



UNDP/UNSOM INTEGRATED ELECTORAL SUPPORT GROUP (IESG) TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA

NIEC holds 2015-2021 reflections retreat



From 24 to 26 January, the NIEC, supported by IESG, held an all-staff retreat to reflect on its performance since it was established in 2015. The objective was to look back at achievements and identify areas for improvement.

The outcome of the retreat will help the NIEC to enhance its institutional capacity and develop a five-year strategic plan (2022-2026), as it prepares to conduct universal elections in 2024/25.

HIGHLIGHTS

- NIEC holds 2015-2021 reflections retreat
- 2021 indirect electoral update
- Project board approves cost extension until December 2021
- Ministry of Finance presents electoral budget to international community
- The UN Electoral Task Force established
- National Elections Security Task Force prepares for elections
- Women push for 30 per cent quota in parliament

Project board approves 2021 cost extension



On 16 December 2020, the UN Joint Electoral Support Programme for Support to Universal Suffrage Elections in the Federal Republic of Somalia held a project board meeting to share 2020 progress updates and the plan for 2021. The board approved the cost extension for one year, from January to December 2021, for continuation of the support extended to the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) to fulfil its constitutional mandate of preparing and conducting universal suffrage in 2024/25.

2021 indirect electoral update

On 27 January 2021, Somalia's Federal Member States (FMS) Jubaland and Puntland nominated their State-level Electoral Implementation Teams (SEITs) and called for urgent dialogue between federal and state leaders to resolve disagreements on implementation methodology for the indirect electoral process. On 30 January, President Farmaajo declared his intention to host in Dhusamareb, from 1 to 3 February, a consultative forum with FMS leaders, followed by an address to update both Houses of Parliament on the federal elections, on 5 February. Also, on 27 January, the Federal Electoral Implementation Team (FEIT) issued a press release referring to its electoral legal basis and mandate as per the 17 September 2020 National Consultative Agreement, which was ratified by Parliament on 1 October 2020. FEIT emphasized its readiness to conduct elections as the necessary electoral procedures are completed and called for the elections to be held on time.

On 28 January, President Farmaajo signed a resolution that was passed by the House of the People on 27 June 2020, allocating 13 seats to the Banadir region, thus increasing from 54 to 67 the number of seats in the Upper House (UH). (A change in the number of UH seats requires an amendment to the provisional Constitution).



Roadmap to achieve universal suffrage

On 27 January, IESG held a meeting with the NIEC Board of Commissioners and senior Secretariat staff to discuss the process to develop the 2024/25 roadmap, analyse related assumptions, and assist the NIEC with their internal consultations on the development and implementation of the roadmap to achieve universal suffrage.

Construction of NIEC compound

On 10 December 2020, construction of the NIEC hard wall warehouse was completed by UNSOS. The handover to the NIEC will be organized during the first quarter of 2021. The new facility, realized with funds provided by UNSOM and the Government of Japan, will enable the NIEC to put an asset management plan in place to store and manage electoral materials as well as to re-utilize equipment for future electoral operations.

Capacity building for NIEC staff

IESG provided a number of capacity building/training opportunities to NIEC staff to support operations, including: performance management and training development for the Human Resources Department (14 December 2020); procurement evaluation procedures (21-28 December 2020 and 18 January 2021); electoral materials supply chain management training (28 December 2020); M&E plan, data collection and reporting (2 December 2020); managing teams (7-10 December 2020 and 19 January 2021); ICT (six weekly sessions in December 2020 and January 2021); and security training (10 and 13 December 2020).



Mogadishu: 10 December 2020: IESG and UNSOS staff brief NIEC security staff on use of spike strips

Ministry of Finance presents electoral budget to international community



IESG held several meetings with the Ministry of Finance in late December 2020 and January 2021, sharing its initial draft budget estimates and assumptions on the indirect electoral process. These meetings resulted in a revised comprehensive draft elections budget, totalling approximately US\$15.5 million including \$2.5 million for electoral security.

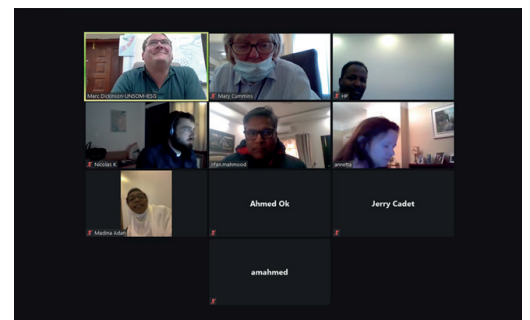
On 17 January, the Minister of Finance presented the budget and explained its major components to officials representing Somalia's international partners, including the UN. The Minister indicated that the amount FGS could contribute towards the electoral budget would be confirmed.

International community representatives reiterated that support to the electoral budget would be conditioned by the resolution of all outstanding political issues around elections, including a confirmation on how women's 30 per cent quota would be achieved.

IESG engages with the FEIT

In January, IESG met with four of the six sub-committees established by FEIT, with a view to provide further support once the outstanding political issues are resolved. The meetings aimed to establish preliminary contacts, provide an understanding of FEITs planning and level of operational readiness, and their support requirements.

FEIT's requirements mainly focus on logistical and technical support for their staff and advocacy to encourage the electoral stakeholders to respect the 30 per cent quota for women's seats in the federal parliament.



Coordination meetings of the electoral assistance partners



In January, IESG initiated a weekly coordination meeting of key electoral assistance partners and the UN, in order to ensure complementarity of support to the electoral process. Partners include the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Creative Associates International/BUILD and the political branch of the African Union.

