

NATIONAL ELECTORAL EDUCATION PLAN

Strategic Guidelines for Public Outreach Activities



The National Electoral Education Plan has been developed under the ELECTORAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN PROJECT implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and funded by the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG ITF).

Executive Summary

The National Electoral Education Plan (NEEP) forms the strategic framework for the conduct and implementation of the Electoral Education Campaign Project (EECP) by partner Civil Society Organizations. The EECP seeks to raise public awareness of and create discussion around all aspects of electoral processes by supporting grassroots initiatives developed by the Iraqi civil society. The NEEP provides guidance to NGOs implementing electoral education activities. It is produced by the Electoral Education Forum, a body that coordinates the campaign to ensure its integration within the overall electoral outreach effort. It

The context, both social and political, of the upcoming electoral cycle will impact the current electoral education campaign. Iraqis have experienced high levels of insecurity over the past years, 2.4 million have been internally displaced and the social fabric has been fragmented along sectarian lines. Lacking public services have also contributed to a limited popular confidence in democratic institutions. The civil society, key to a sustainable and inclusive democratic culture, is still weak. Significant portions of the citizenry who failed to participate in the last elections have felt alienated from the political process. Yet there are encouraging signs that more political actors are willing to participate in the next contests. Lastly, lessons learned from 2005 elections have pointed to the necessity of engaging the public through direct outreach activities of a participatory nature and to the importance of key influencers in the community.

The EECP will be implemented in a new and challenging electoral landscape, including a new institution and still many unknowns. A new electoral authority is in place since 2007: the Independent High Electoral Commission. Under supervision of the Council of Representatives, it has the authority to declare, organize, implement and oversee all electoral activities, including, as relates to the upcoming electoral cycle, voter registration, governorate council elections, and referenda. The IHEC consists of the Board of Commissioners and the electoral administration. The administration is comprised of 19 Governorate Election Offices in the Governorates (two in Baghdad), a regional office in the Kurdistan Region and a Head Quarters office in Baghdad.

The approval of the *Law of Governorates Not Organized into a Region* in February 2008 has paved the way for discussions on the draft electoral law for the Governorate, district and sub-district council elections. Once the law is voted, it is expected that Governorate elections may take place towards the end of the year. Other national electoral events will also take place in 2008 / 2009, such as a Referendum on the revision of the Constitution and the new round of legislative elections slated for December 2009. A necessary update of the voter registration list is being implemented through July 2008. Legal requirements, procedures and dates for the subsequent phases (candidate nomination, campaign, polling and counting) will be defined at a later stage.

The EECP established joint planning and coordinating bodies between the IHEC and the civil society at central and local levels: the Electoral Education Forum and the Governorate Electoral Education Committees. The Forum is responsible to provide strategic and technical guidance to NGOs conducting electoral education and to facilitate linkages and coordination. The Electoral Education Campaign is integrated within the broader outreach strategy of the IHEC - which also includes mass and new media – and, as its essential direct outreach component, is implemented in full coordination with all partners.

The NEEP provides guidance to NGOs implementing electoral education activities by outlining objectives, target audiences, key themes and messages, outreach approaches and tools, and implementation principles. To make the best use of these guidelines, NGOs should reevaluate their own campaign planning and activities and consider at each step if they are in line with the indications outlined by the

Forum. The Electoral Education Campaign activities will be a mix of voter education, voter information and relevant basics of civic education.

The strategic objective of the EECP is to increase among Iraqi citizens the level of awareness, knowledge, support of and participation to the democratic system, and in particular the coming electoral processes. In principle, the EECP aims at all citizens, but the Forum has identified the following priority target audiences: youth and first time voters, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), groups that did not participate in previous elections, women. It is also important to segment audiences and adapt activities, with a view to ethnic, cultural, geographic and literacy level differences.

The Forum stresses the importance of analyzing audiences, in particular exploring their attitudes towards elections and how they are shaped. Special attention should be given to the following typical trends: a weak public confidence in government and democratic institutions; a marked public disillusionment in the electoral process; strong regional variations in perceptions of the overall situation and the impact of the latest elections; an intuitive appeal and public support towards local institutions perceived as better suited to service delivery; religious leaders and professors/teachers appear to be the most trusted segment of society, ahead of tribal leaders and media. The Forum advises NGOs to further their analysis at the local level, and identify the specific challenges and opportunities in reaching out to each audience.

NGOs should then define the most appropriate approaches. The Forum has made the following generic suggestions per target group: TV and new media for urban youth and engagement outreach through entertainment and sports, especially for rural youth; mass media and direct outreach meetings for IDPs; daytime radio programs and specific meetings for women; adapted direct outreach sessions and mass media for the illiterate; direct outreach and radio for rural residents; outreach with targeted messages for people with special needs and linguistic minorities. The Forum stresses the importance of educating and obtaining the support of opinion and community leaders in all groups and contexts.

As for the educational content, the Forum has identified five areas of focus: basics of civic education, the electoral framework and the IHEC, the voter registration update, the electoral process and the importance of citizen's engagement, with a focus on the inclusion and participation of women, IDPs and youth. The Forum has further listed the following themes to be addressed during the campaign: basics of civic education (democracy, the rule of law and the constitution; the roles and functions of government, including the local governance; the role of people in government); the framework and the actors in Iraqi elections; the electoral process (focusing on the forthcoming Governorate Councils elections). Organizations will have to prioritize and adapt the content according to the electoral phase, the audience, the duration and frequency of their activities, following the Forum's guidelines. To prepare messages and activities, they will have access to the following resources: the Electoral Education Manual, IHEC printed materials; the IHEC website and the Forum website.

