



ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT 2006

**United Nations Development Programme
Afghanistan
2004-2005 Afghan Elections Extended: Transitional Phase
01-01-2006 – 30-12-2006**

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Duration:	2004-2006
Component (MYFF):	Fostering Democratic Governance, SL 2.1. Policy Support for Democratic Governance
Total Budget:	(2005 parliamentary elections Budget : US\$ 172,000,000) Transitional Phase Budget US\$ 1,297,563
Unfunded:	US\$ 15,000,000 (parliamentary elections) US\$ 0 (transitional phase)
Implementing Partners/ Responsible parties:	IEC (with support from TAF and IFES)

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Donors Contributing to Transitional Phase Support to the IEC



Agence canadienne de
développement international

Canadian International
Development Agency

Canada/CIDA



UNDP



The Asia Foundation

TAF (in-kind, through USAID)

Acronyms

AITM	Afghan Inkishafee and Tarbiawee Markaz
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CVR	Civil Voter Registry
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
ELECT	Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow
IAPSO	Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IECS	Independent Election Commission Secretariat
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
JEMB	Joint Electoral Management Body
JEMBS	Joint Electoral Management Body Secretariat
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOI	Ministry of Interior
PESG	Post Election Strategy Group
PRR	Priority, Reforming and Restructuring
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TOR	Terms of References
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VREP	Voter Registration and Election Project

Executive Summary

With the successful conduct of the *Wolesi Jirga* and Provincial Council Elections in 2005, completing the political benchmarks outlined in the Bonn Agreement, it was envisaged that the Voter Registration and Elections Project (VREP) 2004-2005 would be closed following a three month “transitional phase”. The transition phase was intended to provide support to ensure the continuation of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in anticipation of full implementation of PRR. In the meantime, a new project supporting the capacity building of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) - “Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow” (ELECT) was to be launched in 2006.

ELECT was planned to be launched following the completion of the transition phase, on 21 March 2006, a date that was set in order to coincide with the start of the new Afghan fiscal year (1385). However, due to following subsequent developments surrounding the IEC outlined below, it was determined essential to extend the transitional period for an additional six months (until 21 September 2006) to provide critical support to the IEC to ensure its sustainability. The newly established National Assembly had been unable to approve the national budget allocation for the IEC prior to the start of the Afghan fiscal year 1385. Furthermore, due to the fact that there was an US\$15 million funding gap against the final budget required for the activities conducted under VREP 2005 (with the final cost estimated at US\$172 million), it was financially impossible to close VREP.

The key reason for extending the VREP transitional phase for an additional six months was for UNDP to support the staffing and operational costs of the IEC to keep the institution functional until it was financially sustained through the national budget. As the VREP 2005 activities were mainly implemented by UNOPS, the responsibility to contract and cover the salaries of the IEC Secretariat staff and the operational costs of the IEC HQ were transferred to UNDP, which cost a total of US\$1,103,545. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) contributed CDN 500,000 to UNDP to meet the basic salaries and running costs of the IEC/IEC Secretariat staff in addition to UNDP core funding. In addition, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided US\$ 100,000 in in-kind support through The Asia Foundation (TAF) to meet the operational costs of the IEC Secretariat in the regional and provincial HQs of the IEC. UNDP contributed US\$649,000 from its core funds to support the remaining costs required for the IEC staff salaries and operational costs in addition to technical advisers and support staff that supported the IEC.

Approximately US\$150,000-200,000 from the funds mobilized from the donors towards the VREP 2005 funding gap was utilized in 2006 for the conduct of essential activities in closing VREP including an evaluation and audit. Due to the fact that UNDP had to allocate a significant amount of core resources for these activities and launching of the ELECT project had to be delayed until November 2006, a number of activities envisaged initially under the ELECT project activities in 2006 could not be conducted.

Although UNDP, with the support of CIDA and USAID/TAF financed the staffing and operational costs of the IEC, it was also important to further capacity build the IEC to enable them to prepare and plan for the upcoming election in 2009. In light of the timeframe in achieving the benchmark on elections outlined in the Afghanistan Compact, “The Afghan Independent Electoral Commission will have the high integrity, capacity and resources to undertake elections in an increasingly fiscally sustainable manner by end -2008, with the Government of Afghanistan contributing to the extent possible to the costs of future elections from its own resources. A permanent civil and voter registry with a single national identity document will be established by end-2009”, it was impossible to set aside all activities until the completion of the transitional period and the financial sustainability of the IEC was ensured.

In accordance with the planned ELECT project, UNDP fielded two advisors, including the Chief Electoral Advisor and the Logistics Advisor, to provide continued support to the development of the IEC. In addition, other key partners supporting the IEC including The Asia Foundation (TAF) and

International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), both funded by USAID, undertook several activities envisaged under the ELECT project as outlined in the report. (Please refer to Annex 1.)

Looking back, 2006 has been a very successful year for the elections program, despite all the challenges mentioned above. One of the most successful outcomes was the fact that IEC has become a financially independent and autonomous body sustained through the national budget. In addition, future electoral support activities were secured through the launch of the ELECT Project which was signed on 14 November 2006.

This annual project report will highlight the developments made in further capacity building the IEC in several areas, which were possible due to the strong partnership with other organizations, the stabilization and sustainability of the IEC as well as the progress made in preparation of closing the 2004-2005 Afghan Elections project and launch the new ELECT project.

1. Context

H.E. President Hamid Karzai presented the *Afghanistan Compact* at the international donor conference “Building on Success, The London Conference on Afghanistan (31 January-1 February 2006)” which was agreed upon by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community. The *Afghanistan Compact* succeeds the Bonn Agreement of 1380 (2001), which provided a framework for the international community to help Afghans establish a legitimate government. Having completed the Bonn process successfully, through this Compact, Afghanistan renewed its mutual commitments with the international community in order to continue its state building and development efforts. The Afghan Government has articulated the overarching goals for the well-being of its people as stated in the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals Country Report 2005-Vision 2020.

