

AusAID Support to Elections in Afghanistan 2012 – 2016

CONCEPT NOTE

Section 1: Principles and background

1.1 Introduction

This Concept Note provides a strategy for AusAID's electoral support in Afghanistan over the next five years. It provides a contextual framework, goals, principles and recommendations of key areas for support based on needs, gaps and on AusAID's comparative advantage in contributing to particular programs. It was prepared through a desk review of documents, and interviews with stakeholders in Afghanistan and elsewhere. While Australia's support to Afghan elections and democratic governance has been substantial, it has not yet come under a consolidated framework. This document aims to provide such a framework. The intended audience is primarily AusAID staff working on Afghanistan and on democratic governance issues.

Elections are one important component of a broader democratic process. A key aspect of successful elections is informed participation by voters and civil society. Electoral support, as discussed in this Concept Note, can therefore include support to a range of different stakeholders in democratic development.

This Concept Note is linked to Australia's long-term whole-of-government commitment to security and development in Afghanistan, a commitment that is well-served by support to elections. Elections can ultimately contribute to an Afghan state that is more stable, legitimate, and responsive to the needs of the Afghan people. Elections can peacefully mediate domestic disagreement and provide legitimate platforms for all sectors of society. Well-run elections are a check on corruption and other acts corrosive to the state-society compact and potentially to peace and security.

1.2 What success would look like

This Concept Note defines two key goals:¹

Goal 1: Electoral institutions and processes are more sustainable, transparent and fair

Goal 2: Meaningful participation by women and men from a diversity of backgrounds in democratic institutions and processes is increased

In the fluid Afghan context achievements can be incremental and unpredictable, particularly looking five years into the future. Realistically, Australia cannot expect to see fraud-free elections in the next five years; nor a fully accurate Voter Register; nor huge increases in women's participation. However, with appropriate support to electoral institutions we can anticipate a further reduction in fraud, increasingly skilled electoral staff and institutions, and an improved Voter Register. As a result of education efforts, as well as more credible institutions, we can expect to see a gradual

¹ These goals are articulated more specifically as Outcomes in Section 2.

increase in informed participation, which would include higher turnout by a diversity of voters who make individual choices based on information from a range of sources.

Progress of AusAID's contribution to these modest goals must be reality-checked on a regular basis, through ongoing contextual analysis and robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Some of the key risks, which could derail even this modest level of achievement, are described in the Risk Management Plan (Annex D).

1.3 Principles for AusAID engagement in Afghan elections

1. **Elections as key to rights and development:** "Supporting democracy is a crucial endeavor for the international donor community, both because of the *intrinsic value of democracy* as a political system that helps foster human dignity and *the contributions that democratic governance makes toward better developmental* outcomes for individual citizens. Elections are only one element of democracy, yet they are an irreplaceable one—without regular, genuine elections democracy does not function."²
2. **Commitment to inclusive Afghanisation:** fulfilling the international community's commitment to Afghanisation.³ An inclusive process means engaging with formal bodies; as well as acknowledging the importance of ownership by Afghan civil society.
3. **International principles:** Reflective of relevant international principles on electoral assistance, including the *draft OECD-DAC Principles for Election Assistance 2010*, the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation* and *Code of Conduct for International Election Observers 2005*. Adhering to the principles of harmonisation, coordination and reduced fragmentation of aid as articulated in the OECD-DAC Paris Principles and Accra Agenda for Action.
4. **State-society relations:** Afghanistan is at a crucial juncture in terms of state- and nation-building. Citizens need to believe their elected governments to be legitimate and competent in order for a state-society pact to be built and for peace and development to be achieved. Credible elections are key to state-society relationship building.
5. **AusAID Strategies:** Supporting improved governance and human rights is one of Australia's key development goals in Afghanistan⁴ and a pillar of AusAID's Governance Strategy.⁵ *An Effective Aid Program for Australia* identifies effective governance as a strategic goal for the aid program. This includes "improving governance to deliver better services, improve security, and enhance justice and human rights."⁶
6. **Recognising that support to gender equality is a particularly important issue in Afghanistan:** Women's participation in democratic processes needs special attention, along with further development of legal and policy frameworks about women in Parliament. Participation includes supporting women's roles as voters, candidates, elected members, electoral officials,

² Draft Principles on International Elections Assistance, OECD, June 2010, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/17/45881241.pdf>. Italics added.

³ *AusAID's strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan 2010-12* p. 14

⁴ *AusAID's strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan 2010-12*

⁵ *Effective governance*

⁶ *An Effective Aid Program for Australia p4*

observers, party agents, elections reporters, community leaders and all other election-related roles.