For a successful implementation, the Forum urges implementing NGOs to respect the key phases of the electoral process calendar, as outlined in this NEEP, and to coordinate with other partners, in particular the IHEC, through the Governorate Electoral Education Committees, to ensure the consistency of messages and maximize the reach and impact of all activities.

The Forum finally recommends that NGOs continuously evaluate and revise their activities, and share feedback with other partners.

The National Electoral Education Plan, as an open, living document will be updated by the Forum to reflect updates in the electoral framework and best practices, and thus increase the impact of the Electoral Education Campaign.

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Introduction

The success of the upcoming Iraqi electoral processes scheduled for 2008 and 2009 depends to a large extent on the level of support and participation of the Iraqi people. Hence, it is crucial to start discussing again in the public sphere the importance of elections as a foundation for democracy and educating the public on the upcoming electoral processes. As a newly formed body, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) needs support from the civil society in its educational efforts to reach out to the Iraqi people. The Electoral Education Campaign Project (EECP) helps create space and mechanisms for the IHEC and Iraqi civil society to closely work together to improve the awareness, understanding and support of the Iraqi people towards the electoral processes.

The National Electoral Education Plan (NEEP) forms the strategic framework for the conduct and implementation of the EECP by partner Civil Society Organizations and Governorate Electoral Education Committees. It is produced by the Electoral Education Forum, a body that coordinates the campaign, through consultations with partner CSOs, and in partnership with the IHEC, thus ensuring its integration within the overall electoral outreach effort, led by the electoral authority. The Forum provides advice to the Campaign, assessing its impact and revising the National Electoral Education Plan in keeping with developments in the electoral legislation framework.

The NEEP provides guidance to CSOs implementing electoral education activities by outlining objectives, target audiences, key themes and messages, outreach approaches and tools, and implementation guidance. The NEEP is essential to ensure that accurate, consistent information is disseminated to the public. The aims of the NEEP are to:

- Serve as a policy reference for electoral education efforts in Iraq, in particular for direct outreach activities;
- Support stakeholders involved in electoral education with strategic guidance;
- Embody the collaboration and consensus between IHEC and civil society on electoral education;
- Ultimately, encourage the participation of the Iraqi voters in the electoral processes.

The NEEP also contains the Electoral Education Pledge, which outlines basic principles of conduct for stakeholders involved in electoral education (see in Annex). All organizations that contribute to the EECP as grantees under the Electoral Education Grant Fund committed to abide by this pledge. Any organization that would pursue electoral education activities is invited to respect the same principles.

The NEEP is structured as follows:

Part 1 outlines key elements of background, social and political, as well as lessons learnt from the previous electoral cycle, which informed the design of the NEEP.

Part 2 presents the electoral framework for the upcoming electoral cycle 2008-2009: the electoral institution, the legal framework, the electoral calendar and key phases as currently anticipated.

Part 3 details the EECP and Part 4 presents strategic guidelines agreed upon by the Forum for its implementation: strategic objective, target audiences, current attitudes toward elections, key messages, approaches, tools and products, key elements of implementation, evaluation and revision.

The **Electoral Education Manual**, developed by the Forum is a complementary document to the NEEP: it provides a summary of key electoral education messages as well as guidelines on planning and designing direct outreach activities and basics of participatory methodology.

1. Background

The background gives a brief review of the key elements of the environment and recent history that need to be considered in the design and implementation of the EECF, as they impact on its effectiveness.

1.1. The social context

1.1.1. Insecurity, displacement, fragmentation

Over the past five years, Iraqi society has experienced momentous change. The authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein was a highly centralized structure that controlled the population through repression of by the security apparatuses. After 2003, the prevailing insecurity in the country that followed the toppling of the regime accentuated divisions as Iraqis tended to seek protection from within their own communities or from various militias.

This also led to the displacement of a very significant proportion of the population. UN OCHA estimates that 4.2 millions Iraqi are displaced, 2.4 millions of which within Iraq. Of these, 1.3 millions have been internally displaced since the December 2005 elections. Their participation in the coming elections, especially for those who have crossed governorate boundaries is crucial but they will be harder to reach.

Recent improvements in the security situation may - relatively - decrease constraints on civil society activities, electoral operations and civic participation.

1.1.2. Lack of basic services and limited confidence in democratic institutions

Economic hardships caused by the conflict, worsened by the disruption to the energy supply and basic services, contributed to a sense that the new central government was unable to meet the basic needs of the Iraqi people. Although many of Iraq's macroeconomic indicators have risen since 2003, poverty rates and unemployment have increased during this period as well, and residents of major cities such as Baghdad, Basra and Mosul still suffer from the lack of electricity for most of the day. The absence of efficient service delivery (from security to health, education and energy) and perceptions of corruption have entrenched skepticism and distrust among many citizens. As a result, public confidence in government and democratic institutions remains weak. This encouraged many Iraqis to vote along ethnic and sectarian lines; it may also discourage them now to participate in the coming electoral events.

1.1.3. Weaknesses of the civil society

In these circumstances, Iraqi civil society remains weak in its ability to effectively advocate for government action, and to contribute to the mobilization of an active citizenry. Many NGOs are small organizations that are struggling to build financial and organizational viability. Few have yet to develop as long term advocates for government responsiveness or as watchdogs of government actions.

As the Governorate Council elections are anticipated to take place in the fourth quarter of 2008, it is important to provide effective, manageable ways of creating cooperation between IHEC and Iraqi civil society organizations, so that they can represent a democratic alternative for electoral education that crosses sectarian boundaries.

