

NEWS LETTER

June-July 2019

Support to Universal Suffrage Elections
in the Federal Republic of Somalia

UNDP / UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) to the Federal Republic of Somalia

IESG News Updates

NIEC attended AU workshop on electoral security and dispute resolution



The Chairperson NIEC addressing the workshop on Electoral Security and Electoral Dispute Resolution. Kampala, 17-20 June 2019. (Photo credit: AMISOM)

In collaboration with the African Union (AU) and supported by IESG, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) organized from 17 to 20 June a workshop on electoral security and dispute resolution, together with other government officials, Somali security actors and the AU's Assistance Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Given threats of extremist

forces to undermine the elections as well as the preliminary security architecture of the country, the conduct of safe and peaceful elections in 2020 will be a major milestone for the Somali security actors in conjunction with the AMISOM troop contributing countries. A coherent and integrated security coordination mechanism called the

Highlights

- ♦ 10 June: NIEC-IESG electoral information sharing meeting
- ♦ 12-14 June: NIEC-IESG bilateral donor engagements in Nairobi
- ♦ 17-20 June: NIEC attended AU workshop on electoral security and dispute resolution
- ♦ 2-3 July: Sub-Working Group Meeting (SWG-3) on Electoral Support
- ♦ 7 July: NIEC meeting with Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs and Security on electoral law
- ♦ 7-8, 10 July: NIEC meetings with electoral stakeholders (political parties, CSOs)
- ♦ 8-14 July: Induction training for NIEC newly recruited staff
- ♦ 15-16 July: IESG Staff Retreat
- ♦ 20 July: Parliament established an ad hoc committee to review the draft Electoral Law

National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) which includes key security actors from the federal government, the federal member states, the NIEC and AMISOM will lead security planning and coordination for voter registration and other electoral activities across the country.

Update on election-related legislation

After the Somali Cabinet had submitted the draft electoral bill to the Parliament on 20 May, the Parliament established on 20 July an ad hoc committee to review the draft. IESG has provided detailed comments and continues to hold discussions with NIEC to improve technical aspects of the electoral bill and highlight articles of concern. The NIEC envisages meetings and discussions

with the parliamentary ad hoc committee and MPs. If requested, the UN's Inclusive Politics programme is ready to provide technical support to the parliamentary ad hoc committee. The adoption of the Electoral Law is essential to prepare for universal suffrage elections, including voter registration, in accordance with the Federal Government's timeline as stipulated in its

political road map.

The draft Amendments to the Political Party Law were also submitted to Parliament on 20 May. To date, it has not yet progressed into its first reading. The Political Party Law is particularly important with regard to the official registration of political parties.

NIEC-IESG electoral information sharing meeting



Somali electoral stakeholders attending NIEC-IESG monthly electoral information sharing meeting, Mogadishu. 10 June 2019. (Photo credit: IESG)

On 10 June 2019, the NIEC and UNSOM's Deputy SRSR co-chaired an electoral information sharing meeting for international stakeholders and electoral assistance providers. The NIEC Chair Halima Ismail gave an update on the NIEC's preparations to hold the 2020 general elections in Somalia.

The NIEC Chair informed that the field identification and verification of potential voter registration sites has taken place in South West State, HirShabelle, Galmudug and in Banadir. Consultations are ongoing to also start the field verification exercise in Puntland and Jubbaland. She also highlighted that the NIEC has developed a comprehensive

teaching curriculum for voter education to reach and empower a diverse group of Somali citizens. The NIEC has issued to date temporary registration certificates to 50 political parties.

Ms. Hiroko Miyamura, Chief of IESG, briefed that NIEC has made huge strides in identification of potential voter registration sites and IESG provided technical, operational and logistic support to the exercise. She emphasized that funding for the voter registration exercise will have to be made available in a timely manner later in 2019 and that IESG will work closely with NIEC to prepare a draft budget for voter registration.

She stressed that impartial, safe and secure premises is essential for NIEC to conduct smooth electoral operations. On the electoral security task force, a project proposal will be submitted to SDRF for approval to support security coordination at national, federal member state and local level. On the electoral law, there are provisions IESG would like amended. IESG has coordinated comments from a number of electoral experts to strengthen the bill and hopes that the NIEC will have the opportunity to speak with relevant members of Parliament so that adjustments can be made.

During the meeting, some challenges were also discussed, such as issues on constitutional articles with related to the electoral law, delays in the adoption of the electoral law, opposition from the FMS of allowing the temporary political parties to open their offices in state capitals, capacity building challenges of political parties, delay in the establishment of the electoral security task force, delays in construction of the NIEC headquarters, inadequate government budget to execute NIEC's operational plan for the preparation of 2020 elections.

Sub-Working Group Meeting (SWG-3) on Electoral Support

On 2 July, PWG-1 Sub-Working Group on Elections (SWG-3) held its first substantive meeting since December 2018. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Khadija Ali, NIEC Commissioner, and the United Kingdom (UK). It was attended by representatives from the NIEC, FGS, FMS, UNDP/UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) as well as other international donor partners including UK, EU, Norway, Sweden, Germany, USAID and other electoral assistance providers.

The NIEC provided an update on the NIEC's progress in preparation of the country's universal suffrage elections and presented its concept of operations for voter registration as well as a tentative budget for voter registration. The NIEC also provided updates on the field verification exercise of potential voter registration centres, voter education, political party registration, and by-elections in Mogadishu and Baidoa.