Consistent with those goals, the Afghanistan Compact identifies three critical and interdependent areas or pillars of activities for the five year period of the Compact: 1. Security; 2. Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and 3. Economic and Social Development. Through the Compact, the Afghan Government has committed itself to realizing this shared vision of the future and the international community, in return, committed itself to provide resources and support to realize this vision. As stated under the benchmark of the Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights pillar, “The Afghan Independent Electoral Commission will have the high integrity, capacity and resources to undertake elections in an increasingly fiscally sustainable manner by end -2008, with the Government of Afghanistan contributing to the extent possible to the costs of future elections from its own resources. A permanent civil and voter registry with a single national identity document will be established by end- 2009.”

The Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, has committed itself to meet the Afghanistan Compact Benchmark on Elections, which is consistent with goals set under the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)*.

The focus of the United Nations electoral assistance to Afghanistan has been to ensure that the commitment by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, through its Constitution in holding democratic elections and the electoral timeframe set by the Bonn Agreement be respected to the extent possible.

In order to ensure that the timeframe envisaged through the Bonn Agreement was met, the model adopted by the national and international stakeholders in undertaking the elections in 2004 and 2005 was largely focused on bringing in international personnel and experts to conduct successful elections.

Despite the limited timeframe in delivering the 2005 elections activities, each aspect of the operation was undertaken having the aspect of capacity building of the electoral body in mind for future elections in Afghanistan. The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) and the Joint Electoral Management Body Secretariat (JEMBS) implemented a capacity building programme which included a series of courses coinciding with the phases of the election process and study trips to visit electoral administrations in other democracies. Nevertheless, due to the very tight timeframe of these elections, the ability to focus on the capacity building of the Afghan JEMB Commissioners and Secretariat staff was significantly reduced. In addition, there was insufficient time for effective public outreach, particularly before the candidate nomination, resulting in the fact that civic education activities concentrated mostly on the process rather than the broader context of candidacy and the roles of the elected representatives in the democratic process. While this allowed elections of international standards to be held in Afghanistan, a number of significant challenges were left to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in conducting future electoral activities.

The final report of the JEMB in 2005 as well as that of the Post-Elections Strategy Group, established in June 2005 to develop a comprehensive post-election strategy for the Afghan electoral institution,

recommended that a baseline level of international expertise for support to future elections be maintained. This recommendation was made based on the reality that the JEMB/JEMBS did not have sufficient time to prepare themselves for the challenges lying ahead of them. Following the completion of the activities envisaged under the Bonn Agreement, the international community is currently providing support which will effectively enable the Afghan Independent Election Commissions (IEC) to conduct future elections in a more fiscally sustainable manner as laid out under the "Governance, Rule of law and Human Rights" pillar of the Afghanistan Compact.

The high costs incurred under the 2004/5 elections, requiring a large number of international personnel, cannot be replicated in the future. Effective support needs to be provided in building sufficient capacity of the IEC and providing them with sufficient means to undertake their responsibilities in conducting elections in 2009.

UNDP fielded an evaluation mission in 2006 to review the overall activities conducted under the 2004/2005 Voter Registration and Elections Project and its outcome. The evaluation identified key challenges and areas where further international support is required to enable the IEC in effectively undertaking its responsibilities. In summary, the report highlighted the following:

- The need to establish a permanent and accurate civil and voter registry prior to the next elections;
- The insufficient electoral capacity and expertise within the newly established Independent Electoral Commission, particularly in certain electoral activities such as the demarcation of electoral constituency boundaries;
- Retaining IEC core staff who have acquired expertise in certain aspects of electoral management is a major challenge and further intensive training will be required for the new recruits;
- Lack of electoral infrastructure particularly at the sub-national level;
- Inadequate legal framework and procedures, including mechanisms for interaction between the Commission and other Government institutions/agencies;
- Lack of coordination amongst key national and international stakeholders who are supporting electoral activities.

An extensive consultation was conducted with the IEC and other key national and international stakeholders to identify the most effective and appropriate ways in addressing the challenges highlighted in the evaluation report during the next two years in the run up to the next elections in 2009.

The IEC, UNDP and the partner organisations including IFES and TAF, identified the following three key areas of support to address these challenges: 1) Capacity building of the IEC at all institutional levels; 2) Review of the electoral legislation; and 3) Conducting a civil and voter registration pilot project to lay the grounds for the future national civil and voter registry exercise. Enhancing the IEC's capacity in various areas prior to the upcoming elections in 2009 in a sustainable manner will be an investment in effectively scaling down the international support in the long run.

In this context, the Voter Registration and Elections Project (VREP) was due to be closed in early 2006 with a new capacity building project titled "Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow" (ELECT) starting in March 2006 coinciding with the new Afghan fiscal year (1385). However, due to the large funding gap of VREP amounting to approximately US\$15 million and the unsustainable situation of the IEC which was yet to receive national budget allocation, it has not been possible to close VREP in spite of significant efforts made on both issues. In addition, due to the fact that the National Assembly was newly established as a result of the elections, the budget needed to be passed by the legislature and resulted in further delays for confirming the required budgetary allocation for the IEC.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that VREP had originally been extended for only three months as a "transitional phase" until the national budget could cover the operational expenses when the new Afghan fiscal year commenced, the transitional phase had to be extended for a further six months to 21 September, 2006. Effective 21 March 2006, it was decided that UNDP would take over responsibilities from UNOPS in contracting all IEC staff and finance the salaries and other basic

operational costs until the 21 September 2006. Unfortunately, as the IEC was unable to comply with its promise to secure funding under the national budget, UNDP agreed to support the IEC for basic costs through core funds for another month, to 20 October 2006, after which the IEC was able to access its allocated budget. This limited possibilities of UNDP being able to finance other capacity building activities. In spite of these circumstances, UNDP undertook several activities envisaged under the new ELECT project which was revised and later signed in 14 November 2006.

Furthermore, in addition to the evaluation of VREP earlier mentioned, further activities were conducted to enable the effective closure of the project including an evaluation, audit and transfer/liquidation of a portion of the electoral assets.

2. Performance Review

2.1 Progress Review

Overall progress towards the ANDS benchmark

"The Afghanistan Independent Electoral Commission will have the high integrity, capacity and resources to undertake elections in an increasingly fiscally sustainable manner by end-2008, with the Government of Afghanistan contributing to the extent possible to the cost of future elections from its own resources. A permanent civil and voter registry with a single national identity document will be established by end-2009".