In the long-term, the education system is always a key venue for civic education efforts that help build an informed and active citizenry. But civil society groups have a key role to play, not only as actors in the civic field, but also as educators, especially in the shorter run as the education system is still being rebuilt. Civil Society Organizations thus need to be developed and strengthened to help build a concept of

citizenship that makes Iraqis, regardless of their sectarian or ethnic background, believe they can participate and have a future in a unified democratic state.

1.2. The political context

On January 30, 2005, Iraq held its first national election for the Transitional National Assembly (TNA). The day began with fear of violence conducted by insurgents and terrorists attempting to stop the democratic process. By mid-day when Iraqi citizens saw that acts of violence were not as high as expected, many families flocked to the polls to cast their first votes ever for a representation government. Results showed strong showings of Kurdish Coalitions and the United Iraqi Alliance, but weak overall performance in governorates such as Anbar and Ninawa. Out of 111 parties or coalitions competing in the TNA elections, only 12 parties or coalitions won seats: among others, the United Iraqi Alliance won 150 seats, while the Kurdish Coalition won 75 seats, Iraqi list won 40 seats, and Iraqiyun list won five.

After an intense summer of drafting a representative constitution, Iraqi citizens narrowly approved the draft on October 15, 2005. Official results reveal that 9,852,291 Iraqis, or 63 percent of registered voters, turned out in a referendum devoid of any major incident of violence or fraud. Results remained sharply divided along sectarian and ethnic lines with three governorates, Al-Anbar, Salahadin and Ninewa, rejecting the charter, two of them by a two-thirds majority. Under Iraq's Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), if two-thirds of voters in three of the governorates had voted against the constitution, it would have failed.

On December 15, 2005, nearly 70 percent of eligible voters participated in Iraq's third electoral event of the year. Voter turnout far exceeded that of earlier elections with nearly 10.9 out of 15.5 million registered voters, compared to 58 percent in the January 30 parliamentary election and 63 percent in the October constitutional referendum. The increase was mostly attributable to the participation of Center Region Governorates in the political process and the high stakes of a four-year permanent assembly. Fewer security incidents were reported nationwide, in particular in Al-Anbar where military operations and insurgent intimidation campaigns had previously kept residents away from the polls.

The December 2005 elections for a permanent assembly witnessed considerable turnout and an increasingly diverse political environment. Unlike the January 2005 election, parties affiliated with the Center Region Governorates population also participated in the process. While much of the population voted along sectarian lines, the political landscape was increasingly dynamic with 6,655 candidates from 307 political entities and 19 Alliance representing all the continents of the Iraqi people (all sects, religions and ethnicities). Although the biggest winner was the United Iraqi Alliance, it fell short of achieving an absolute majority (138 of 275 seats). The Kurdish Coalitions list won 53 seats, while the Iraqi Tawafiq front list won 55 seats. The Iraqi list maintained a parliamentary presence with 25 seats.

The results of these first elections, with the limited participation of some social and political groups, have led to issues of representation, especially in some governorate councils elected in January 2005. The participation of these groups of voters, formerly alienated, in the coming local elections is thus critical. They will be key audiences for the Electoral Education Campaign.

In an encouraging development, many of the political actors that had boycotted these first elections now seem prepared to participate directly or indirectly in the next contests.

1.3. Elections 2005: Some lessons learned on electoral outreach

Many electoral outreach activities in 2005 under-estimated the influence of clerics and traditional opinion leaders. Polling by the organization IRI even suggested, according to a USAID report (Final Report for Political Process Assistance Review, December 2005) that *“fewer people were influenced by voter education than expected. This was especially true in the southern governorates and in areas of the Sunni boycott in January. When voter participation was high, it was more often influenced by religious leaders than by an understanding of democratic values and political issues surrounding the electoral process, elections and the constitution”*.

The effectiveness of the mass distribution of voter education material *“in provoking discussion and debate in the public”* was limited and could not outweigh the influence of clerics and traditional leaders, when adverse.

The same survey also noted that public outreach with regard to the technicalities of the voting was not always successful. An international observation mission, IMIE, noted by contrast that the electoral commission’s focus on simple, yet practical messages, such as how to mark the ballot and where to vote was the right approach.

In the absence of a comprehensive review of lessons learned, these few elements indicate the following challenges need to be considered for coming electoral outreach efforts:

- the public need to be engaged through direct outreach activities of a participatory nature, that should address democratic values and key notions of civic participation;
- key influencers from the national to the very local level need to be engaged by electoral outreach actors: their voice often carries more weight in their community, especially among constituencies where a low turnout was observed in 2005;
- priority needs to be given to simple, practical messages when communicating with the general audience of voters in the run-up to the electoral event. This is especially true in circumstances when limited time is given between the full establishment of the legal framework for the elections and the elections themselves (as may be the case again in 2008).

2. The 2008-2009 Electoral Cycle

2.1. The previous electoral cycle

In 2005, Iraq held three important electoral events organized by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) which was mandated in 2004 to conduct electoral activities for the transitional period. On 30 January 2005, in legislative elections, the Iraqi people chose transitional representatives for the newly formed 275 member Iraqi National Assembly. The role of the newly elected transitional Assembly was to write a new and permanent Constitution for Iraq and to exercise legislative functions until the new Constitution came into effect. Eighteen Governorate Councils and a 111 member council of the Kurdistan Regional National Assembly were also elected.

On October 15th, a constitutional referendum was held and resulted in the ratification of the Constitution by the Iraqi people. Under a compromise brokered before the referendum, it was agreed that the first parliament that was to be elected under the new constitution would institute a Constitutional Review Committee to look at whether the constitution should be amended. Any amendments agreed would have to be ratified by a similar referendum to the one that originally approved it.