7. **Recognising the ethnic make-up of Afghanistan:** Ethnicity impacts upon the way that different ethnic and tribal groups participate in society, including through influencing local and national decision-making processes as well as accessing information and services.
8. **Electoral Cycle approach:** recognising that elections should not be viewed as one-off-events that occur on voting day, but rather as continuous processes of policy-making, preparation, implementation and evaluation.⁷
9. **Engagement at provincial and district levels:** *AusAID's strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan* recognises the need to improve national-level legitimacy and capabilities, while at the same time ensuring local needs are met and local views heard.⁸

1.4 Background

AusAID has provided approximately USD19.4 million in support to Afghan electoral processes since 2004, with the aim of 'improving governance and the effectiveness of the Afghan Government.'⁹ AusAID was one of the earliest donors to support a sustainable Afghan-owned Independent Election Commission (IEC). AusAID support has continued through the multi-donor UNDP program *Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow* (ELECT), which now focuses on backing Afghan-led electoral institutions. In addition, AusAID has assisted US NGO The Asia Foundation (TAF) to carry out a range of civic education and election observation activities between elections and for the 2009 and 2010 polls.

Since 2001 Afghanistan has held four national elections. Presidential elections were held in 2004 and 2009 and elections for the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) were held in 2005 and 2010. Provincial council elections were held simultaneously with other elections in 2005 and 2009. Until 2005 elections were managed by a Joint Election Management Body (JEMB) and its Secretariat (JEMBS), including UN-appointed Commissioners and staff. A transition started in 2005, and by 2010 the IEC had been fully established. The IEC's seven Afghan Commissioners (including two women) made all key decisions and were the public face of the process. Afghan managers led the IEC's units. The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), mandated to receive and adjudicate electoral complaints, was also Afghan-led in 2010, although it had two international members. By 2010, 85 international UN staff worked on the elections, compared to 500 in 2005. UNDP, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), TAF and other international organisations continue to provide substantial funding and technical support. Observers generally agree that, despite ongoing security risks, error and fraud, the IEC performed credibly for the 2010 election.

Recent elections have been held in a difficult political context, which has impacted on the quality of elections and their contribution to democratisation. Transition to Afghan control of security by 2014 will impact on the security situation for the 2014

⁷ Examples of standard electoral cycles can be found at <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/topics/electoral-management/electoral%20cycle.JPG/view>.

<http://www.ifes.org/publication/df5353932a8e44b688aa33ab50fd552d/Paul%20Guerin%20-%20IDEA.pdf>

⁸ This means supporting provincial IEC and ECC offices; and elections for sub-national as well as national bodies.

⁹ This is the third pillar of *AusAID's strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan 2010-12*

Presidential elections; and ‘Afghanisation’ of development and governance processes is also intensifying. The 2010 Kabul Conference saw donors committing to putting at least 50% of aid money through Afghan Government budgets. At the same time, the international community has acknowledged the need for Afghanisation to be accompanied by improvements in government effectiveness and transparency.

During the Kabul Conference, the Afghan Government committed to “initiate within six months a strategy for long term electoral reform that addresses in particular the sustainability of the electoral process” and acknowledged that “transparent, inclusive and credible elections” are crucial.¹⁰ This commitment was re-affirmed at Bonn II in December 2011. These commitments are yet to be cemented in laws which guarantee the independence of the IEC and ECC; and in practices which demonstrate respect for impartial election processes and their outcomes.¹¹ Electoral reform remains crucial to the legitimacy of electoral processes; long delays in reforms risk further decline in voter turnout and reduced legitimacy of elected Afghan leadership. This could have negative consequences for the future of democratic governance as a whole.¹² There are various levels of electoral reform. Some, such as Constitutional change, are dependent upon the political will of the Afghan Government. Others, such as regulatory reform of the IEC, can be targeted through donor funded programs. It is important to note here that realistically it is not AusAID’s role to tackle high-level electoral reform explicitly, due to its highly political nature. However, we acknowledge that electoral reform is central to improvements in electoral administration and participation, and that Australia can support this indirectly through diplomatic channels and through partnerships with other organisations.

Centralisation of power in the President vis a vis the other institutions also impacts on elections. In recent years the President has increasingly used his powers of decree, including on electoral laws.¹³ Political analysts have also speculated that President Karzai may not step down at his two-term limit in 2014 due to a change in the Constitution through an extra-parliamentary Loya Jirga, a postponement of the scheduled election, or by other means.¹⁴

Peace processes in Afghanistan may effect major changes to the political settlement, including the potential of compromises with the Taliban which have them more involved in governance at the national and/or sub-national levels. On one hand, a well-designed, inclusive peace process may have a positive effect on democratic participation, including better security and improved state-society relations, making for more meaningful elections. On the other hand, ongoing stalemate and conflict, or compromises that marginalise important stakeholders or that prioritise compromise over human rights, could result in a retreat from democratic participation.

¹⁰A Renewed Commitment by the Afghan Government to the Afghan People; A Renewed Commitment by the International Community to Afghanistan,’ Kabul Conference Communiqué, 20 July 2010, p.10

¹¹ Of the 21 policy changes to which GIRoA committed at the Kabul Conference, just 3 have so far been implemented. Robert Lamb, CSIS, Washington DC.

