

NEWS LETTER

November-December 2018

*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 - Monthly News Updates*

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

On 10 December, preceding the Pillar Working Group on Inclusive Politics (PWG-1), the Sub Working group on Elections (SWG-3) held its last meeting in 2018, co-chaired by, Chairperson of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) and the United Kingdom (UK). The meeting was attended by representatives from the NIEC, European Union (EU), Sweden, UK, USAID, UNDP/UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) and UNSOM Political Affairs and Mediation Group, as well as other international stakeholders.

Chairperson Ms. Halima Ismail Ibrahim provided an update on the NIEC's progress in preparation of the country's universal suffrage elections for a new Federal Parliament by the end of 2020. These include: the appointment of a new Secretary-General to lead the Secretariat; the allocation of additional office space for the NIEC in Villa Somalia by the Federal Government; and the NIEC's institutional expansion in the Federal Member States, starting with the opening of the Puntland field office, followed by the other offices shortly after. The Chair also noted progress on the review of the NIEC Strategic Plan, a stakeholder mapping exercise, the ongoing temporary registration of political parties and the discussion with the Prime Minister's Office on the

establishment the Election Security Task Force. The NIEC Chairperson stressed that the adoption of the Electoral Law is a key milestone for Somalia to move forward to prepare for universal elections. She requested support from the international partners to advocate for sound and timely passage and adoption of the Electoral Law to keep on track for the preparations of universal elections. The Electoral Law is a requirement for the planning of the Voter Registration.

IESG presented an outline of its phased approach from 2018 to 2021 to assist the NIEC with the preparations for the universal suffrage elections. To ensure continuity and provide ongoing assistance, IESG extended its support to the NIEC until the end of 2019 with regard to the development of electoral building blocks, while preparations for voter registration planning are being made. To gauge progress, the following key milestones are to be assessed in mid-2019:

- The adoption of the Electoral Law by Parliament;
- The NIEC GIS field verification exercise and mapping potential voter registration sites;
- NIEC comprehensive Voter Registration Operations Plan.

Highlights

- ◆ 5 November: NIEC lessons learnt of GIS mapping pilot exercise
- ◆ 11 November: MOIFAR submits draft Electoral Law to Cabinet
- ◆ 15 November: NIEC-IESG information sharing meeting
- ◆ 14 to 17 November: IESG-NIEC sessions on development electoral-operations chronogram
- ◆ 27 November: NIEC appoints new Secretary-General
- ◆ 27-28 November: Social Media workshop for NIEC
- ◆ 4-12 December: NIEC partnership building workshop
- ◆ 10-11 December: SWG-3 and PWG-1 meeting on Elections
- ◆ December: NIEC opens field office in Puntland

During the PWG-1 on 11 December, IESG's 2019 work plan was approved (Phase 1). It is envisaged that in mid-2019 discussions on planning for voter registration will facilitate the project's upscaling to Phase 2 (VR).

Draft Electoral Law submitted to the Cabinet

On 11 November, the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR) submitted the draft Electoral Law to the Council of Ministers Secretariat. The Electoral Law is an essential priority for the Federal Government of Somalia as it defines the future system of representation and the regulatory framework for the NIEC to organise universal elections.

The draft is in line with the 'Baidoa Agreement on the Electoral Model' which was endorsed by the leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member State (FMS) in June 2018. The chosen electoral system for the next Federal Parliament is based on a closed list, multi-party system and proportional representation,

and includes provisions to enhance women and minorities' representation.

The draft included an annex with comments from civil society and political parties. On 6 and 21 November, MoIFAR, supported by the NIEC and other representatives of the federal government presented the draft law to international partners. On 12 December, IESG met with MoIFAR, NIEC and the Office of the President and presented consolidated comments from international partners. While some additional adjustments have been made, the draft law has yet to be discussed by the Council of Ministers, before being submitted to the Federal Parliament.

NIEC-IESG Electoral Information Sharing Meeting

On 15 November, IESG and the NIEC convened for international stakeholders and electoral implementation partners an Electoral Information Sharing Meeting, co-chaired by Ms. Halima Ismail Ibrahim, Chairperson of the NIEC and Mr. Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political), UNSOM. The meeting established a forum for information-sharing and enhanced technical coordination on electoral matters and related activities. Progress and challenges were discussed, including the NIEC's ongoing recruitment of field officers, the voter education curriculum, and the pilot project of the GIS verification exercise to identify 112 potential voter registration sites in two districts. It was reiterated that the adoption of the Electoral Law is a crucial requirement to plan for voter registration. The next Electoral Information sharing meeting is planned for 23 January 2019.

