Joint EC-UNDP Thematic Workshop on Sustainability in Electoral Administration
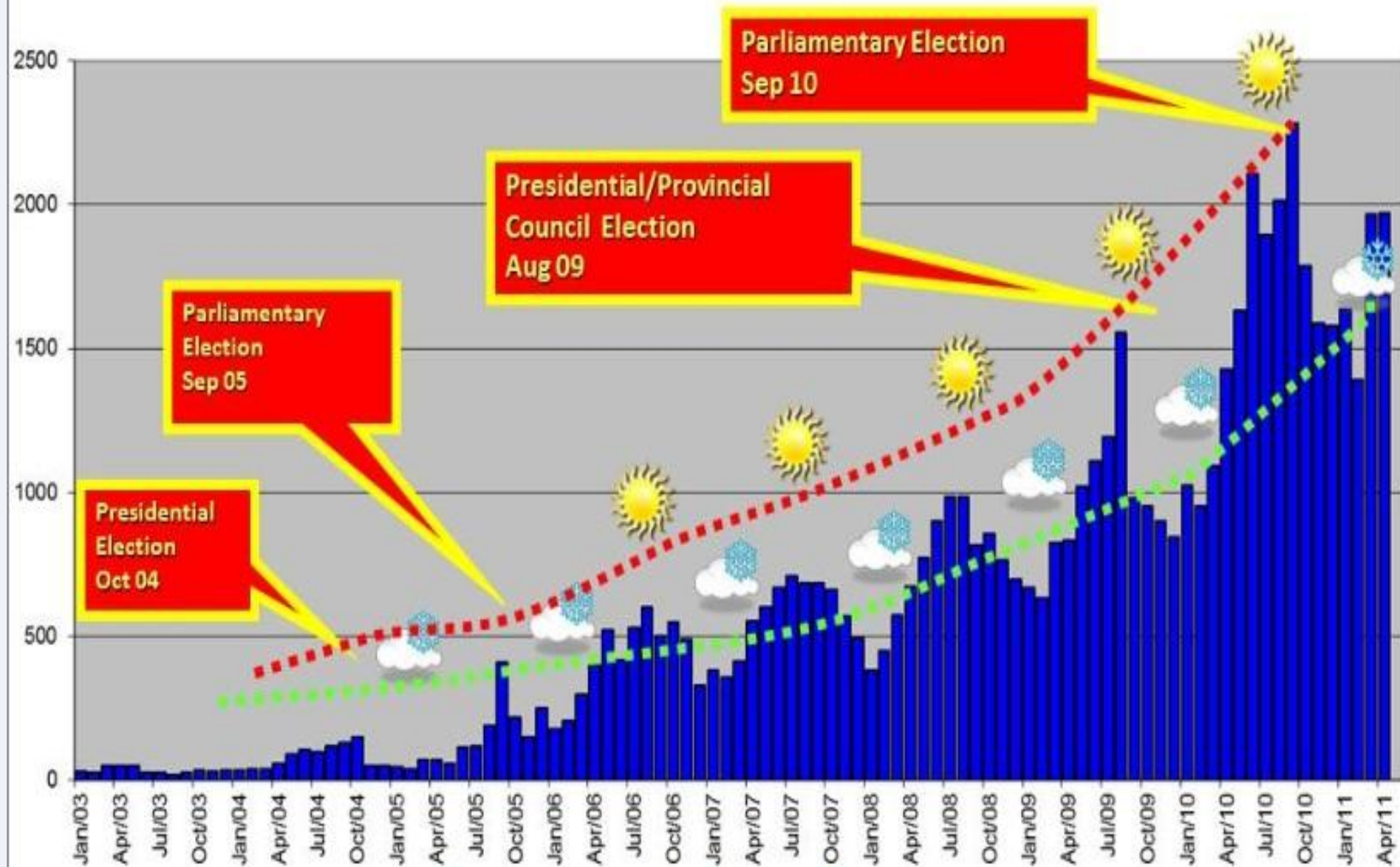
Case Study:
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