¹² Democracy International consolidated recommendations so far made in 50 source documents by different agencies into a useful document called ‘Consensus Recommendations for Electoral Reform in Afghanistan’ in April 2010.

¹³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/21/opinion/21fri1.html>

¹⁴ For example, Arnoldy, B., *Afghanistan’s future murkier as Karzai disavows third term*, Christian Science Monitor, August 2011; Trofimov Y., *Clean up elections, West tells Karzai*, The Australian, 7 December 2011, p10

The security situation in recent years has impacted on democratic processes. According to TAF, the percentage of people afraid to participate in elections rose from 41% in 2006 to 57% in 2011.¹⁵ These fears are justified – on polling day in 2010 there were 66 reported deaths, at least 105 injuries, 33 explosions and 63 rocket attacks.¹⁶ Voter turnout has declined. For presidential elections, there was a huge drop to 38.8% turnout in 2009 compared with 83.7% in 2004. For Wolesi Jirga elections, turnout fell but was more stable at 45.8% (2010) compared to 49.4% (2005).¹⁷ Women’s turnout was significantly lower than men’s, as discussed in Annex A.

The next elections are scheduled for 2013 (Provincial Councils), 2014 (Presidential), and 2015 (Wolesi Jirga).¹⁸ The many donors that have supported past elections are cautious. For example, major donors to UNDP’s ELECT I project for the period 2008 – 2011 appear to be reducing their support for ELECT II (2012 – 2013). This situation may be temporary. Many donors may be waiting to see what develops in terms of electoral reform, or on-budget commitments. Others may be less interested in the Electoral Cycle approach and may make commitments closer to election time. Australia may become an increasingly significant donor (both relatively and absolutely) in this area in the near future. This role would put Australia in a strategic position to influence electoral assistance. On the other hand, significant investments in elections, while very important, also bear the risks associated with democratic development in the context of Afghanistan.

Section 2 Program Goals and Outcomes

2.1 Goals and Outcomes

This section establishes Goals and Outcomes for AusAID’s program of electoral support, discussing the rationale as well as ways that progress toward each can be achieved.

Goal 1: Electoral institutions and processes are more sustainable, transparent and fair

Outcome 1: The IEC and the systems and processes under its responsibility are developing and well-functioning

Outcome 2: Monitoring and reporting of electoral events and processes is supported and improved

Goal 2: Meaningful participation by women and men from a diversity of backgrounds in democratic institutions and processes is increased

Outcome 3: Women and men’s awareness of civic responsibilities and voting practices is increased.

¹⁵ Survey of the Afghan People 2011, TAF, <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/TAF2011AGSurvey.pdf>

¹⁶ European Union Electoral Assistance Team (limited observation team) report.

¹⁷ The Asia Foundation, *Survey of the Afghan People, 2010*

¹⁸ It is widely anticipated that the Provincial Council elections will be run in 2014.

2.2 Outcome 1: The IEC and the systems and processes under its responsibility are developing and well-functioning

The Constitution of Afghanistan establishes an Independent Election Commission (IEC) as having responsibility for supervising ‘all types of elections and referendums’ in Afghanistan.¹⁹ A temporary Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC)²⁰ is established 120 days before an election to oversee complaints and disputes. According to the Electoral Law an Elections Media Commission is also established 60 days prior to polling day to monitor media behavior, uphold the media code of conduct, mediate complaints and refer serious complaints to the Ministry of Information.

While the 2010 election provided an opportunity for the IEC to demonstrate its strengths, including strong leadership, a growing cadre of competent staff, and an increasing capacity to identify and address fraud, the IEC remains challenged on a number of fronts. As a young organisation, it will require time and effort to develop systems, processes, infrastructure and a fully skilled staff. In addition, a key challenge for both the IEC and ECC is the legal framework which, among other things, provides for all Commissioners to be appointed by the President.

UNDP has supported electoral processes in Afghanistan, including voter registration, since 2003. In 2006 it established *Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacities for Tomorrow (ELECT)* which from 2008-11 focused on strengthening the IEC. An ELECT basket fund was the primary mechanism for international support to the IEC, receiving almost USD 380 million from 27 donors.²¹ Australia contributed AUD8 million to UNDP in 2004 and 2005 for voter registration and an additional AUD6 million to ELECT in 2008 and 2009.

The IEC received additional support from donors including Australia which, through TAF, funded BRIDGE²² training for IEC staff as well as the establishment of a Resource Center. USAID, through IFES, is providing technical assistance for legal and regulatory processes and anticipates that this support will continue over the coming period.

