Joint EC-UNDP Thematic Workshop on Sustainability in Electoral Administration

Case Study: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Afghanistan Profile

- 25 – 30 Million People
- 85% rural population
- Literacy Rates (M 43% F 13%)
- Culturally conservative
- Ethnic tensions
- Political Environment
  - Political apathy
  - Lack of confidence/trust in the process
  - Lack of political will to reform electoral process
- Security environment worsening/transition
Independent/Autonomous

7 member Commission (Directly appointed by President of Republic)

Secretariat (HQ and 34 Provinces)

CEO appointed by President of Republic

Funded largely by donors:

- 2003 -> 2015 = 6 election cycles & 4 VR exercises
  =~$1 billion direct costs
  Govt. contribution $20 million
Legal context

• The IEC is responsible for fulfilling its legal mandate to maximum effectiveness [Electoral Law (Art. 11) “a person with the following qualifications shall be eligible to vote in elections...4) has been registered on the voters’ list by the Commission].

• Even if VR extracted from Civil registry in future – IEC still has legal responsibility to certify that list.
VR Challenges in Afghan Context

- Lack of personal documents
- Lack of consistent names
- Lack of birthdates
- No register of births or deaths
- Lack of address data
- No census data – obtaining accurate ethnic numbers is extremely political and has impeded any proper data collection
- Lack of formal district lines
Official Government Boundary
VR Background

1. VR Operational Framework established in 1 week in 2003:
2. Complete Vacuum of VR/Civic Data
3. Compressed timeframe in initial planning and shortcomings of data collected has compounded problems ever since
4. Result: unsustainable costly periodic exercises
2003–04 Registration/2005 Update

Issued 12.5 million voter cards

- Photos for women were not mandatory
- No population census upon which to base registration centers
- Formal identification documents were very uncommon
- In 2003/4 no polling centers to which to allocate registrants
- VRCs became PCs – no coordination with population centers
- District Boundaries not formalised

- Estimated direct cost: $120 million
2006-2007 Joint Civil/VR Pilot Program

Explored the possibility of a joint civil and voter registry, which would include biometric data.

- Coordination with MOI extremely difficult
- Timelines for VR and NID card programs not compatible in short to medium term:
- Due to security concerns and many other challenges the programme was never able to be completed.
2008 – 2010 Registration Updates

Issued 4.5 million voter cards

- Extremely short timeframe for planning and operation
- Incompatibility between 2003-5 data and 2008/10 as biometric data not taken in first registration –
- Impossible to de-duplicate both data sets, and thus that 17 million cards were distributed out of an estimated voter population of 10.5 million
- Growing security problems

Estimated direct cost: $86 Million
### Problems with manual bio data capture in 2008

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VR Exercises To Date

Only periodic voter registry (VR) prior to elections have been conducted

- 2003–04 Nationwide Registration
- 2005 Update (Top-Up)
- 2006 – 2007 Joint Civil/Electoral Register Pilot Program
- 2008 Update (Top Up) – Added Biometric data
- 2010 Update (Top Up)

Result: No PC-specific voters lists produced
VR Cost Summary

- 1 Full Scale National VR Exercise
- 4 “Top Up” VR Exercises
  - $210 million in Direct Costs (Indirect Costs x2 or x3)
- Govt. contribution = ~ $2mil./year
- Int’l funding not expected to continue at this level
- A continuous process ($4 mil./year) is only sustainability VR option but has high upfront costs
Observer Reports

• OSCE Election Support Team – 2005 Final Report
• European Union – Election Assessment Mission 2009
• OSCE Election Support Team – 2010 Final Report

These and other national and international observer reports refer to the fact that:

1. Current VR Process is flawed and adversely affects the credibility of the process...
2. Emphasis must be on the creation of a sustainable register.
Some Possible VR Options

- No VR
- VR Top-up (Districts, Provinces) ($20 million)
- Nationwide VR ($80 million)
- Polling Day VR ($20 million)
- Continuous District Level VR ($4 million/year)
- Civil Registry
2012 VR Decision Making Process

- 2012 June/July VR Planning/Feasibility Study/IEC Decision
- 2012 Oct. 27 - IEC produced Nationwide VR plan
- 2012 Sept - Decision/E-NID/Implications and Consequences for Sustainability
- 2012 Dec. 15 - “Complementary” plan
- 2013 Jan. 2 - Letter/Current Plan/Links to E-NID
- 2013 Jan. 15 – IEC produces third plan
Considerations for Decision-Making

• Access for voters
• Access for female voters
• Cost
• Perception of the IEC
• Vulnerability to Fraud
• PC lists
• Complementarity to E-tazkera
3rd VR Plan

- ‘Top-Up’ on existing registry (est. 4 million voters)
- Cost: $25 million
- Electronic National ID issued by MoI is the long term solution – implementation and funding uncertain
Consequences

• VR PC List impossible
• No major improvement to the process, and thus little value for money
• Public perception of the EMB Independence negatively affected
• Could be open to fraudulent registration
• Fairly inclusive as security would prohibit comprehensive coverage under a new exercise
• Lack of sustainability in the exercise
Lessons Learned

- Given that elections are political processes there is a need to negotiate with key stakeholders with a view to achieving consensus on strategic objectives and support on VR operations.
- A strategic approach to a choice of VR system must harmonize short and long-term (political and operational) objectives.
- There must be sufficient emphasis on and time for the operational planning of a VR exercise.
Lessons Learned

• Democracy development may follow a continuum: post conflict ->transition->stabilization

• Therefore: A VR plan must include provisions for a movement from periodic to continuous operations (to possibly civil registry) and provisions for deregistration.

• Sustainable VR cannot happen in a vacuum and must be accompanied by a raft of governmental processes including: Census, births/deaths register, formalized accurate geo data
Looking Ahead

• Political Transition
• Security Transition
• More limited international Resources
• Worsening Security Situation
• Ongoing Peace Talks
Improving Sustainability

• Political
  – IEC Independence (Legal Framework/Selection Process/Mandate/Financing)

• Technical
  – PC Lists/PC Locations/E-NID/Data Sharing/Updating/Certification by IEC

• Cost
  – E-NID Enrolment/Updating/Technology
Thank You Very Much
Muito Obrigado
Merci Beaucoup
Shukran