During the last 12 months, several training activities and field visits were conducted in further building the capacity of the IEC secretariat staff as well the commission in various fields. The IEC increased its ability to plan and prepare for upcoming elections, in spite of the fact that ELECT could not be launched due to the circumstances previously described in Section 1. Although the IEC now has access to the national budget, the allocation is insufficient to conduct all envisaged activities and operations at the required standard. Therefore, budgetary requirements for elections are under review. Constant support was provided to the IEC in carrying out these discussions with the relevant government entities throughout 2006.

In addition, the IEC, in cooperation with UNDP and IFES has completed the design and plan to undertake a Civil and Voter Registry Pilot Project to test different methods in anticipation of the nationwide civil and voter registration exercise from which the national voter registry can be drawn and ID cards can be provided to the individual citizens. UNDP has successfully assisted the IEC in mobilising US\$336,567 from the newly established United Nations Democracy Funds for the pilot project.

In light of the above, the IEC has undertaken the following tasks in 2006:

- Civil and Voter Registry Pilot Project operational guidelines finalised;
- International tender conducted and orders for procurement placed for equipment required for the pilot project;
- All preparations completed to commence field work in Batkot (Nangarhar) and District 10 (Kabul City) by end-January 2007. The field work in the hilly district of Yakawalang (Bamiyan) will also have to begin in the spring as soon as the snow melts and the area is accessible for the CVR field work to commence.

All field work should be completed by June 2007 in order to complete the pilot project in Kabul, Nangarhar and Bamiyan by end-August 2007. Lessons learned from this pilot project will be incorporated to the design of the national project which should be formulated and launched by October 2007. Meeting this timeframe is critical to have a voters list ready by early 2009 prior to the next presidential elections scheduled for 2009.

Overall progress towards the UNDAF outcome

"By 2008, communities and individuals, especially women and marginalized groups, participate effectively in the development and political processes."

The public outreach campaign designed by the IEC to inform the citizens about the IEC and various election related results was specifically reviewed to target women and marginalized groups. The IEC additionally employed a gender officer and a political party officer to incorporate communities and individuals more effectively in the planning of their activities and public information campaigns.

Overall progress towards the CPAP outcome and output

Expected Country Programme Outputs

The democratic state and government institutions strengthened at all levels to govern and ensure quality public services through advocacy, policy advice and capacity development (reflects UNDP's MYFF Goal 2, "*Fostering democratic governance*"; and MYFF Service Line 2.3, "*Electoral systems and processes*")

CP Outcome Indicator(s):

Output 1: Democratic assemblies and electoral institutions strengthened at national and sub-national levels (functional Parliament established, operational, efficient and recognized by all the people, Provincial Councils elected and functional, Independent Election Commission institutionalised and autonomous)

ELECT Expected Outcome: The ability to undertake free and fair elections in Afghanistan through the establishment of a fully national Independent Electoral Commission.

ELECT Output 1: Operations of the IEC sustained and budgetary independence ensured through the national budget as of new fiscal year. Indicator: *National Staff of IEC become employees of the state of Afghanistan and enjoys security of services, ensuring further independence of the IEC.*

ELECT Output 2: IEC strengthened through training and reviewing of voter registration and electoral activities conducted in 2004 and 2005. Indicator: *IEC equipped with basic knowledge and skills to carry out its responsibilities mandated under the Constitution.*

ELECT Output 3: Civil and Voter Registry Pilot Project planned and designed. Indicator: Preparations completed for all citizens in the districts selected for the pilot project for the IEC to establish a voter's list and for the Ministry of Interior to obtain civil registry details and issue national identification documents.

In 2006, much of the effort towards ensuring the institutional sustainability of the Independent Election Commission focused on securing its financial independence. As mentioned above, the IEC was supported by the international community to ensure that it would be able to assume its mandated role for elections administration in Afghanistan. The entire IEC staff received UN contracts and all operational costs were externally funded by the international community. As this arrangement was clearly unsustainable in the long term, UNDP and the international partners supported the IEC to obtain a national budget allocation to sustain its operations. In effect, the impact of the IEC's success in achieving this in late 2006 was that the IEC's autonomy as well as the institution itself were protected. Numerous strategy group meetings were held to discuss these issues and support was provided to the IEC throughout 2006 to effectively engage with the other government entities including the Ministry of Finance, Civil Service Commission and the Office of the President/Office of Administrative Affairs. Meanwhile, until the IEC secured the much needed national budget for its staffing and basic operational costs, UNDP together with UNAMA and the other partners, provided political and financial support to the IEC to sustain its operations.

In the last quarter of 2006, the IEC finally received access to the national budget and the posts as well as 218 posts were approved through the Priority Reform and Restructuring Process including successful approval of the Super Scale for 30 staff members which was significantly more than what was initially indicated as feasible by the relevant government authorities including the MOF and CSC. (see 2.2 for more details).

Furthermore, the new ELECT Project was signed as a continuation of support provided in 2006 to further enhance the autonomy of the IEC and further strengthen the capacity of the institution. Additional IEC capacity building activities were undertaken by IFES and TAF. (see Annex 3)

Capacity Development

Considerable capacity of the IEC has already been built through the preparation and conduct of the previous elections. Despite the fact that UNDP did not have sufficient resources to undertake a comprehensive and in-depth capacity building programme, UNDP did support the capacity

development of the IEC in key areas in 2006 through a cost effective and sustainable manner. The project is based on a partnership strategy whereby capacity development is addressed through daily consultation and coaching in addition to other methods of training and exchange activities. Each of the nine IEC departments have a designated international advisor (supplied by UNDP, TAF, and IFES) embedded into the department where coaching/mentoring is being conducted on a daily basis. Different methods were used for the various groups to ensure the best possible opportunities for capacity development.

Impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries

The IEC secretariat as the direct beneficiary of 2006 elections support activities is better able to plan their work processes and respond to challenging situations arising from government requests.

Due to the fact that the IEC has improved their capacity with better structured work processes, indirect beneficiaries to the project, including other government institutions as well as the general public, can better rely on the IEC to fulfil its mandate.