After the ratification of the Constitution, a general election was held on 15 December 2005 to elect a permanent 275-member Council of Representatives (CoR). The electoral system was a closed list, where voters chose from a list of parties and coalitions and the seats within each governorate were allocated to the lists through a system of proportional representation and 45 seats were elected at national level.

2.2. A new electoral institution: the IHEC

On 23 January 2007 the Council of Representatives approved the Law on the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) through which the IECI has become a permanent entity - the IHEC. The IHEC is an independent body mandated to conduct electoral activities in Iraq.

2.2.1. Legal mandate of the IHEC

The IHEC, under supervision of the Council of Representatives, is the only body that has the authority to declare, organize, implement and oversee all electoral activities, including, as relates to the upcoming electoral cycle, voter registration, governorate council elections, and referenda.

In particular the IHEC has the authority to undertake the following functions:

Supervise the management and administration of all federal and regional elections, and referenda in the governorates that are not organized into regions. This includes counting of votes, tallying and certification of final results with the exception of the results for the Council of Representatives which shall be certified by the Federal Supreme Court.

Coordinate and collaborate with Regional Electoral Bodies, to administer and manage regional and local elections, and referenda in the governorates falling under the region.

Compiling, maintaining and publishing the Voter Registries for elections or referenda in collaboration with the governorate and regional electoral offices.

Regulate the registration and certification of political entities and candidates for the purpose of contesting for elections.

Regulate and accredit elections observers, party agents and media representatives.

Regulate and adjudicate electoral related complaints and appeals.

2.2.2. Structure of the IHEC

The IHEC consists of the Board of Commissioners (BoC) and the electoral administration. The IHEC Board of Commissioners includes eight permanent election Commissioners and one Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), who were selected by the CoR. In order to be selected, Commissioners must have elections expertise and must be known for their competence, integrity and independence. Two of the Commissioners are women. The Law of the Independent High Electoral Commission also mandates that two Commissioners must be lawyers. The CEO heads the IHEC Administration and is a non-voting member of the BoC.

The IHEC administration is comprised of 19 offices in the Governorates (two in Baghdad), a regional office in the Kurdistan Region and a Head Quarters office in Baghdad. The governorate offices are headed by the Governorate Election Office (GEO) director, which are selected by the CoR and appointed by the IHEC BoC. The GEO offices are responsible for carrying out electoral activities throughout the country, which includes the conduct of voter registration, polling and counting.

2.2.3. The IHEC Public Outreach Department

The Public Outreach Department (POD) is responsible for the development and coordination of voter education and public information activities aimed at providing information to Iraqis about the electoral process and to encourage voter participation.

As such, its various units deal with three types of primary audiences:

Political Entities unit: candidates, political parties.

External Relations unit: observers, government agencies and departments, media and religious institutions.

Electoral Education unit: Civil Society Organizations and voters.

The IHEC Public Outreach Division is source of official electoral information and a key interlocutor to ensure the coordination of the Electoral Education Campaign with their larger outreach effort.

2.3. The legal framework

The exact calendar for upcoming electoral events is still not fully determined, as the legal framework for elections or referenda to be held is still incomplete.

Yet the approval of the Law of Governorates Not Organized into a Region in February 2008 has paved the way for the discussions on the draft electoral law for the governorate, district and sub-district council elections. Once this electoral law, still under discussion as of end June, is approved, the governorate elections can take place.

The legal framework for the elections defines the rules of the electoral race. For these elections, there are three basic electoral modalities to be agreed upon:

the electoral system: the electoral formula (majority or proportional), the basis of representation (is the constituency the governorate or the district?) and the ballot structure (closed or open list);

the eligibility of voters and contestants, including the residency requirements and the issue of IDPs;

the mechanisms to ensure the representation of women and minorities: reserved seats, etc.

Once these are legally set, they will become key elements of any outreach effort, especially in case of change from the modalities agreed upon for the previous elections.

2.4. The electoral sequence

2.4.1. Upcoming electoral processes

- **Governorate Council Elections**

They are the likeliest next electoral event, pending the vote on the electoral law. They are anticipated to be held towards the end of 2008.

- **Constitutional Review Referendum**

The constitutional review process was meant to be completed around June 2008, although this is likely to be extended. Thereafter, outcomes from the Constitutional Review Committee will have to be presented to the COR. Only after the COR decision can a Constitutional referendum take place.

- **Referendum on the Disputed Territories**

The deadline to hold a referendum on the disputed territories, as set in the Constitution, had been **extended until June 2008**. It is likely to be extended again as negotiations on a resolution continue.

- **Regional Referendum**

A moratorium on regional referenda had been decided until April 2008. Yet no such referendum is envisaged at this time.

- **Voter Registry Update**

Before any elections or referenda can be held, an update of the voter registry is required. The IHEC will use information from both the PDS and IDP database to create a provisional voters list which is likely to include over 90% of Iraqis. Thereafter, a voter registry update will be held to amend and correct the list. The final voters list will be ready after a period of exhibitions and challenges to be used on polling day.

The National Electoral Education Plan (NEEP) has been organized according to the possible electoral calendar as detailed above.

2.4.2. Electoral phases for the Governorate Councils Elections

Outlines below are the critical phases of the upcoming electoral event, with the related key focus of the outreach effort.

- **Voter Registration Update**

The IHEC will undertake the voter registry update from 15 July 2008 to 15 August 2008. The voter registration update is a process in which the Provisional Voters' List will be available for individuals and families to check that their information is correctly entered on the voter lists where they will vote. To implement the voter registration update, the IHEC will open 549 registration centers all over Iraq. The IHEC will appoint registration officials to carry out the process.

All citizens will be encouraged to verify that they are properly registered. It is essential that those who have been displaced do so in the area where they now reside. IDPs as well as first time voters will be primary targets in the delivery of information on the voter registration update.

