

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

Highlights

- IESG conducts lessons learned workshops for two Peacebuilding Fund projects
- IESG holds staff retreat in Mogadishu
- Two TPEC commissioners appointed in Puntland
- Donors approved no cost extension for Elections Project



Electoral Dispute Resolution Mechanism lessons learned workshop, Mogadishu. Photo credit UNSOM

Electoral and Political Updates

On 6 June 2022, The Galmudug Council of Ministers submitted two draft legislative bills: 1) to establish the Galmudug State Electoral Commission and 2) a bill on Political Organisations and Parties in Galmudug State to the Galmudug State Assembly for debate.

On 15 June, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud appointed Hamza Abdi Bare as the Prime Minister (PM) of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS).

On 25 June, the House of the People (HoP) of the Federal Parliament

endorsed the newly PM Hamza Abdi Bare. Two hundred and twenty parliamentarians attended the session and approved the appointment by a show of hands and the PM was sworn in by the Chief of the Supreme Court.

On 21 July, donors approved a six month no cost extension for the Joint Elections Project to continue support to the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) and TPEC.

On 23 July in Garowe, the Speaker of Puntland Parliament nominated two

commissioners to the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) to replace the former Chair and his deputy who resigned in January 2022. Puntland Parliament approved the nominations on 30 July.

On 25 July, the HoP of the Federal Parliament endorsed the request from PM Hamza Bare for a ten days extension to form the cabinet. The PM held consultative meetings with different sections of Somali society such as religious groups, politicians, women and youth ahead of the formation of a new government.

IESG staff retreat



SRSG James Swan and UNDP Resident Representative Jocelyn Mason with the IESG team, Mogadishu. Photo Credit: UNSOM

On 20-22 June, IESG held its all staff retreat in Mogadishu. The retreat was launched with the participation of SRSG James Swan, UNDP Resident Representative Jocelyn Mason and NIEC Chairperson Halima Ibrahim while DSRSG Anita Kiki Gbeho and the NIEC Chairperson gave closing remarks at the final session. The retreat provided an opportunity for the IESG team to

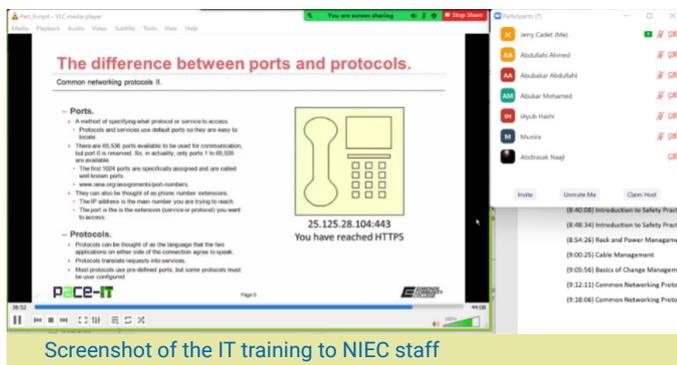
gather after more than two years due to COVID 19 restrictions. While the team took the opportunity of the retreat to reflect on the support to the indirect elections and solicited lessons learned, IESG affirmed that the project would continue to support national and sub-national Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to conduct direct elections.

Support to NIEC

Office of the Political Party Registrar (OPPR)

During the reporting period, IESG updated the political party registration software based on inputs provided by the NIEC's OPPr. Registration forms have been revised and amendments were made to the Political Party Member and the Political Party Merger modules. Eventually, the required Information Technology (IT) equipment and off the shelf software will be procured to enable the utilization of the software for political party registration. In the meantime, IESG will continue to work closely with the OPPr on improving the software.

NIEC IT Staff Training



Screenshot of the IT training to NIEC staff

IESG provided online training for the NIEC IT staff on networking basics from 17- 27 July. The training covered important networking standards principles. This knowledge is not only important for NIEC's day-to-day activities but also during the elections period when data processing will be key to the overall success of operations.

IESG Legal/Procedures

Regular mentoring sessions were held between representatives of the IESG Legal/Procedures team and the NIEC legal department during June and July to provide advice and support on legal and procedural matters. This included discussions on the draft bill on political parties prepared by the Galmudug cabinet. The NIEC provided advice to the Galmudug authorities on the content of the draft bill. Furthermore, IESG provided advice on NIEC documents to advocate and explain the need for electoral legal reform. A workshop on electoral systems for members of the NIEC legal department will be provided by IESG in September 2022.

Public Information

During the reporting period, IESG Voter Education Officer met with NIEC's acting Public Outreach (PO) Director to discuss the PO Department's quarterly work plan.

It was agreed that once the first draft is finalized, it will be shared with IESG to provide inputs that would enable NIEC PO staff to fulfill their roles effectively.