UNDP, in close collaboration with IEC, has developed a proposal to continue the work of ELECT. ELECT II is limited to the electoral mid-cycle (2012-2013) and focuses on: institutional, operational and technical capacity of the IEC; improvements to the voter registry; and the capacity of the IEC to encourage democratic participation. It is during this current phase of the electoral cycle that the IEC has the potential to make considerable gains in embedding processes and systems and advancing electoral reform. Due to the crowded electoral calendar the IEC rarely has such opportunities. It is recommended therefore that AusAID make a sizeable contribution to the ELECT II basket fund. A contribution of \$10 million will give

¹⁹ Constitution of Afghanistan 2003 Article 61.

²⁰ There is room within the existing legal framework for a permanent ECC secretariat located inside the IEC, which can then develop into an independent full-blown ECC before elections

²¹ ELECT Annual progress Report 2010, 26

²² Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) is a comprehensive international elections management training program run by a consortium and housed at the AEC, Melbourne, Australia

Australia leverage to influence programming as well as quality engagement with ELECT II management and the Donor Elections Working Group.

AusAID should encourage UNDP and IEC to commence discussions on a third phase of ELECT (an extension to ELECT II or a substitute program) well prior to the conclusion of ELECT II. It is important that planning for the next phase is well progressed before operational planning for the 2014 Presidential election begins. Discussions for future programming should also give consideration to support for the ECC. Based on the likelihood that a UNDP program in the next phase of the electoral cycle may receive greater support from other donors, it is recommended that AusAID contribute \$8 million to the next program of support to the IEC. This will need to be re-assessed at a later date.

The IEC indicated during consultations in Kabul that it would benefit from some support outside that provided by ELECT II, such as BRIDGE training. Given that AusAID has already provided direct support to the IEC, it would be appropriate to continue this support if doing so could be accommodated within the broader program.

Outcome 1 recommendations: AUD10 million to ELECT II
AUD8 million to a continuation of ELECT II (to be re-assessed in late 2012)

2.3 Outcome 2: Monitoring and reporting of electoral events and processes is supported and improved

Domestic and international observation missions make important contributions to electoral integrity and legitimacy, to advocacy for electoral reform, and to the learning process of all electoral stakeholders. International missions bring expertise and the benefit of local and international media attention but they are expensive, the observers may not be familiar with the language or culture, and they are constrained by poor security.²³ Domestic observers risk being perceived as biased and they are more vulnerable to coercion or intimidation, but they have the advantages of: knowing the language and culture; more ready access to insecure areas; being less costly; and remaining present in the country over the long-term. In a transitional context like Afghanistan, a combination of both domestic and international observers is important; and coordination between them is also key to maximizing coverage and the impact of findings.

AusAID provided support – alongside other donors including US and UK – to the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL's)²⁴ 2009 and 2010 international election observation missions through TAF. The missions were generally considered to be a success, although the size of the 2010 mission was reduced substantially due to security concerns following a Presidential decree on the use of private security companies.

It is recommended that Australia fund domestic and international observation missions for the 2014 and 2015 elections. Planning for observation of the 2014

²³ For example, one international observer who went to Uruzgan for the 2010 Parliamentary election told AusAID that he was confined to his accommodation due to security threats.

²⁴ ANFREL is a Bangkok-based coalition of 22 NGOs from 15 Asian countries which has carried out about 50 EOMs in Asia since 1997.

election is not likely to begin until around 18 months prior to the event, so it is too early to determine the level to which other donors will support observation or which implementing partners they will use. However, it is likely that there will be opportunities for AusAID to coordinate with other donors in the selection of implementing partners, including possibly the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) for domestic observation and ANFREL for international observation.

Civil society and the media also have an important role in ensuring that elections, Parliament and other democratic institutions and processes are held to account. Thus, it is essential that civil society and the media have the skills and resources required to make full contributions to democratic processes.

AusAID is already contributing to the capacity building of civil society organisations that engage in election-related work through *Strengthening Organizations Engaged in Civic Education and Elections*, implemented by TAF. This six month program, which concludes in April 2012, includes training in financial management, monitoring and evaluation, communications and BRIDGE.²⁵ One of the more notable media-related programs is the USAID funded Afghanistan Media Development and Empowerment Project (AMDEP). AMDEP is implemented by media development agency, Internews, and seeks to build the capacity of local independent media through technical support, equipment upgrades, business development, and strengthening of media industry associations. This USD 22 million program will conclude in October 2012 and funding for a continuation of AMDEP or similar program is not guaranteed.

There is considerable opportunity to contribute to the quality and reach of the media as well as to use the media as an educational tool. In terms of quality, Afghanistan's media is described as 'lively,' but the public broadcaster is perceived as having a strong pro-government bias; and reporting from the independent media often lacks rigor. Radio and television are the most commonly used source of information in Afghanistan (radio 45%; TV 28%; friends, family and neighbours 20%; religious leaders 6%²⁶). Further, the media can make citizens more aware of their rights and the ways that they can exercise those rights by participating in and influencing government decisions. The media can also encourage debate on existing political issues and options, so that citizens can choose to exercise their rights in an informed, responsible way. It is recommended, therefore, that Australia develop a media strengthening program (see Annex B for a list of media-related activities).