- **Candidate Nomination period**

The nomination of candidates is the formal procedure by which political parties and/or individuals put candidates forward for election, and the acceptance of the electoral commission of that nomination. Key criteria for candidates in local elections have been defined by the *Law of Governorates Not Organized into a Region*, but further conditions and procedures will be defined by the electoral law and IHEC regulations.

Although information on and at this stage is primarily aimed at potential candidates, and thus political entities and civil society groups and opinion leaders, it has to reach all citizens which may meet the requirements and be interested. Citizens in general need to be informed on procedures to follow to challenge candidate nominations.

- **Campaign period and Polling**

The law or IHEC regulations will likely define a set period during which candidates can officially campaign for votes. Special rules would then apply to parties, candidates, and media. This will obviously be in the run-up to the all-important polling day.

Specific information will have to go out to the above audiences, first concerned with the rules linked to the campaign period. Yet from an outreach point of view, priority will likely be given to general voter information on the importance of the elections and the practical modalities of the vote.

- **Count process and results**

Vote counting is one of the most crucial stages in the election process. Failure to complete the count and transmit results in a quick, transparent and accurate manner can jeopardize public confidence in the elections and will directly affect whether candidates and political parties accept the final results.

Counting rules should be clear, known in advance, and understood by everyone involved in the election, including the general public. The counting period thus requires the outreach effort towards the general public to be sustained with transparent coverage of the process and messages on the technical modalities and guarantees as well as on the necessary democratic acceptance of results.

2.5. The challenges ahead

As a new electoral commission, the IHEC faces several challenges in organizing elections. A few are mentioned below:

- The very significant proportion of **IDPs** (1.3 million new IDPs since the last 2005 elections) requires the adoption of specific voting procedures for them.
- **Disputed boundaries**: the disputes related to district and sometimes governorate boundaries will likely affect decisions on the electoral system.
- The **delays in the adoption of the electoral law** may impose a tight timeline for the operational implementation of elections.
- The debates about changing the **electoral system** from a closed to an open list system, as well as related disputes on the electoral modalities may not be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

These key challenges will have to be addressed through the messages disseminated during the Electoral Education Campaign.

3. The Electoral Education Campaign Project

3.1. The objectives

The Electoral Education Campaign Project (EECP) seeks to raise public awareness of and create discussion around all aspects of electoral processes by supporting initiatives developed by the Iraqi civil society, in cooperation with the Independent High Election Commission (IHEC), so that Iraqi voters will be better prepared for, and participate more actively in the upcoming electoral events. As demonstrated worldwide, the involvement of civil society actors in civic education programs supporting electoral processes, in synergy with the official electoral management authorities, is crucial for the success of such programs.

3.2. The framework

In order to ensure that activities and events carried out under the EECP are in line with the overall strategy of IHEC, the Commission has been involved at all levels of the project. The project established joint planning and coordinating bodies between the IHEC and the civil society at central and local levels:

the **Electoral Education Forum** (the Forum), composed of 23 members, 4 from the IHEC and 19 civil society organizations, the media, academia and unions. The Forum has elected a 5-person Coordination Committee which acts as its executive committee. The Forum is responsible to provide strategic and technical guidance to civil society organizations conducting electoral education, in line with the electoral laws, regulations and procedures, and to facilitate linkages and coordination between IHEC and civil society with regards to electoral education

the **Governorate Electoral Education Committees** with similar joint membership from the IHEC and civil society have been established to coordinate on the ground public outreach activities of the **Electoral Education Campaign**, raising therefore awareness of electoral principles and processes.

the **Secretariat** supports the Forum and the Governorate Committees in organizing meetings, reporting, training and promoting the Forum and the National Electoral Education Plan. The Secretariat also provides technical assistance to CSOs funded through the EECP.

To implement the Campaign together with IHEC, 75 Civil Society Organizations have been funded by UNOPS through a competitive process. Other CSOs, funded from other sources, are also welcome at the local level to join forces in implementing the Campaign.

The main tool developed by the Forum to provide this strategic guidance is this **National Electoral Education Plan**, which details in particular key themes and messages of concern for the Electoral Education Campaign and identifying target audiences and educational methods and materials to be used. The National Electoral Education Plan forms the strategic framework for the Electoral Education Campaign. The Forum provides advice to the Campaign, assesses its impact and revises the National Electoral Education Plan in keeping with developments in the electoral legislative framework.

3.3. The EECP: priority to grassroots

On the ground, the **Electoral Education Campaign** is implemented through:

- **Grassroots civic education projects.** Local Iraqi Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), established at the governorate level, implement a variety of civic education outreach projects in keeping with the National Electoral Education Plan. Such projects are implemented in each of the 19 electoral governorates. Priority has been given in funding direct outreach activities that engage citizens and eligible voters in meetings and participatory activities.
- **Opinion Leaders Symposiums:** These events target opinion leaders, such as elected councilors, religious figures, tribal chiefs, community elders, women / youth activists, political leaders, professional associations, etc. They are implemented by the Governorate Electoral Education Committees and focus on the principles and procedures proposed for future electoral events so that these leaders can disseminate correct information to their constituencies and communities.

3.4. An integrated and coordinated campaign

The EECP contributes to and is an integral part of the public outreach strategy and work plan of the IHEC.

3.4.1. Overview of the IHEC Public Outreach strategy

The IHEC Public Outreach Department (POD) uses four tools to disseminate public outreach information:

- **Mass media**

POD funds the production and broadcast of radio and TV public service announcements, spots and other programs, as well as the placement of ads and articles in the print press.