Support to TPEC

IESG meets with TPEC

IESG conducted a field visit to Garowe between 17-19 July to meet with TPEC to discuss support and other requirements for the Puntland district council elections scheduled for later this year.

Electoral equipment handed over to TPEC

At the request of the NIEC, IESG facilitated the handover of electoral equipment that the Puntland State Election Implementation Team (SEIT) used for the indirect elections to TPEC in July.

Lessons Learned Workshops

On 18-19 June, IESG with the support of the Peace Building Fund (PBF) organized a two-day workshop on Election Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (EDRM) lessons learned in the 2020/2022 indirect elections in Somalia. The two-day workshop included presentations by the facilitators and special guests, plenary discussions, and working group sessions. Participants included the Election Dispute Resolution Committee (EDRC), NIEC and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to consider lessons learned from the indirect elections. Reflecting on the achievements of the EDRC, all participants acknowledged that:

- the EDRC structure provided a platform for electoral stakeholders to present their grievances reducing the potential for conflict, which could have escalated to violence
- the CSOs support to assist women was appreciated despite the challenges.



EDRM lessons learned Workshop Participants, 18 June 2022. Photo Credit: UNSOM

There was a candid discussion on the challenges encountered during the indirect electoral process with applying the fundamental principles of independence, integrity and impartiality not clearly established. Other challenges included financial barriers which may have caused people to use alternative channels for complaints. The costs of establishing and supporting the structure of an ad-hoc EDR body are high and unsustainable. The extended electoral calendar caused many problems and had the possibility to increase electoral tensions and insecurity.

Overall, the lessons drawn pointed towards:

- *Alternative sustainable EDR Models:* that are in line with established EDR models which should be adopted well in advance of the next elections and there should be a clear legal framework.
- Well defined EDR Mechanisms and Responsibilities need to be established within the permanent EMB structure. Appeals to any decisions made by the permanent EMB in relation to complaints should be heard by an authorised court. This would enhance fundamental EDR principles for sustainability as well as accountability after the electoral process.
- Members adjudicating complaints should be independent, free from a conflict of interest, and have sufficient capacity.
- An authorized court for appeal should be clearly defined in a timely manner.
- *Synchronised Efforts:* National efforts for electoral conflict prevention should be supported and assistance should be provided in building the capacity of the EMB managing EDR.
- *Specialised Training:* A training package should be provided for technical and advisory support for the NIEC and the relevant court(s) to manage EDR and ensure that all electoral procedures and decisions are legal and constitutional.

Lessons Learned Workshop on Elections Security

Upon the conclusion of the 2020-22 indirect elections, IESG with the support of the Peace Building Fund (PBF) organised and facilitated a four-day lessons learned workshop from 13 to 16 June which was well attended by the FGS and Federal Member States (FMSs) police, African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), UN agencies and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) of Sweden. Some of the main lessons learned are as follows:

- *Police Lead for Elections Security:* Elections raise law and order concerns and it is essential that the Somali police lead elections security for elections.

- *Joint Planning:* IESG’s elections security project supported the establishment of the police National Joint Operations Center (JOC) but the Somali Police Force (SPF) declined to operationalise it. The police led JOCs in the regions offer much potential for joint planning and coordination but needs to be further developed for which there is widespread FMS police support to do so. IESG has recommended to the Joint Police Programme Executive Board areas for further support particularly for JOC staff training.
- *Women’s Situation Desks (WSD):* The inclusion of WSDs within the JOCs was embraced by all stakeholders. FBA was a strong supporter of this initiative and funded and conducted training for all WSD staff.
- *Training and Mentoring the Somali Security Force (SSF):* The SSF were better trained and equipped ahead of the 2020-22 elections than they were before the 2016-17 elections. However, specialist training and mentoring of the SSF for elections security needs to be delivered well ahead of the next elections. Human rights training needs to be embedded into all formal training.
- *Prepare for Elections in Advance:* The horizons for thinking and planning by the SSF are short, and the demands on SSF resources are to deal with the everyday pressing security challenges. Without a confirmed electoral model well in advance, it is hard for the SSF to know what to plan for therefore the electoral model needs to be agreed well in advance to allow the SSF to plan accordingly.
- *Community Engagement:* A key lesson is the need for the SSF to engage more with the community. The lessons learned workshop revealed low levels of engagement and lack of options for the community to communicate, report and complain to the police about intimidation, harassment and violence. These basic tools (email address; hotline; contact numbers; front desk) should be in place as soon as possible as a matter of good practice and should not have to wait for an election.



Participants in the election security lessons learned workshop. 14 June 2022. Photo credit: IESG

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