Outcome 2 recommendation: AUD300,000 for a media strengthening program (to be developed by AusAID)
AUD3 million for observation missions

2.4 Outcome 3: Women and men's awareness of civic responsibilities and voting practices is increased

An informed electorate is a critical component of meaningful elections. Ongoing civic and voter education is essential to improving public understanding of democratic

²⁵ This program also includes completion of a Voter Behaviour Survey.

²⁶ The Asia Foundation, *Survey of the Afghan People 2010* p111

processes, democratic rights, and practical ways to be involved in elections. Civic awareness should be a two-way process, both providing information to citizens and providing interactive avenues for citizens to engage with each other and with their leaders.

There are differences between voter education and civic education. Voter education focuses on the preparedness of citizens to participate in elections and includes practical information such as how and where to vote. Civic education focuses on broader democratic principles such as separation of powers, citizens' rights and responsibilities, functions of parliament and the role of women in democracies. Both voter and civic education depend on careful definitions of, and research into, audiences, mediums, and messages. A key issue is ensuring that the content and reach of civic and voter education are gender sensitive and effectively reach women and men in isolated communities. (Priorities and examples of messages for voter and civic education are included in Annex A.)

Civic and voter education methodologies can range from village to national-based programs. Australia has supported civic and voter education previously through TAF but our support to this area concluded in October 2011. Probably the most closely related activities still ongoing are those implemented by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) to which Australia contributes funding. The AIHRC disseminates information on a range of human rights issues through its website, workshops and printed material. A major new civil society program, *Tawanmandi*, to be funded by DFID and other donors through a USD 65 million basket-fund, may include some civic education activities, but this is not flagged as a focus for the program.

There is considerable scope for AusAID to increase its contribution to civic awareness. Further, in the context of transition and potential for a controversial or delayed Presidential election, this is a low risk option that distances Australia from specific electoral events or political processes. It is therefore recommended that AusAID develop a comprehensive program of support that targets women and works across provinces and ethnic groups. The media provides an effective method for delivery of such programs due to its ability to reach a broad demographic and dispersed population. The focus should therefore be developing a media-based program of support. However there should also be scope to support non-media activities as appropriate. Some options for activities are listed in Annex B.

It is recommended that the impact of various methods of civic and voter education be further assessed where possible before further investment. Data on the popularity and accessibility of specific media outlets should be reviewed in deciding which to work with for specific audiences.

Outcome 3 recommendation: AUD9 million for a new civic awareness program delivered through media

Section 3: Activities, Implementing Partners and Funding

3.1 Activities

The table below lists some suggested activities and funding. Figures are indicative only and will need to be discussed in greater detail with implementing partners as programs are designed.

Activities	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	Total
Outcome 1						
1. ELECT II & follow-up	\$5m	\$5m	\$4m	\$4m	-	\$18m
Outcome 2						
2. Media strengthening	\$100,000	\$200,000	-	-	-	\$300,000
3. International and domestic observation of 2014 & 2015 elections	-	-	\$1.5 ¹	\$1.5m ¹	-	\$3m
Outcome 3						
4. Civic awareness	\$500,000	\$3m	\$3m	\$2.5m	-	\$9m
Monitoring and evaluation	-	-	\$50,000	-	\$50,000	\$100,000
Total	\$5.6m	\$8.2m	\$8.55m	\$8m	\$50,000	\$30.4m

¹ Timing of payment will depend partly on timing of elections.

3.2 Implementing partners and funding mechanisms

A number of overall considerations have been taken into account in recommending the following partnerships and funding mechanisms. In line with AusAID's new aid policy, *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*, this Concept Note recommends partnerships with other donors and multilateral agencies to reduce fragmentation and increase impact by pooling resources and coordinating closely. While working with basket funds such as UNDP ELECT II is recommended, it is also recognised that international and national NGOs can offer effective and value-for-money outcomes and in Afghanistan these NGOs often have unique access and networks. In addition, a strong civil society is critical to democratic governance, thus civil society organisations are natural partners for programs such as this that contribute to the strengthening of democratic processes.

AusAID needs to take into account the contributions that are likely to be made during the next five years by other donors, in order to prevent duplication and gaps. As mentioned above, many donors have contributed to all aspects of democratic governance including elections in the past ten years. Key donors in the coming years will continue to be USAID, which will provide support to UNDP ELECT II, the *Afghanistan Electoral Reform and Civic Advocacy (AERCA)* project and Internews for general media development programming for the coming year. USAID is also developing a new parliamentary strengthening program. The EU and DFID will likely make major contributions to ELECT II. DFID is also working with Scandinavian donors to fund the civil society program, *Tawanmandi*. A number of

other donors have expressed interest in the proposed National Democratic Institute (NDI) basket fund to support FEFA, an important local NGO.