- **Call Center/Website**

A call center provides Iraqis with toll free numbers (expenses to be covered by the IHEC), set up with four partner mobile phone companies. Trained IHEC will answer callers' questions about the voter registration update and the electoral process.

- **Stakeholder coordination**

POD liaises with civil society organizations, and works with ministries to facilitate the implementation of the electoral education campaign. POD provides information packs to CSOs and to the ministries and training to their staff when possible. It also holds information sharing meetings with media organizations - both national and international - to encourage them to participate in the voter education campaign.

- **Grassroots efforts**

Direct outreach takes place through community mobilization events, such as the Opinion Leaders Symposiums aimed at influential members of the community (see above) or Face-to-Face Activities organized by CSOs (including EECP funded ones) aimed at the general population. Grassroots efforts are also linked to the mass distribution of materials (posters, leaflets, stickers, brochures, booklets and banners).

3.4.2. An integrated strategy

The EECP is *the* essential grassroots component of the overall electoral outreach effort deployed by the IHEC. Organizations, funded from other sources to conduct outreach activities will be encouraged to coordinate closely, and join forces where feasible, with the EECP.

While IHEC POD will likely focus strictly on voter education and information directly related to the current electoral process, Civil Society Organizations may extend their messages to broader civic education (see Strategic Guidelines 4.4.2.). Yet they should make sure that their message is in phase with the overall outreach strategy of IHEC. In particular they should consider IHEC POD materials as the official source for accurate legal and technical information on the electoral process. To this effect, the IHEC will provide core information to support voter education activities (fact sheets, backgrounders, and manuals), as well as some print materials for distribution.

3.4.3. A coordinated implementation

The implementation of the EECP is shared with the IHEC and its governorate offices. The **Governorate Electoral Education Committees** (GEECs) are the ‘implementing arm’ of the Campaign at the grassroots level by facilitating and coordinating implementation of the Electoral Education Campaign.

There are 19 such committees, one for each of the IHEC Governorate Electoral Offices (Baghdad is divided into two governorate offices). Each Governorate Committee is chaired by the Director of the Governorate Electoral Office (IHEC), supported by the GEO Media Officers and gathers CSOs selected to implement civic education projects in the governorate, and other relevant actors that can contribute to a more effective outreach campaign.

In these Committees, all electoral activities are coordinated from a calendar and geographical point of view, to ensure an optimal coverage and scheduling of the Campaign. GEEC members also exchange best practices, share information on questions frequently asked during outreach events and document the campaign progress.

The GEECs are supported operationally and technically by the Campaign Secretariat, present in all Governorates and headquartered in Baghdad. The Secretariat also ensures communications between GEECs and the Forum.

4. Strategic guidelines for Organizations Implementing Electoral Education Activities

These are meant to be generic guidelines, as produced by the Forum, to help civil society organizations strategize their electoral education activities, and focus on key target groups, messages and best approaches identified for the Electoral Education Campaign Project. Organizations which are not funded through the EECP are also invited to use these strategic guidelines, as they have been sanctioned by the IHEC.

The structure also reflects what should be the main steps of the design and implementation of an electoral education campaign, from the definition of strategic objectives and the identification of target audiences through to the implementation and evaluation of activities.

Some modalities may not apply to all partners: for example, many NGOs will not conduct media activities, not all NGOs will reach all target groups.

To make the best use of these guidelines, as a civil society organization implementing electoral education activities, reevaluate your own campaign planning and activities, step by step. You may even want to produce your own strategic plan along these lines, tailored to your campaign. Consider at each step if your organization is in line with the indications outlined by the Forum and detail each part as pertinent to your activities, by using the suggestions.

Keep in mind that you should respect the main elements of focus as defined by the Forum but that you will have to tailor them to your circumstances, and use your creativity and specific strengths to ensure the highest impact for your activities.

4.1. Educational activities in support of elections and democracy

One usually distinguishes between three types of activities: civic education, electoral or voter education, voter information.

- **Civic education**

It is a broad, continuous and long-term process usually embedded in school education curriculum and others programs. Civic education (often referred to as civic and citizenship education) deals with broader concepts underpinning a democratic society such as the respective roles and responsibilities of citizens, government, political and special interests, the mass media, and the business and non-profit sectors, as well as the significance of periodic and competitive elections. It emphasizes not only citizen awareness but citizen participation in all aspects of democratic society. Civic and citizenship education typically comprise 3 main elements: Civic Knowledge, Civic Disposition (values) and Civic Skills – i.e. to enable citizens to acquire the knowledge and skills essential for informed, effective citizenship. Civic education is a continuous process, not tied to the electoral cycle.

- **Electoral or Voter education**

It covers aspects of elections (why vote, how to vote, when to vote etc). Electoral education programs typically address voters' motivation and preparedness to participate fully in elections. They aim to address relatively more complex types of information about voting and the electoral process and are concerned with concepts such as the link between basic human rights and voting rights; the role, responsibilities and rights of voters; the relationship between elections and democracy and the conditions necessary for

democratic elections; secrecy of the ballot; why each vote is important and its impact on public accountability; and how votes translate into seats. Such concepts involve explanation and exploration by the learners, not just a statement of facts.

- **Voter Information**

It happens just before the electoral event and aims to provide basic information enabling qualified citizens to vote, including the date, time, and place of voting; the type of election; identification necessary to establish eligibility; registration requirements; and mechanisms for voting.

The Electoral Education Campaign, as its name indicates, focuses on electoral or voter education. Yet, for the purpose of the project, the themes to be addressed in your activities – as defined by the Forum (see below 4.5.) - include also voter information, and even essential elements of civic education, as pertinent to the current electoral cycle.