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

Security Incidents since 2003

© UNDSS AFG - Security Incidents

Parliamentary Election
Sep 10

Presidential/Provincial
Council Election
Aug 09

Parliamentary
Election
Sep 05

Presidential
Election
Oct 04

EMB

- 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
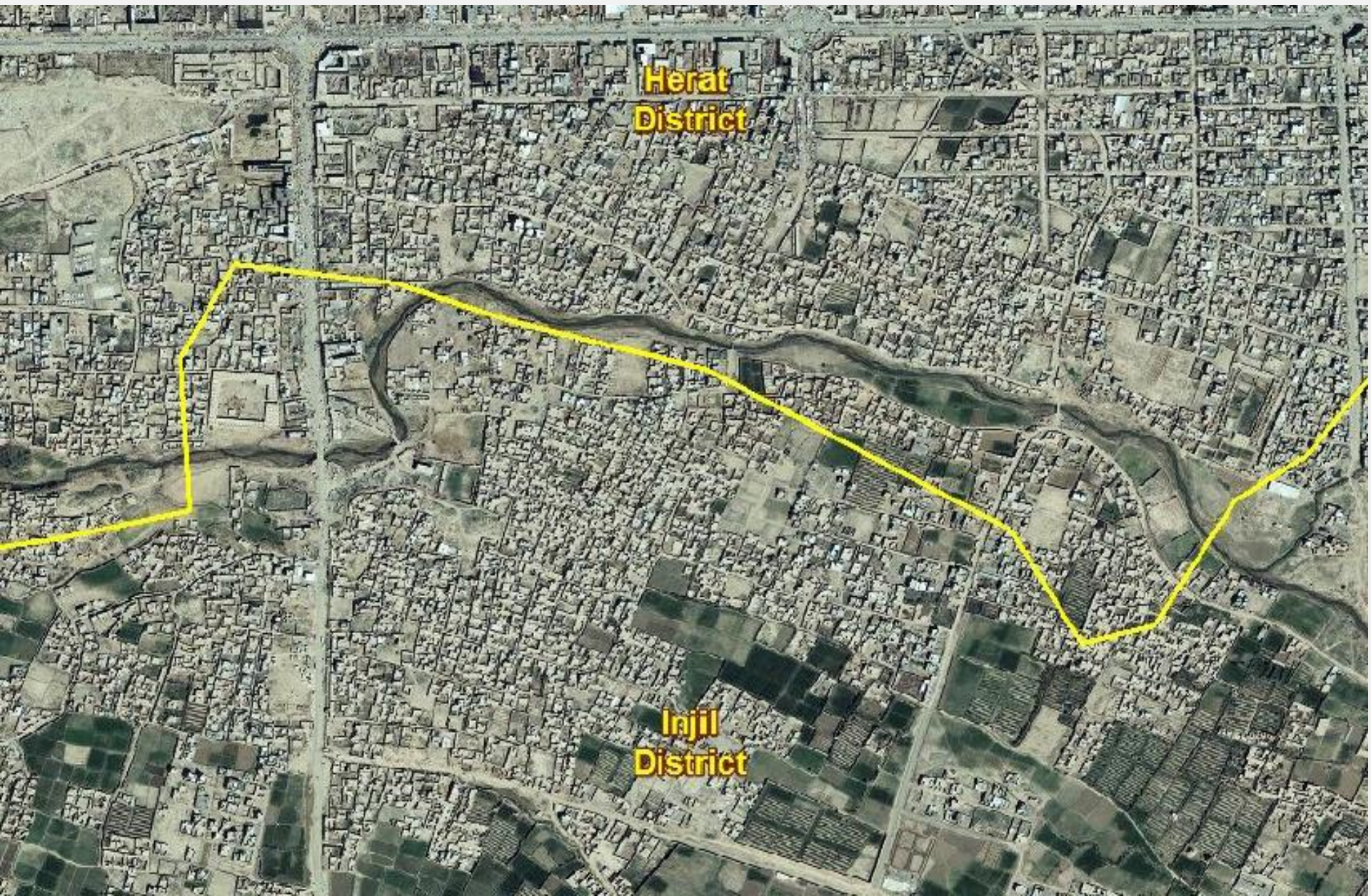   Govt. contribution $20 million

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
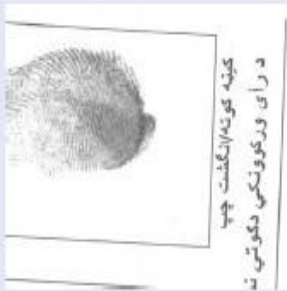- Growing security problems

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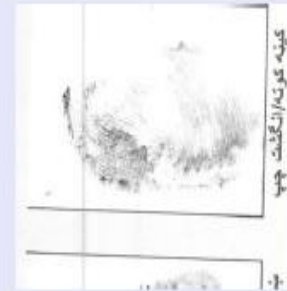
Problems with manual bio data capture in 2008

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 July 27 - Pres. Decree – Request for VR Plan/On Budget Proposal (in 3 months)

➢ 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