Commissioner Khadija reminded all participants that 2019 is a crucial year for electoral preparations, in particular voter registration in early 2020 and the elections later that year.

The NIEC also highlighted potential challenges, including the establishment of the electoral security task force that will be vital for the NIEC to finalize the assessment of the potential voter registration sites. Another electoral challenge is that any further delays in passing the electoral law in a timely manner would affect the NIEC's preparations and roll-out of the voter registration, foreseen to start in March 2020, and hence would affect the overall electoral timeline.

Commissioner Khadija mentioned that the NIEC will continue to work on the mapping of the voter registration centres; the drafting and development of electoral procedures and regulations; and outreach and voter education.

NIEC-IESG bilateral donor engagements

From 12-14 June 2019, NIEC and IESG held joint bilateral meetings with several donor partners in Nairobi. NIEC and IESG met partners from embassies and/or development actors from Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Sweden.

The NIEC Chair and IESG Chief Technical Advisor provided updates on electoral preparations and solicited support from donors for the construction of NIEC's electoral management center and upcoming voter registration exercise. The NIEC would present at the next SWG-3 meeting an outline of the voter registration plan and the tentative budget.

Induction training for NIEC newly recruited staff

From 8 to 14 July 2019, IESG facilitated an electoral induction workshop for the NIEC's newly recruited staff from the field and HQ. The week-long training was attended by 41 newly recruited NIEC staff from both national and regional offices to familiarize them with their roles, functions and operational mechanism as well as to build the capacity with their new roles.

The workshop was conducted by electoral experts from NIEC, IESG and Creative Associates/BUILD. During the workshop, topics such as electoral dispute resolution, electoral legal frameworks, electoral laws formulation, capture of VR centers, voter education,

voting/polling, vote counting/tallying, announcing the winner and evaluation on the conduct of the elections were discussed.

In his closing remarks, the acting NIEC Chair Mr. Said Hashi Warsame called upon the participants to apply the skills and knowledge they gained during the eight-day training to their work. He underscored the importance of the country moving from the 4.5 clan-based politics

to a more inclusive, democratic one person one vote in 2020.



Newly recruited NIEC staff engaged in an induction workshop Mogadishu, 8-14 July 2019 (Photo credit: IESG)

IESG Staff Retreat



A group photo of IESG team in staff Retreat 2019 15-16 July 2019. Mogadishu (Photo credit: IESG)

From 15 to 16 July 2019, a two-day retreat for all IESG staff, both from headquarters and the field offices, was conducted in Mogadishu. This was the first retreat since IESG field staff was deployed to Puntland, Hirshabelle, Southwest, Jubaland and Benadir. The aim of the retreat was to exchange experiences and identify strategies to ensure women, youth, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), marginalized groups and nomads are included in the electoral process particularly during the first phase of Voter Registration (VR).

The field office representatives gave presentations on various sub-topics, such as how best to capture the nomadic population and engage with IDPs and marginalized people to ensure their participation in the VR and other electoral activities.

NIEC preparations for identification of potential voter registration sites

The NIEC identified and verified the locations of potential voter registration centres in the following federal member states: South West, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug plus the Banadir region. The NIEC is conducting consultations with the Puntland and Jubaland administrations to start the mapping exercise in those areas. Information on the locations and the overall numbers of identified voter registration centres will feed into the NIEC's operations plan. Once approved by the Commission, this will inform IESG and donors on the required budget for voter registration and timely procurement of voter registration kits. With assistance from IESG, the NIEC developed a draft concept of operations and provisional budget for the 2020 voter registration exercise.

NIEC meeting with Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs and Security on electoral law



On 20 May, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Federal Government of Somalia introduced the draft electoral law to the House of the People. On 7 July, the National Independent Electoral Commission held a meeting with the Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs and Security.

The NIEC had formed an internal committee of legal experts to look into what repercussions the draft electoral law may have on NIEC.

NIEC team meeting with parliamentary subcommittee on Interior and Security on Electoral Law. 7 July 2019, Mogadishu (Photo credit: NIEC)

NIEC meetings with electoral stakeholders (political parties, CSOs)

On 7 and 8 July 2019, a delegation from NIEC and Office of the Registrar of Political Parties paid a visit to several political party offices. The officials held meetings with senior party officials and reviewed the parties' offices to assess the capacity of the parties to become permanent political parties.

On 10 July, the NIEC Secretary General met with representatives of several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Mogadishu and stressed the importance of the partnership between NIEC and Civil Society Organizations for electoral preparation.

During the meeting with CSOs, the Secretary General, Mr. Abdirizak Bashir, expressed optimism that the electoral law will be passed by Parliament and reiterated that the electoral model for the 2020 elections lies with the aspirations of Somali people. The Secretary General also called upon the parliamentarians to speed up the process of enacting the electoral law so that the Electoral Commission could start working on civic and voter education to sensitize the public on their voting rights and voter registration.

The Secretary General briefed the CSO representatives on the electoral cycle. He underscored the importance of elections for the Somali people and reiterated the need to support the electoral body as it gears up to conduct universal suffrage elections in 2020.



NIEC team meeting with CSOs representatives 10 July 2019. Mogadishu (Photo credit: NIEC)



NIEC Registrar office visit to a political parties' offices 8 July 2019. (Photo credit: NIEC)

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