NIEC GIS mapping exercise to identify Voter Registration Centres



IESG facilitating GIS mapping exercise workshop to identify Voter Registration locations in Somalia, 5 November, Mogadishu, (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 5 November, the NIEC and IESG held an initial lesson-learned workshop to analyse the process and preliminary results of a pilot project mapping out potential voter registration sites. In October, equipped with GIS tools in a district in Mogadishu and one in Jowhar, the NIEC had deployed enumerators to identify on the ground and map out the coordinates and relevant data of 112

potential voter registration points. The two NIEC enumerator teams were deployed simultaneously for a total of 8 days including training, local travel, meeting with district commissioners, data capture of sites, and retrieval of devices used for the operation. This pilot project was designed to verify the technical and operational validity of the proposed field data collection methodology for potential voter

registration sites.

The identification of voter catchment areas is a first step in the process of establishing future voter registration centres. Earlier in 2018, the NIEC had finalized a desk study identifying around 1,760 potential voter catchment areas across the country based on satellite images, GIS data and tentative population estimates. The results of the pilot project will feed into the NIEC's planning of a nationwide verification process of voter catchment areas in the upcoming months.

From 14 to 17 November, IESG and NIEC directors and senior staff worked together on the development of an electoral operations chronogram in line with the NIEC Strategic Plan. The mapping of voter registration sites is part of the chronogram in anticipation of operational requirements for voter registration in 2020.

NIEC Workshop on Building Partnership for the Elections



Participants busy in group work during NIEC partnership building workshop for upcoming elections, Mogadishu, 9-12 December 2018. (Photo credit: NIEC)

From 4 to 12 December, the NIEC conducted a joint workshop with national stakeholders on modalities for establishing effective partnerships for implementing the NIEC Strategic Plan. The workshop was attended by civil society organizations and other Somali electoral stakeholders.

The workshop was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on the capacities of the NIEC in managing partnerships, identified potential partners for implementation of the

NIEC's Electoral Operations Plan, and designed tools for engagement to assist NIEC with managing these partnerships. The second phase reviewed the NIEC's stakeholders map, developed a shared understanding of the NIEC's strategic direction, and looked at joint work plans with local partners, based on the NIEC's Strategic Plan.

The workshop followed up on the NIEC Strategic Plan Review, which was held from 20 to 24 October.

NIEC Secretary-General

On 27 November, the Commission announced the appointment of Mr. Abdirizak Bashir as the new Secretary General to lead the NIEC Secretariat. Mr. Abdirizak Bashir has sound working experience with the NIEC and on the electoral process and preparations for Somalia's 'one person, one vote' elections. The position was vacant after the previous Secretary General had resigned earlier in 2018 due to personal reasons.



Social Media Training for NIEC Staff



NIEC senior managers and staff attending Social Media training, Mogadishu, 27-28 November 2018. (Photo credit: IESG)

On 27 and 28 November, IESG organised a social media training for the NIEC staff in Mogadishu. The two-day training was attended by NIEC staff including senior managers, and those working on public outreach, operations, and voter registration.

The training aimed at enhancing NIEC's public outreach capacity through teaching social media techniques in order to boost the skill of their employees on the use of social media and covered the use of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

NIEC opens first state office in Puntland

The NIEC has recruited four field staff for Puntland and is looking for office space to open its first field office in Garowe. In the coming months, the NIEC will open state offices in all the Federal Member States of Somalia. These offices will spearhead the Commission's electoral operations at state level.

The newly-recruited field staff have been invited to attend in Mogadishu in December the NIEC's partnership building workshop. While an orientation was given on the NIEC's mandate, role and electoral operations in the field, the Puntland field staff were introduced to the Commissioners, the different colleagues in HQ, the political party registrar as well as IESG's recently recruited Electoral Field staff in Garowe.

To support the NIEC's electoral operations at state level in the field, IESG has been recruiting different national and internationals electoral advisors in the field, based in UNSOM regional offices.

IESG has opened 18 field staff positions under the UNSOM budget to assist the NIEC at the field level. International staff are now deployed in Baidoa, Garowe, Jowhar, Kismayo and for Benadir. The recruitment of national field officers is ongoing. A voter registration and procedures advisor has been recruited for IESG HQ.



Contact:

Filip Warnants, Project Manager, Elections, Email: filip.warnants@undp.org
 Mahmood Akhtar, Communication & Reporting Officer, Email: mahmood.akhtar@undp.org
 UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)