The electoral education activities that your organization will conduct will thus be a mix of voter education, voter information and relevant basics of civic education. You will have to adapt this “mix”: for example, to your audience (new voters may need more emphasis on broader civic education), or to the phases of the electoral process (as polling day gets closer, voter information on the practical modalities of the vote may become a dominant message along with specific voter education on the elected bodies), etc.

Keep in mind that you also have a mandate to deepen the civic debate, in a manner adapted to your audience, and thus civic education should always be part of your mix.

4.2. Strategic objectives

The strategic objective of the Electoral Education Campaign has been identified by the Forum as follows: **increase among Iraqi citizens the level of awareness, knowledge, support of and participation to the democratic system, and in particular the coming electoral processes.** Among the citizenry, priority will be given to groups identified as *having participated significantly less or not at all* in the latest electoral cycle.

Specific objectives have been defined. The campaign aims at increasing the level of knowledge on and support to:

the Iraqi democratic system and the necessary active participation of citizens, in particular through the practice of voting for representatives;

the upcoming electoral events and what is at stake, in particular the role of the institutions to be elected;

the electoral process, its actors, principles and regulations;

the modalities for a citizen to be actively engaged in the vote: such as the practical modalities of the vote, but also the responsibility to follow issues, study candidates and form his/her own opinion;

the electoral institution (IHEC) and the guarantees put in place for democratic elections.

It is important that your organization turns these generic aims into practical, precise objectives for your campaign. You will be able to precise these, once you have defined with more details your target audiences (see below 4.3.) and your analysis of these audiences, in particular of their needs (see 4.4.).

4.3. Target audiences

Referring to the typology established above in 4.1., and adapted to the context of a nascent democracy like Iraq, civic education should aim at all citizens. Yet, practically, you need a more precise definition of your target audience(s). The Forum has identified priority audiences (see below in 4.3.2.), that may already be reflected in your planning. As a civil society organization implementing an electoral education program, you also need to focus on optimizing your resources and the impact of your activities, and thus identify and analyze carefully the intended beneficiaries.

4.3.1. Priority target audiences

The following target groups have been identified as priorities by the Forum.

- **Youth and first time voters:** This group has not participated in the last elections and they are estimated at between 2-3 million, including both educated and non educated people. Special attention needs to be given to non-schooled adult youth, and rural youth.
- **Internally Displaced Persons:** estimated at about 1.3 for IDPS since 2005 and 2.4 million people in total (counting long-term IDPs in the Kurdistan Region).
- **Groups that did not participate in previous elections,** in particular in governorates with a majority Sunni population.
- **Women:** 50% of the population.

The following additional target groups have been identified by the Forum as segments that require specific attention, in the development of particular messages or approaches.

- **Illiterate people:** estimated at up to 30% of the population.
- **Residents of rural areas:** this includes people living in the marshes, villages, mountains and desert areas, in communities likely to be more traditional and conservative.
- **People with special needs** (handicapped): this is of particular relevance in Iraq where, following a succession of wars, some estimate that as many as 10% of Iraqis live with a disability.
- **Main ethnic/cultural/religious groups,** in the Central, Northern and Southern parts of the country.
- **Minorities** (ethnic, religious and/or linguistic).

Cross-cutting to all the categories above, it is important to have specific programs for potential **Opinion and community leaders:** this includes tribal leaders, clerics, community leaders, educated influential people and media representatives.

4.3.2. Segmenting and prioritizing target audiences

It is necessary to segment and prioritize target audiences:

segment them, because different social groups will have different levels of knowledge, interest, etc. related to elections, and will necessitate different approaches to be reached;

prioritize them, because limits in time and resources make it necessary to identify groups who are the most in need of electoral education: in particular groups whose participation (often because it has

been too low in the past) is even more crucial to ensure full democratic representation in institutions, groups which need more convincing and engagement to participate, as well as groups or types of individuals that can have a “multiplier effect” through the influence they wield.

You have already identified your target audience(s) in the proposals submitted to UNOPS. It may be useful to segment and prioritize them further, through the following steps:

an assessment of the socio-demographic make-up of your governorate and of the local relative importance of the priority groups defined by the Forum;

a local analysis of:

- the target audiences less likely to participate, and the categories of eligible voters whose participation is especially crucial to ensure a representative democratic process;
- the groups that will require specific messages and/or specific approaches;
- the groups or types that may have the most impact in terms of influence, or for which the effects could be long-lasting (the youth for example, as civic habits tend to be ingrained at a young age), etc.

an evaluation of your organization’s strengths and opportunities in reaching out to specific target audiences in the community.

When segmenting your target audiences, think not only of groups with homogeneous demographic traits but also of communities of interest, groups where different people share a common interest through which they may be reached (example: football fans, people socializing in cafés, internet café users...).

4.4. Audience survey: exploring attitudes, identifying influencers

With target audience(s) defined, it is useful to deepen the audience analysis, in particular to explore attitudes and evaluate the level of knowledge, interest, etc. related to elections and the democratic system, and identify the key influencers of a specific audience (who, or what do they get their information from? who or what does influence their opinions?). This is important because this helps to determine the most appropriate messages and approaches for each audience.

4.4.1. Key elements

The Forum has identified the following elements which would require special attention and further exploration at the governorate and local level:

Public confidence in government and democratic institutions remains weak overall.

There is a marked public disillusionment in the electoral process since the 2005 elections.

Strong regional variations on perception of overall situation and positive impact of latest elections: largely positive in Kurdish areas, mixed in the South, negative in Baghdad and Sunni areas.¹

Within all major groups, suspicion and criticism of elected officials (arguably a common element of democratic politics).²

¹ Al Yaqeen Center, Survey, June 2007

Iraqi citizens usually support the notion that regional councils are better suited to service delivery at the local level than the national government.