2.2 Implementation strategy review

Participatory/consultative processes

The IEC has weekly meetings with all international advisors to review progress made in the various fields. All decisions regarding the project activities are taken in cooperation and consultation with the IEC. The ELECT project will ensure that the IEC takes the lead with regards to the established interagency coordination mechanism, and that the IEC will have a full overview of all project activities undertaken. The IEC participated in all decisions taken regarding project activities and the upcoming ELECT project is a result of a long standing partnership and detailed discussions with the IEC.

Additionally, the IEC is the lead organization in bi-weekly strategy group meetings amongst UNDP, The Asia Foundation, IFES and UNAMA where political challenges are discussed and the IEC can openly bring forward issues and concerns to be addressed together with this group.

Quality of partnerships

The cooperation between the IEC and UNDP over the reporting period has resulted in a strong and sound partnership. This relationship has been tested at times, particularly during the IEC's difficult transition from UN support to becoming a fully Afghan government-supported institution in 2006, but has emerged from this process stronger than before, as all issues have been worked through with continuous communication and with flexibility on both sides. It has been challenging to establish a positive and fully functional working relationship with a national institution when both parties are involved in a stressful process of trying to preserve the very existence of the organization. The key element to the successful partnership between the two organizations has been a completely co-operative approach to decision-making where the various perspectives have been fully explored in regular discussions. Additionally, the support of UNAMA in ensuring that co-operation is productive has been very helpful. High-level support and advocacy has been provided when required.

Partnerships with IFES and TAF are based on good foundations and have been mutually beneficial in supplementing and strengthening each others activities. For example, during the transitional period when UNDP was stretched for funds, the partners provided various activities in close collaboration with UNDP in implementing the critical capacity building activities while UNDP's funds were used to support the IEC staffing and operational costs. Both the activities of IFES and TAF are reflected under the ELECT project in order to ensure that support to the IEC is provided in a well coordinated and streamlined manner in reaching the overall common objectives.

National Ownership

All activities undertaken or planned are discussed with and approved by the IEC. In the upcoming ELECT project the IEC will lead a coordination mechanism to steer the activities of the different organisations working with the IEC in the right direction. At the same time, the IEC is the leading

organisation on the project steering committee and has control over the implementation of the project.

Sustainability

One of the key achievements in 2006 was the fact that IEC became a financially sustainable institution supported by the national budget. This was made possible through the concerted efforts of the IEC with the continuous support of UNAMA, UNDP, TAF, IFES and key donors such as the Canadians and the US throughout the process.

Currently, the provincial and regional offices of the IEC are barely functioning. Only 18 provinces have allocated office space for the IEC provincial offices and offices for the remaining 16 provinces are yet to be identified. It is critically important that the IEC provincial offices are able to function adequately for the IEC to carry out its mandate. Although considerable efforts have been made by the IEC, much remains to be done.

The achievements made by the IEC in these areas are as follows:

1. Priority, Reforming and Restructuring (PRR) in the IEC:

The staff of the IEC was recruited by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in 2005 under the JEMB mandate in accordance with UNOPS rules and regulations. Further recruitment was undertaken in early 2006 following UNDP's rules and regulations after the handover of responsibilities between UNOPS and UNDP. The recruitment of all IEC staff has subsequently been approved by the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

The total staff strength of the IECS at HQ and the provinces is 218, including 150 professional staff. Of the 150 professional staff, there are 66 staff employed at IEC HQ with the remaining 84 (32 in the regional HQs and 52 in the non-HQ provinces) in the provinces and the Regional HQs. There are currently nine departments under the IEC including IT, Planning, Logistics, Training and Capacity Building, Public Outreach, External Relations, Legal, Field Operations and Administration and Finance.

In order to become an integrated institution of the state structure, the CSC required the IEC staff to undergo two stages of the PRR process. In the first stage, discussions on the roles and responsibilities of all the positions in the IEC were agreed upon between the IEC and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and a proposal from the IEC was sent to the CSC for examination. Through a number of negotiation meetings, the CSC finally accepted the proposal at stage I. The second stage covers decisions on structure/organigram of the IECS, the chain of command, responsibilities of officials, and Terms of References (TORs) for each position. A 350-page document on this issue was submitted by the IEC and was subsequently approved by the CSC, completing the second stage of the PRR process.

All IEC staff in the professional category, except those on Super Scale, have been placed under PRR and will obtain salaries ranging from \$80/mo to \$250/mo. The CSC required each position to be advertised and only after successfully completing the selection process, allowed the staff salaries to be charged from the national budget under the PRR. A number of negotiations were held with CSC officials to exempt the IEC staff from the recruitment process as they had already undergone a transparent UN recruitment process. The matter was supported by UNAMA and after intervention by the Office of the President, the CSC finally agreed to exempt the IEC staff selected through the UN process from an additional PRR recruitment process.

As the IEC's effort to obtain PRR salaries for IEC staff did not succeed by September, UNDP extended salary support to IEC staff for another month up to 21 October 2006, though at a reduced scale. Since October all posts have been incorporated under PRR system. To retain the highly qualified staff of the IEC, a proposal was handed in for sanction of super pay scales for qualified staff. The IEC initially made a proposal of 36 super scale (Pay range \$500- \$2000) which included the 9 IEC Commissioners. Out of 36 super scale posts requested, the Civil Service Commission granted 30 positions to the IEC. This has allowed the IEC to keep its highly qualified staff, especially in the IT section.

2. Salary of the IEC Commissioners:

Payment of the IEC Commissioner's salaries from the national budget was a major issue during April-June 2006. The UNDP agreed to take on the responsibility to pay the salaries of the secretariat staff but not of the IEC Commissioners. The IEC Chairman, Bismillah Bismil, had a number of meetings with the President's office and Chairman of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to resolve the issue of payment of the Commissioner's salaries. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) Chris Alexander also emphasized its early resolution in his meetings with the Chairman of the CSC. After numerous negotiations, the CSC agreed to include the IEC Commissioners in its Lateral Entry Scheme and their salaries have since been paid without interruption.