In selecting implementing partners and designing programs, another key consideration for AusAID is the need to minimise and carefully manage administrative requirements. AusAID's small presence in Kabul limits opportunities for direct engagement with partners or close monitoring of activities. Nevertheless, this is an area in which Australia has an opportunity to make an important and relatively sizeable contribution and therefore electoral support should be considered as a priority area for AusAID's Afghanistan Program. Consideration must also be given to the capacity constraints of implementing partners. AusAID and other donors working in electoral support have experienced regular underspends and delays, and so care must be taken to ensure that programs are flexible but achievable and that budgets are realistic.

The **ELECT II basket fund** is the most appropriate and effective mechanism with which to fund and implement capacity building of the IEC (Outcome 1). UNDP has a track record of working closely with Afghan electoral authorities since the first post-Taliban elections in 2004. In developing the ELECT II proposal, UNDP has worked with the IEC leadership who are in support of the activities it proposes. This is the same IEC leadership, more or less, that delivered improved elections in 2010. Additionally, the ELECT II proposal has been scrutinised by democratic governance specialists from many international donors, which has sharpened its focus and its contextual appropriateness. Finally, UNDP is highly likely to provide ongoing support to electoral institutions for the life of this Concept Note and beyond, ensuring greater consistency and institutional knowledge and therefore a better investment for AusAID. It is recommended that Australia contribute AUD10 million to the 2012-13 basket fund, with the anticipation that a further AUD8 million be contributed to a follow-up program in 2014-15.

Internews, an international NGO that focuses on media development, has submitted a proposal to AusAID that includes a range of civic awareness and media-strengthening activities (Outcomes 2 and 3). Internews proposes utilising its capacity as a media producer, trainer and broadcaster, and its wide network of Afghan media partners, to carry out extensive national civic and voter education activities; training for journalists and editors on elections coverage; training for candidates and civil society on utilising media during elections; elections media Code of Conduct, and other activities. Internews proposes to begin this process with roundtable discussions with a range of stakeholders about what has and has not worked in past elections with regard to media and elections. The organisation plans to implement activities with and through its partner organisations in Afghan media, recognising the need for 'Afghanisation' in this as in all sectors. Internews brings ten years' experience in Afghanistan, including management of the USAID-funded AMDEP. As noted previously, media is powerful and has a broad reach, making it an effective tool with which to disseminate both voter and civic education while reaching to women, across ethnic groups and across provinces. In addition, media strengthening should contribute to improvements in political reporting. It is recommended that AusAID work directly with Internews to develop a four year, AUD8 million program.

Australia should seek to co-fund **international and domestic observation missions** in 2014 and 2015 (AUD3 million) (Outcome 2). Planning will be dependent upon the funding made available by other donors as well as the political climate and final timing of the electoral events. It is therefore recommended that identification of implementing partners be delayed until 2013 when planning for the first of these missions begins. AusAID's **Development Assistance Facility for Afghanistan (DAFA)** can potentially be called upon to administer grants for the missions.

Whilst there is a real need to minimise the number of agreements in order to maximise effectiveness, the political nature of the elections program requires that it remain flexible. The program may be called upon to undertake additional, smaller activities that sit outside the framework outlined in this Concept Note but that assist with developing strategic partnerships. The program should accommodate such activities as required.

3.3. Quality processes

The elections program should comply with the relevant AusAID guidelines for quality processes and reflect the emphasis on rigorous evaluations, value-for-money, and transparent reporting in *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*. This will require that peer reviews and quality at entry reporting be undertaken for UNDP ELECT II and the Internews program, both of which will be valued at over AUD3 million. It is recommended that independent mid-term and final reviews of the entire program be conducted in 2013 and 2016. The indicative budget above allows for the cost of implementing these reviews.

In order to streamline processes, AusAID can ensure that lessons learnt from evaluations of past programs are used to inform the development of new programs. For example, an independent evaluation of UNDP's ELECT I informed the development of ELECT II.

3.4 Risk Management

Electoral programming in contexts such as Afghanistan is inherently risky, but it is this very risk that supports the rationale for Australia's engagement. The approach recommended in this Concept Note minimises risks to an extent by distancing the program from specific electoral events. Through its focus on capacity building and institutional strengthening, UNDP's ELECT II will assist the IEC to withstand some of the pressures of the difficult context in which it operates. Support to civil society, including the media, ensures that the program is not dependent upon the successful running or outcome of future elections. Nevertheless, strategic and programming risks remain.