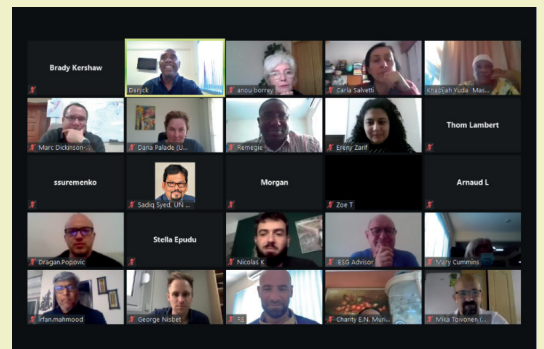
Both the UN and assistance partners are supporting a range of activities related to women's participation in the electoral process, including: training of women candidates; training of civil society observers; establishment of Women's Situation Desks in the JOCs; training of Somali police to ensure protection of women candidates and delegates; support extended to the task

force of 60 women and men trained in conflict resolution and electoral observation, related to the work of the Goodwill Ambassadors; establishment of the Election Situation Room platform and support CSO leaders, an advocacy coalition and women candidates to develop strategies for engagement and mobilization of key stakeholders and powerbrokers at FGS and FMS levels to campaign for the 30 per cent women's quota in parliament; monitoring of human rights incidents and other issues in the electoral process; and operational planning, procedures and training support.

The UN Electoral Task Force established

On 12 January, SRSG Swan chaired the inaugural meeting of the UN Electoral Task Force (ETF), which brings together UN entities to facilitate the provision of coordinated assistance to the electoral process in Somalia.

The ETF, chaired by IESG, will meet weekly to share information, analyze and address challenges, and formulate recommendations to the UN senior leadership. IESG will compile a 'UN Weekly Electoral Update' document for internal UN circulation, to provide a summary of main electoral events, as well as an overview of the UN system-wide preparatory and support activities to the electoral process.



Screenshot of participants in the ETF meeting on 26 January 2021



In preparation of engagement with the indirect electoral implementation committees, IESG has begun drafting and updating a number of support documents, including: drafts of the concept of operations; operational and logistic plans; a code of conduct for electoral observers, candidate agents and media; a code of conduct for electoral officials; draft procedure for selection groups (elders and civil society); procedures for polling and counting for the House of the People elections; procedures for the electoral dispute resolution process; and a briefing pack for international observers.

In collaboration with UNSOM Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group, IESG is also preparing communications products to help raise awareness and understanding of the electoral process.

Electoral security preparedness

Furniture and equipment were delivered by IESG to assist with the establishment of the Joint Operations Centres (JOCs). JOCs are a key capability in the national security plan supported by IESG in each of the constituencies where voting will take place. Training of JOC staff is being coordinated through the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) Training Working Group. The project is supported through the UN Peacebuilding Fund.



Electoral security (cont.)

Tactical Motorola radios have been procured and are arriving in Mogadishu, to be configured into packages for each FMS/Banadir JOC. Trained Somali Police Force (SPF) technicians will install the equipment, and dedicated trainers will coach users on proper functioning of hand-held radios.

On 21 January, a Concept for Women's Situation Desks (WSD) was presented by FBA to the NESTF Working Group meeting. IESG will be working with FBA to support the establishment of Women's Situation Desks in the 12 JOCs that plan, coordinate and manage security operations for elections around the country. **Women's Situation Desks** will ensure that reports and complaints of electoral violence against women, including harassment and intimidation, are reported, and addressed properly.

National Elections Security Task Force prepares for elections



IESG supported the organisation of meeting held on 13-15 December, which brought together 60 participants from FGS, all FMS, and security forces and institutions. The SPF Commissioner chaired the meeting, and each police Chief from all FMS including Banadir made presentations on security preparations.

The UN (UNSOS, IESG), AMISOM and Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA)/Sweden outlined their support. FBA provided details on the proposal to include a Women's Situation Desk in each of the JOCs. A revised national elections security plan and budget was presented, and minor changes were suggested. Following the NESTF meeting, a Working Group on Training held virtual

meetings on 23 December and 21 January. The working group, led by NESTF Secretariat, will plan, schedule, and coordinate key trainings in coordination with AMISOM, IESG, UNSOS, UNSOM/UNPOL and Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA)/Sweden. The JOCs will be trained by AMISOM. The meetings covered the inclusion of the Women's Situation Desks in each JOC, which will be trained by FBA Sweden.

Women push for 30 per cent quota in parliament



IESG initiated a series of meetings with FEIT's Head of Gender Relations, who leads the efforts to ensure that women will be indeed allocated a minimum of 30 per cent of seats for both Houses of Parliament. The FEIT gender focal point emphasized that the support of the international community would play a major role achieving the women's quota as candidates, delegates, and members of the various electoral committees, and eventually members of the Parliament.

In collaboration with IESG, UNSOM Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group is producing a series of ten social media-friendly videos reflecting Somalis' perception of the need to include women in the upcoming electoral process and beyond - in all decision-making mechanisms and areas of life.

In November 2020, the UN Gender-Elections Task Team (GETT) was established to define a common UN approach to gender equality and women's participation in the 2020/21 elections and adopt a strategy to make these topics a priority. Since last November, the GETT members - UN entities with shared mandates such as UNDP, UN Women and UNSOM (IESG, Gender, Political, Human Rights and Strategic Communications) have coordinated their efforts to support the establishment of the Goodwill Ambassadors to promote the 30 per cent women's representation in the 2020/21 electoral process including the electoral committees and federal parliament. Members of GETT reported that civil society organizations advocating for women's rights expressed concerns over the delay in launching the Goodwill Ambassadors initiative, which requires appointment by the federal government.

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