3. Approval of Budget for IEC Salaries and Operational Costs:

The IEC budget has been approved by the National Assembly on 4 June 2006 and documents were prepared for the actual release of funds. An amount of 33,750,000 Afghanis, equivalent to US\$665,000 (about one-third of the annual requirement by the IEC), has been provided under the national budget for the IEC for financial year 1385. The IEC assessment finds this amount sufficient to meet its requirements up to March 2007. However, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) indicated that the amount available for the remaining half of the year will be only ½ of the amount allocated under the national budget. This led to a number of negotiations between the IEC and MOF. UNAMA supported the IEC's case that the IEC budget for the first 6 months (during which it was supported by the UNDP), should be allowed to be spent by the IEC in the latter half of the year. The matter still remains unresolved.

4. Making the Provincial Offices Functional:

In order to ensure a cost-effective 2009 election, the IEC needs to be prepared to undertake the elections with a minimal international presence. This is a significant task and will not be achieved in any measure unless the IEC can establish a functional field structure. The provincial offices rented during the 2005 elections could not be retained as the rents were unaffordable for the IEC. A request was made to the provincial governors to allocate office space for the IEC provincial presence and office space has been allotted in 18 provinces. In the remaining 16 provinces, the IEC is in the process of identifying office space to rent at an affordable cost. The offices allocated by the governors are not functional as offices and would require further renovation or refurbishment.

The president's office has advised the provincial governors to allot some land to the IEC for office construction in the provinces. A number of provinces have been allotted land but due to lack of funds, construction work has not been able to commence. The IEC is preparing a project to be handed over to various potential donors for the construction of offices to be completed in the next 3 years.

2.3 Management effectiveness review

Quality of monitoring

The VREP was evaluated by external consultants. For a period of 2 months (March-April 2006), the evaluation team undertook field visits and interviews with all partners in the project. Additionally, there were regular meetings between the management and the project team to review the progress made and discuss next steps.

Timely delivery of outputs

- Output 1: Operations of the IEC sustained and budgetary independence ensured through the national budget as of the new fiscal year (Hejri Shamsi Year 1385)
- Output 2: IEC strengthened through training and reviewing of voter registration and electoral activities conducted in 2004 and 2005
- Output 3: Civil and Voter Registry Pilot Project planned and designed

Output 1 was initially planned to be completed by 21 March 2006 based on discussions with the government counterparts. However, due to the circumstances mentioned in earlier sections, the timeframe needed to be extended for an additional six months to 21 September 2006 and had to be

further extended for an additional month to finalize the institutionalization of the IEC and their access to the national budget. As of 21 October 2006, the IEC has access to the budget and is financially independent.

Output 2 was delivered during the indicated timeframe to some extent. However, as it is an ongoing activity, it was determined that further capacity building would be required through a follow-on project and thus the initial ELECT project was further developed and finally launched in late 2006.

Output 3 was delivered under the planned timeframe. The CVR pilot project has been designed and activities are ready to commence in January 2007 as envisaged.

Resource Allocation

IEC Support and project preparation activities:

All resources available for the project were allocated to cover the IEC staffing and operational costs of the IEC as well as for the two international advisors financed by UNDP as part of the future capacity building project. Out of the total amount of US\$ 1,103,545 (US\$ 649,000 UNDP Core funds and US\$ 454,545 contribution from CIDA), UNDP core funds in the amount of US\$ 310,000 (28%) were spent on staffing costs to cover two advisors, a portion of the costs for one Assets and Records Officer to assist with the closing down activities (including evaluation, audit and transfer/liquidation of electoral assets up to 31 December 2006), and a couple of drivers.

The remaining US\$ 793,545 (US\$ 339,000 UNDP Core Funds and US\$ 454,545 Canadian contribution) were spent on for the staffing and operational costs of the IEC and some minor project activities, mainly preparation activities for the CVR Pilot Project. USAID in-kind contribution through TAF in the amount of \$100,000 was also applied to operational costs of the IEC. Furthermore, US\$ 150,000 – 200,000 was spent in 2006 towards the costs of the external evaluation and audit from donor contributions for VREP.

Cost-effective use of inputs

All resources were used in an effective manner with the objective to strengthen the IEC in a sustainable way. This includes the staff and operational costs to run the institution as well as the salaries of the two advisors who were essential to support the IEC throughout 2006.

3. Project Results Summary

VREP Closure

“The conduct of the 2005 elections was the culmination of a remarkable set of achievements for Afghanistan and its supporters especially the United Nations as the guarantor responsible for delivering the Bonn Agreement; the international community whose financial, operational and in-kind support underpinned the entire process; and the individuals – both Afghan and international - whose expertise contributed to the successful delivery of two complex inaugural elections and with them the conclusion of the Bonn process of transition to democratic government.” (VREP evaluation report)

a) Evaluation of Afghan Voter Registration and Elections Project

Between 16 March 2005 and 30 April 2005 an external evaluation team was fielded in Kabul (with several visits to Herat, Shindand and Bamyan) in order to conduct an external evaluation of the Voter Registration and Elections Project 2004/2005. The main objective of the evaluation was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations and international community supported voter registration and elections. The mission focused on the following activities:

- Review how well the UN and international community supported voter registration and elections conducted in Afghanistan;
- Extract the lessons learned and best practices that can be incorporated into the planning and design of future electoral activities in Afghanistan;
- Build national ownership and recommend priority measures that might be undertaken by UN in the future to ensure long term viability and sustainability of the democratic process in Afghanistan to strengthen the capacity of all electoral activities.