The most significant strategic risks are those pertaining to the politicised nature of elections. Electoral events are in themselves sources of conflict and it can be anticipated that the next electoral cycle, as with the last, will experience both overt and subtle forms of conflict. There is a risk that the 2014 election will be postponed or cancelled or that the implementation of the elections is not seen to be free and fair. Security risks may also severely limit voter participation. Risks to the program include those pertaining to the capacity of implementing partners. Past electoral programming has experienced delays and underspends in implementation and our

implementing partners risk become increasingly constrained by security. AusAID program managers will work closely with implementing partners as programs are designed and will ensure that designs are subjected to AusAID quality processes where applicable. AusAID will also ensure that fraud mitigation procedures are in place, including through agreements and contracts, in line with AusAID policy. A risk management plan is included at Annex D.

ANNEX A: Voter and Civic Education

Audiences:

Women: Just under 40% of voters in the 2009 and 2010 elections were women.²⁷ This figure was much lower in some provinces. Further research needs to be done on how to better reach women voters, particularly in the south and southeast of the country. Additionally, research needs to be done on men's attitudes to women's participation and on how best to influence these attitudes, with the ultimate aim of male family and community members supporting women's participation.

New voters: Afghanistan continues to have a huge youth bulge, with over 42 percent of the population under fourteen years old.²⁸ The next series of elections will see a large number of new young people turn 18 and become eligible to vote.

Examples of broad messages:

Voter Education:

- Who you vote for is your own choice (surveys show that 57% of people think people should vote the way their community votes)²⁹
- Voter registration: how to register and why the new system is better
- Security measures: educating people about what security measures have been taken to make them safe during elections and what to do if they see or suspect a security problem
- Explain how the IEC and the ECC have changed and improved
- How the women's quota works and how this impacts upon the selection of male candidates.

Civic education:

- What is democracy?
- Your democratic rights and responsibilities
- Responsibilities of elected officials
- What constitutes 'good' leadership?
- Equal rights for men and women to participate as candidates, officials, or voters, and the Afghan / Islamic foundations of these
- Why there are special seats for women and how this will benefit all Afghans
- Various ways to participate: voting, lobbying, meeting MPs, writing to the media, running for office, discussing with friends and family
- Positive stories about women leaders

²⁷ IEC Website. This is difficult to calculate exactly, as the IEC disaggregates turnout by Male, Female, and Kuchi.

²⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

²⁹ Survey of the Afghan People, TAF, 2010

ANNEX B: Media-related activities

Media role in elections	Possible activities
Election reporting (media acting as watchdogs throughout the electoral process)	Training for journalists and editors Study tours to overseas newsrooms during their election periods
Elections media code of conduct	Work with Afghan media peak bodies to develop a voluntary code of conduct for elections reporting ³⁰
Media input into elections media regulation	Media peak bodies provide input into election law reform elements that impact on media
Managing direct access	In the past mass media provided a certain level of sponsored advertising to each candidate (called 'direct access'), if this continues media should be trained in how to manage it
Media Commission	The law sets up a temporary Media Commission prior to each election, responsible for regulating media. Assistance to this Commission could help to improve balanced reporting, upholding of campaign regulations, relationships between media and the IEC, etc. Between-elections capacity-building could be carried out on media regulation during an election, management of the Media Commission, etc.
Media monitoring	Carried out by media peak bodies, the IEC, Media Commission, observer organisations, or independent body. Consider stimulating an ongoing program of media monitoring (so far it seems they have been ad hoc)

³⁰A Code of Conduct has been used in past elections but it has been imposed by the IEC and has been overly vague. A voluntary CoC is a better option in terms of a balance between compliance and protection of media rights.

ANNEX C: Consultations

UNDP Country Office

- David Akopyan, Deputy Country Director

Australian Embassy

- Ambassador Paul Foley
- Deputy Head of Mission, David Lewis
- Second Secretary, Lauren Henschke
- Stuart Schaefer, Minister Counsellor AusAID

Democracy International

- Hassan Baroudy CoP
- Dr Moh Ibrahim Kazemi, Senior Program Officer
- Min Zaw Oo, Director of Research and M&E

UNAMA Political Affairs

- Joanna Nathan, Head of Elections Support Unit

Independent Election Commission (IEC)

- Abdullah Ahmadzai, Chief Electoral Officer

The Asia Foundation

- Sheilagh Henry, Deputy Country Representative
- Abdul Ghafoor Asheq, Program Manager (elections)
- Hassebullah Shinwary, Program Manager

Internews

- Jan MacArthur (COP)
- Charmaine Anderson (DCOP)

Women's Affairs, Civil Society and Human Rights Standing Committee

- Raihana Azad, MP, Uruzgan Province

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

- Carina Perelli, Chief of Party

Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA)

- Nader Nadery, Chairperson
- Eng. Naeem Asghari, Program Manager

Pajhwok Afghan News

- Danish Kharokhel, Director
- Tom Willard

Afghan Analysts Network

- Martine van Bijlert, Co-Director

Afghan Civil Society Forum

- Aziz Rafiee, Executive Director

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

- Catherine Coleman, First Secretary (Development)