The conclusions of the external evaluation team were:

- International support to electoral processes in post-conflict Afghanistan was provided on an extraordinary scale. As in other post-conflict situations, a large autonomous but cooperative transitional structure was established and supported in order to ensure the success of elections. The focus now must shift, however, to ensuring the independence and sustainability of Afghan electoral administration;
- For the future, the main goal for continued international support to the electoral process will be to assist the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) retain and build capacity, ensure its independence, and develop and implement sustainable programs. Costly transitional arrangements should be diminished; and the components of current International Community support, coordinated through the current UNDP electoral project cycle (Project ELECT), should be assessed in terms of these objectives;
- With respect to the status of the IEC as an Afghan public body, steps should be taken by the Government, in coordination with the National Assembly, to safeguard and enhance IEC independence and neutrality. These would include executive and legislative actions on appointments to the IEC, the tenure of commissioners, and the IEC budget and staff.

b) Audit of Voter Registration and Elections Project 2004-2005

Joshi & Bhandary, Chartered Accountants, was appointed as auditors to undertake the audit of the 2004-2005 Afghanistan Elections Project in August 2006. The audit team arrived in Kabul on 04 September 2006 and completed their work on 17 October 2006. According to the scope of work, auditors provided the reported expenditures and expressed an opinion on the overall financial status of UNDP implementation of Afghan Election Project for period of 1 May, 2004 to 30 June 2006 and certification of the status of inventory of non-expendable equipment as of 31 August 2006. (It is to be

noted that the Voter Registration Project was already audited in the previous year). After management responses were provided, the auditors released a final report. Their main findings concluded that the overall organization, management, staffing, and financial processes of the UNDP Elections Project were found satisfactory and in accordance with the UNDP rules and regulations. The audit report is currently awaiting final approval from the UNDP Office of Audit and Performance Review in New York.

c) Liquidation of assets

UNDP, in close collaboration with UNOPS, is in process of selling the remaining VREP assets following completion of donations to the key selected state institutions including the Independent Election Commission, Parliament and Provincial Councils. It has been agreed by both UNDP and UNOPS that the numerous vehicles and equipment needs to be liquidated in the coming three months in order to recover part of the deficit against the budgetary requirements for VREP 2005. Due to the large amount of assets and the time constraints, an expert on liquidation of assets is in the process of being fielded to generate much needed income which will be used for the VREP funding gap.

VREP transitional phase

Although UNDP's financial resources were partially bound to support the core functions of the IEC and it was not possible to launch ELECT until November 2006, significant preparation work has been undertaken in anticipation of the ELECT Project. In particular, as outlined below, it is to be noted that the designing and planning of the Civil and Voter Registration Pilot Project was successfully completed during 2006.

Joint Civil and Voter Registry Pilot (ELECT Output 3)

One of the main challenges in the high cost of the 2004/2005 elections was the lack of a polling station-wise voters list. The database created during the 2003-04 voter registry exercise and the updated list in 2005 suffers serious infirmities and cannot be used to create such a voter list. Therefore, if the future elections are to be low cost and sustainable, a credible voter list needs to be newly established.

In addition, a large number of ballot boxes were excluded from counting on account of booth capturing and other irregularities in 2005. It was not feasible to organise a re-poll to restore voting rights of voters who voted at these polling stations. This could raise questions on the credibility of the election results. A polling station-wise voter list will allow re-polling of the polling stations where ballots are excluded due electoral irregularities and fraud.

In reducing the cost of the voter list, the Post Election Strategy Group (PESG) recommended the combining of the civil registry and voter registry. A joint exercise would address the concerns of the Ministry of Interior (Mol) and the IEC, where the Mol's interest is to establish an ongoing registration process incorporating the production and distribution of national ID cards for all Afghan citizens, and the IEC's interest is to have an updated and accurate voter list. The constantly updated civil registry would guarantee the preparation of voter lists for future elections at a minimal cost from this database. Thus, the PESG recommended running a CVR pilot project exercise to identify the most cost-effective way in which an accurate registration exercise could be conducted nation-wide with the possibility of creating a polling station-wise voter list at minimal cost for years to come.

In this context, the pilot project has been formulated with two objectives:

- 1) to build the capacity of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the IEC to run the national CVR project; and
- 2) to test technologies and methodologies to implement the nationwide CVR project. The MOI and IEC have selected three pilot districts for implementation, including District 10 in Kabul City, Batikot in Nangarhar, and Yakawlang in Bamiyan taking into consideration the demographic and geographical diversities of Afghanistan.

The IEC working with the Mol has designed a project which incorporates the lessons learnt from the the current usage of the *Tazkera* system (a paper-based registration system) of the Mol. The IEC and Mol officials with the support from various advisors, were responsible for devising a robust operation plan for the CVR. The following activities have been completed:

- A Steering Committee consisting of Mol and IEC representatives has been constituted for implementation of the CVR;
- The CVR objectives have been defined by the IEC in consultation with the Ministry of Interior (Mol);
- The existing voter data has been reviewed and analyzed to assess its usefulness and the methodology of past Voter and Civil Registry exercises and updates has been reviewed for effectiveness;
- A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed to ensure data sharing between the MOI and the IEC as well as the maintenance of the CVR following the national CVR;
- A proposal has been sent to the newly established United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) to finance the project. The project was selected by the UNDEF in a multi-stage process and was awarded the amount of US\$ 336,567 which has already been released;
- The Operational Plan for the CVR pilot is being jointly drafted by the IEC and Mol. Timelines and working groups have been established to address specific planning areas for the CVR project;
- Research has been conducted on various biometric technologies for CVR. This leads to technology options and a way to find the best possible technology for this project;
- A delegation of international advisors, IEC and Mol officials have visited the Iris scanning facility of the UNHCR office in Pakistan to take a decision on the usage of Iris scanning under the project. The delegation recommended Iris recognition for testing as a potential tool to detect duplicate registration of Afghans, to be tried out during the pilot project;
- IFES fielded a database expert to meet the technology needs of the project;
- An international tender document has been prepared and hosted on the UNDP/IAPSO websites and has received bids;
- Procurement of other materials required for the project is in progress; and
- The Public Outreach materials for the CVR have been printed. The project will be launched in spring 2007.

In addition, various activities have been conducted by the key partners supporting the IEC and the objectives outlined in the ELECT project. (See Annex 1 for activities conducted and results achieved by IFES and The Asia Foundation in 2006)

4. Implementation Issues

The government did not give IEC access to the national budget by the start of the 1385 fiscal year, and therefore the IEC, scrambling to retain staff and keep operationally afloat, was not able to advance with their various responsibilities within the originally envisaged timeframe. UNDP had to financially support the IEC's core operations while trying to mobilize resources against the remaining 2004-2005 elections funding gap. A series of donor conferences and meetings were held in Kabul and New York in 2006 to appeal to donors for additional funding against the 2004-2005 Afghan elections funding gap. These 2 priorities limited UNDP from engaging in other urgently needed activities to support the IEC.

5. Lessons Learned and Next Steps

5.1. Lessons learned

1. In conducting large scale elections as that of the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections held in Afghanistan in 2005, under political time pressure (i.e. Bonn Agreement), it is essential to build in a sufficient contingency budget to absorb inherent risks likely to arise in a political process. Last minute political decisions and changes in the election process resulted in expensive follow-on costs (eg. extension of the counting period). In order not to delay the completion of the envisaged electoral activities, in agreement with national and international stakeholders, activities had to continue in spite of the fact that the required funds were not sufficiently made available in time.
2. While working with newly established government institutions it has to be taken into account that administrative processes might change or may not have been completely implemented yet. That can lead to serious challenges regarding time frames. In the case of the IEC, its transition to an independent government institution was put on hold for several months due to the administrative uncertainties within the various different ministries and commissions concerned with the budget and the establishment of a civil service structure.
3. The envisaged Lessons Learned exercise itself could not be conducted due to the lack of funds required under VREP.

5.2. Recommendations

The new ELECT project, signed on 14 November 2006, will build on the efforts undertaken in 2006 and will launch its first activities in January 2007, starting from the lessons learned and CVR pilot project exercises.

The following recommendations take into consideration certain areas outside the framework of ELECT which are important for the success of the long term benchmarks and outcomes:

- The IEC will have to develop a detailed budget for the next fiscal year as soon as possible to meet timelines required by the MOF and avoid the delays in the budget processes which occurred during the reporting period.
- A detailed plan for the construction of provincial offices should be prepared by mid-2007 to ensure a functioning field structure by 2009
- A sustainable communication strategy with the provinces should be developed by 2007 to be better able to implement planned activities
- An audit of the IEC website should be conducted to ensure that all relevant information regarding the IEC is available to the outside world

6. Financial Status and Utilisation

All annual expenditure figures are subject to later adjustment. Please note that although ELECT project activities were implemented in 2007, due to close affinity between some transitional support activities and ELECT, no donor funding was spent on ELECT until January 2007.

6.1. Financial Status

Table 1: Overview of Contributions Utilized in 2006 for Transitional Support to the IEC and 2005 Election Costs

Donor	Contributions to Afghan Elections Extended (2004-2006)
CANADA	466,144
UNDP	649,000
Belgium	94,452
UK	87,934
Total	1,297,530

*Belgium and UK funds were contributed for the 2005 Afghan elections and applied to elections project expenses in 2006.

Table 2: Funding Status (as of the end of the year)

Donor	Received	Expenditures		Balance	Earmarked	Available Funding (as of 1 Jan 2007)	Remarks
		Reporting Year Only	Total				
UNDP	649,000	599,983	599,983	49,016	ALD Salaries for December	500,000	ELECT expenses
CANADA	466,144	453,075	453,075	13,069		-	For transitional phase support to IEC
Belgium	94,452	93,708	93,708	744		-	for VREP
UK	87,935	74,190	74,190	13,745	Used to pay remaining audit costs	-	for VREP
Total	1,297,531	1,220,955	1,220,955	76,575		0	500,000

*Belgium and UK funds were contributed for the 2005 Afghan elections but were applied to elections project expenses in 2006.

6.3 Financial Utilisation

Table 3: Annual Expenditure by Activity [1 January – 31 December]

Activity	Budget (2006)	Expenditures	Balance	Delivery Rate
Activity 1	84,215	89,312	-5,097	
Activity 2		4,253	-4,253	
Activity 3	108,444	12,166	96,278	
Activity 10	469,000	545,382	-76,382	
Activity 12	621,311	555,277	66,034	
UNDP GMS	14,565	14,565	0	
Total	1,297,536	1,220,955	76,581	94%

Table 4: 2006 Expenditure by Donor [1 January – 31 December]

Donors	Activity	Budget (2006)	Expenditures	Balance	Delivery Rate	Remarks
UNDP	Activity 1	-	44	- 44		ALD Salaries for December not reflected yet
	Activity 2	-	4,253	- 4,253		
	Activity 10	469,000	480,184	- 11,184		
	Activity 12	180,000	115,502	64,498		
	Sub Total (UNDP)	649,000	599,983	49,017	92%	
Canada	Activity3	11,599	60	11,539		
	Activity 12	441,311	439,776	1,536		
	GMS	13,239	13,239	-		
	Sub Total (Canada)	466,149	453,075	13,074	97%	
UK	Activity1	84,215	63,947	20,268		The last payment for the audit still needs to be made
	Activity 3	2,959	9,483	- 6,524		
	GMS	760	760	-		
	Sub Total (UK)	87,934	74,190	13,744	84%	
Belgium	Activity1	-	25,321	- 25,321		
	Activity 3	93,886	2,623	91,263		
	Activity 10	-	65,197	- 65,197		
	GMS	566	566	-		
	Sub Total (Belgium)	94,452	93,708	745	99%	
Total		1,297,536	1,220,955	76,581	94%	

Annex I. Project activities implemented by IFES and The Asia Foundation as part of the ELECT project

Activities conducted by The Asia Foundation during the reporting period:

General and Elections-Related Training to the IEC:

The IECS Training and Capacity Building Dept. planned, organized and conducted different training in order to improve professional, skills and knowledge of IECS HQ and Field staff. All the training courses were funded by TAF and training as conducted from June 2006 up to the present.

Finance Management Course:

The course was conducted by BRAC trainers at Building # 3, IEC Compound for 19 IECS HQ and field Admin/Finance/Logistics officials.

General Management Course:

This course was conducted from 26 August - 02 September 2006 by Afghan Inkishafee and Tarbiawee Markaz (AITM) trainers for 19 IECS HQ and field staff at IEC Compound, Building #3.

Gender Awareness Course:

This training conducted by Afghan Inkishafee and Tarbiawee Markaz (AITM) trainers for 11 participants (10 IECS and 1 FEFA) from 22-26 July 2006.

BRIDGE Trainings:

In addition to ensuring the continuation of governmental and international support for the IEC, the most important task for the Independent Election Commission is to develop the capacity of the electoral staff in all relevant electoral areas, countrywide. To achieve this, the IEC, through its Training and Capacity Building Department, has had to plan, organize, and conduct trainings in different fields of Election Administration for its HQ and field staff. TAF has provided an experienced adviser and has organized the following BRIDGE training courses for the IEC HQ and the field staff.