UNDP ELECT advisors to IEC

- Shahadat Chowdhury, Project Coordination Advisor
- Daniel Hinchcliff, Field Operations Advisor
- Silvana Puizina, Capacity Building Advisor
- Carolyn Williams, Communications Advisor
- Filip Warnants, M&E adviser

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

- Hatem Bamehriz, Senior Country Director
- Yousuf Rasheed, Senior Program Manager, Election and Political Process Program

Afghan Women's Education Centre (AWEC)

- Wagma Yameen Zia, Program Manager

Election donors working group

- Harald Jepsen, Political/Elections Adviser, European Commission
- Riccardo Rossi, Attachè, Aid Coordination & Regional Cooperation, European Commission
- Francesca Stidson, District Approach Coordinator, DFID
- Brett Jones, Senior Elections Adviser, USAID

United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office

- Richard Croker

Australian National University

- Professor William Maley, Director, Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy

Australian Electoral Commission

- Michael Maley, Special Adviser, Electoral Reform and International Services
- Bronwen Shelley, Director, International Services

AusAID, Canberra

- Michael Bergmann, Director, Policy, State and Society
- Susan Ferguson, Gender adviser
- Rob Nicol, Program and Policy manager, Fragility and Conflict
- Marcus Khan, Program and Policy manager, Fragility and Conflict

ANNEX D: Risk Management Plan

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Residual impact
Strategic risks				
Constitutional reforms, reconciliation processes or presidential decisions bring about major political change which affects elections	Likely	Moderate	Ensure flexibility in programming to allow for changes if needed. Focus programming on areas that are non-political and not linked directly to electoral events. Support Afghan civil society groups working to make sure any changes made are inclusive and democratic.	Moderate
Insufficient progress on key electoral reforms, including independent IEC/ECC, reducing the credibility of future elections	Likely	Moderate	Indirectly (through Foreign Affairs colleagues, NGO and university partners) stimulate domestic and international discourse and advocacy around electoral reform. Support Afghan civil society groups working on electoral reform. Focus programming in areas not directly linked to electoral events.	Moderate
Security environment means that elections can't be held in many locations	Almost certain	Minor over life of program	Coordinate closely with international and domestic security sector colleagues on long-range planning for elections security that identifies different needs for men and women voters. Support IEC and UNDP ELECT II to develop security plans and contingency plans. Focus programming on pre-electoral period.	Minor
Electoral observation is curtailed due to security risks	Almost certain in some locations	Major for the observation component	Support elections security (see above). Support training for observers in working in high-risk environments. Support low-key local observation in high-risk areas where appropriate.	Major
Ongoing corruption, fraud and error result in unreliable outcomes for voter registration as well as future elections	Likely	Moderate	Support observer organisations to monitor the voter registration process and expenditures inside the IEC Support the IEC and UNDP ELECT II to carry out training to increase professionalism, and sanctions for fraud	Moderate
Afghan perceptions of foreign interference in political processes	Likely	Minor	In the current Afghan context accusations of foreign interference are almost inevitable. Mitigated through working with local partners; understanding 'Afghanisation' as including both government and civil society; strong coordination with Afghan officials and donors; choosing carefully when to comment and when to withhold comment on certain issues.	Minor
Women's participation is not possible or not improved due to ongoing security, political, economic and cultural barriers	Likely	Major	Ensure that culturally appropriate activities are carried out for both women and men as beneficiaries. Work with colleagues in other sectors, for example the education sector, to encourage long-term change in knowledge and behaviours.	Major

			Support elections security (see above).	
Adequate Voter Registry not prepared by IEC	Likely	Minor	Monitor progress closely, including requesting a detailed plan from UNDP ELECT II for the 'continuous registration' and 'data sanitation' process Maintain voter registry as a small component of program	Minor
Loss of key leadership and technical staff at the IEC and ECC	Likely	Moderate	Through diplomatic channels, continue to encourage reform that sees IEC and ECC commissioners chosen through a transparent process with checks-and-balances. Support UNDP ELECT II and IEC to provide a strong incentive framework for IEC and ECC staff, including opportunities for training, non-salary benefits, and well developed security plans for staff (particularly female staff). Include programming that does not depend on performance of IEC, such as civic awareness raising activities.	Moderate
Programmatic risks				
Lack of donor coordination/duplication of efforts	Likely	Moderate	Continue to attend Elections Donor Working Group meetings. Continue to facilitate direct and regular engagement with other donors. Through elections programming, encourage civil society to also coordinate closely.	Minor
Partner organisations' program quality is compromised by over-commitment or other reasons	Possible	Major	Ensure that sufficient AusAID personnel hours are dedicated to liaising with partner organisations, careful review of proposals and monitoring of activities. Cross-check program quality questions with other stakeholders (beneficiaries, other donors, etc.)	Moderate
Chosen civic education programs do not reach target audiences or have the desired impacts	Possible	Major	Carefully plan audience, media and message based on research. Ensure quality monitoring including through surveys, pre-testing through focus groups, etc.	Moderate