- **Module 1: Election Management Bodies**
The training for Module 1 was conducted from 11 June-10 August 2006 through a total of 5 sessions. About 113 participants attended these sessions of which 49 were from FEFA and 9 from other organizations. It was carried out by BRIDGE semi-accredited facilitators from the IECS.
- **Module 5: Voter Registration and Module 9: Election Observers**
The training for Modules 5 & 9 was conducted from 10 September- 12 October in 4 sessions for IEC and FEFA staff. 95 participants attended.
- **Module 7- Preparation for the Electoral Event**
The training for the second session of Module 7 was ongoing as of the end of 2006. The first session was conducted from 11-15 November during which 28 participants (PEOs) were present. Following the first session an Administration workshop was organized for 3 days for 33 PEOs in IEC. This workshop was funded by TAF.
- **Translation:**
The translation of the BRIDGE modules 1, 5, 7 and 9 was performed by the Global translation unit through the financial support of TAF and the proofreading was completed by IEC translators.

Public outreach:

Progress achieved by TAF in this area includes:

- A Public Outreach strategy has been drafted by the IEC and training materials have been designed and are being printed before December 2006. The training materials prepared include those for general information of the public in Afghanistan and public outreach activities of the CVR.
- The general material includes information on IEC and electoral activities done by IEC including the forthcoming CVR. Nearly 50,000 copies of this have been printed by the TAF.

Study tours for IEC Commissioners and IECS:

In the year 2006 3 study tours to India, Australia and Bosnia were organised for the IEC and IECS staff to enable the IEC to study the electoral experiences of these countries. The tours to India and Australia were organised by TAF. In these tours a number of IEC Commissioners and IECS staff participated and brought useful inputs. The study tour reports were presented before the IECS staff to disseminate the learning experience of the participants.

IT support and capacity development:

Results achieved by TAF in support of IEC IT-related issues include:

- A review of the current ICT assessment of the staffing within the IEC, highlighting areas of weakness where capacity building is needed.
- Identification of alternative technology solutions for the CVR pilot project including cost implications, with a view to help decision making in the CVR project formulation.
- Assessment of training needs of the Mol officials in the field of IT to ensure their services during project implementation and during the maintenance phase of the project.
- Identification of CVR technologies completed and international tender prepared and published on the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office (IAPSO) and UNDP global and Afghanistan websites.
- Training of Mol staff for implementation and maintenance of CVR started.
- Designing the training module for the CVR project staff in progress.

Activities conducted by IFES during the reporting period:

Cooperation with Electoral Authorities of other countries:

Additionally, Two IEC commissioners participated in the Executive Committee meeting of the Association of Asian Electoral Authorities (AAEA) in which the IEC was granted a visitor's status and recommendations were sent for granting full membership to the General body of the AAEA. This visit was funded by the IFES and the participant Commissioners shared their experiences with the IEC plenary.

The IEC has also approached the Election Commission of India and Association of African Electoral Authorities for signing MOU for mutual cooperation on electoral issues.

Study tours by IEC Commissioners and IECS:

In the year 2006 3 study tours to India, Australia and Bosnia were organised for the IEC and IECS staff to enable them to benefit from the electoral experiences of these countries. The tour to Bosnia was

organised by IFES. In these tours a number of IEC Commissioners and IECS staff participated and brought useful inputs. The study tour reports were presented before the IECS staff to disseminate the learning experience of the participants.

Preparation of draft electoral law:

A number of deficiencies were observed in the electoral law, during the elections in 2004 and 2005 which needed to be addressed. A number of regulations were issued by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) during the 2004 and 2005 elections to address these gaps in the Electoral Law. These regulations and procedures passed in 2004 and 2005 needed to be reviewed in the light of the past experiences and after such a review have been made a part of the law.

The IEC made great efforts to identify key issues of concern around which 6 discussion papers were prepared and widely circulated after approval from the national and international stakeholders. The discussion papers covered important issues like Electoral Calendar, Electoral System, Independence of the Election Commission, Campaign finance, Municipal Law and Electoral Complaints. The IEC then initiated a national dialogue on these issues, involving all stakeholders, including civil society groups. Initially the recipients of these papers were invited to give written comments. This process was followed by six round tables organized in Mazar (13 June), Kabul (18 June), Herat (20 June), Kabul (26 June), and Jalalabad (3 July), which concluded with a National Workshop on legal reforms on 9-10 July. IFES provided services of a consultant on the electoral system whose recommendations were examined by the Legal sub-committee of the IEC in detail.

The suggestions and proposals received during the roundtables and the seminar and the recommendation of the Consultant on the Electoral System have been used as an input for drafting the law reform proposal. The exercise of reviewing the existing Law and making recommendations for changes and additions has been completed and the draft law has been sent to the government for consideration and legislation by the Parliament.

IFES provided an experienced Legal Adviser to facilitate this task during the preparation of draft law.

IT Capacity Building:

One of the most urgent IEC capacity building requirements is in the field of IT. IEC needs to build its capacity to run its IT services and the maintenance of the internet servers, the IEC website, the election databases and last but not the least the - implementation of the CVR pilot project which is substantially IT intensive. The IEC IT staffs till now has developed capacity for running its internet services but with passage of time the IT requirements are growing and skills will have to be adjusted. The CVR will add responsibilities like the maintenance of the CVR database which will include facial and Iris recognition as well as processing of these data etc. This is a big task ahead for the IEC.

Added to this, is the problem of attrition of the experienced staff in the IT section. The IEC staff is likely to get paid at PRR scales from November onwards. These scales are too low compared to the open market salaries and the experienced IT staff will find alternative employment elsewhere. Therefore retaining experienced staff is going to be yet another problem in the near future. The IEC is currently making an effort to get Super Scale Salaries (USD 500-2000) for the IT staff and additionally a retention policy is worked out to give incentives to the staff to work with the IEC in the future.

IFES is providing an experienced IT Adviser and a Database Expert to meet the CVR project needs.

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