People put more trust in religious leaders and professors/teachers (around 4 in 5 trust them), then in charity organizations (2 in 3), tribal leaders and media (more than half), then unions and professional associations (2 in 5) and political parties (1 in 3).³

These are only indicative elements, which have been measured in surveys in 2006 and 2007. These perceptions could have changed significantly.

Your own local campaign will benefit if you can produce even a basic audience analysis.

4.4.2. Producing a basic audience survey

Your organization will probably lack the time and resources to conduct a thorough audience analysis. But it is possible to produce a basic audience survey that will give you most of the accurate information your organization needs to tailor messages and approaches to reach your audience more effectively.

You need to explore the level of awareness, interest, knowledge, perception (negative/positive), and anticipated participation as relates to the coming electoral events (and the institutions to be elected). This will help you define the themes that you need to address with this specific audience, and the messages best suited to them.

You also want to study your audience(s) and understand the key following elements: where do they get their information from? Who or what influences their decisions? Who do they trust or who do they see as role-models? What are their preoccupations and interests? What is the best time to reach them? The best place?

In most cases, you can answer these questions by drawing on your organization's knowledge and the prior experience of your staff with the target group. It is also advisable to complete and verify this with a simple questionnaire or focus group discussion with a small sample of the potential audience.

Imagine you are planning an electoral education program for university students. Prepare a questionnaire addressing the above questions, field it to a representative group of 20 students. Or conduct a "focus group" discussing the same questions with a representative group of 10-15 students, with one staff animating the discussion along the questionnaire, and another staff taking notes. This will give you most of the information you need.

Try and also draw on local knowledge to analyze the environment of your audience, and in particular to identify, at the local and community level, personalities or influential people that can be your entry points into the community and facilitate your access and increase your impact. These could be traditional leaders in a village, but maybe also the owner of a popular internet café if you want to reach the youth. In a university, you will need support from the administration and the deans, but an especially popular professor may have more impact when it comes to creating interest among students.

² NDI Focus Groups with Iraqi men and women, October-November 2006

³ Al Yaqeen Center, Survey, June 2007

4.5. Approaches – Tactics and tools

With audience(s) defined and analyzed, best approaches need to be determined for each: which activities, methods, media and tools will have the most impact in reaching out to the audience in the local context?

4.5.1. Generic approaches

The following generic methods or means of communication have been identified by the Forum.

Display and print media

- **Billboards**
 - **Murals:** opportunities to create interactivity within a community, engage youth in the actual creation or production (example: painting a mural create by an artist with children/students on a security wall)
 - **Ad placement** in newspapers and magazines (cartoons, articles...)
 - Periodic **publications** (example: newsletter of the Forum)
 - **Display materials:** flex, stickers, posters, mostly used for simple motivational voter information.
 - Brochures, booklets and fact sheets: often used as resources, with more complex information.
- **Audio visual and live media**
 - **TV and radio:** spots*, public service announcements, talk shows and debates, call-in shows, soap operas, documentaries such as simulations of the electoral process.
- Audiovisual mass media have the largest impact in numbers reached. Yet most formats are not participatory. TV and radio use tend to work better when messages are seamlessly incorporated into popular regular programming (from entertainment to debates). Getting a popular talk show host to invite your organization and IHEC representatives to discuss elections on a regular basis will be more effective (and at no cost) than producing a specific program. Special attention needs to be given to ensure that the channels chosen to broadcast on are the ones most used by the target audience, and the most cost-effective.
- **Movies:** broadcast on TV, through social websites, as additional programming to regular movie screenings. “Edutainment” where entertainment mix with educational content.
 - **Songs and music videos**
 - **Theatre plays:** the live version of edutainment. It is often complemented by face-to-face activities, and thus is also associated to direct outreach (see below).
 - **Mobile cinema and theatre:** distribute the same “products” as above but roving through “mobile teams” system to reach non-urban areas which lack infrastructure. This can be a magnet for audiences in contexts where entertainment is lacking, and is often followed up by direct outreach sessions with members of the assembled crowds.
 - **Plastic arts:** may be used in the form of educational contests.

- **Direct outreach**
 - **On-the-spot** activity: group meeting “improvised” in a public environment. This can be done, for example, by walking through a local market and disseminating electoral information directly to people met in that place.
 - **Face-to-face** sessions (groups of 10 to 30): often used as the most participative and effective direct outreach format, adaptable to most audiences and potential venues.
 - **Focus groups outreach**: engaging an audience defined as a community of interest (example: reaching to the football fans at a game...)
 - **Peer outreach**: reaching an audience through peers they can relate to (example: students with students...)
 - **Workshops**, conferences, symposiums and seminars: more adapted with better-educated audiences. Sometimes do not give enough opportunities for participation.
 - **Roving outreach** through field visits and mobile teams (with loudspeakers, etc.), through home visits, etc.
 - **Elections tents**: a specific temporary public space is set up where videos are displayed and facilitators interact with citizens for on-the-spot direct outreach.

- **New media**
 - Distribution of CDs, DVDs or memory flash drives containing electoral education content
 - **Call center**: toll-free call center to answer elections-related questions
 - **Mass texting** (SMS) to mobile phones: very cost effective for reminder-type voter information (Every vote counts – Go and vote today for the Governorate Council elections – Any question call IHEC Center at this number)
 - **Mass-mailing**: requires building or buying a mail database.
 - Forum and IHEC **websites**
 - **Blogs and participative websites**

- **Other methods**
 - **Promotional products**: agendas, folders, pens, t-shirts, etc. displaying electoral branding and messaging.

4.5.2. Identifying challenges and opportunities

Identifying the best approach for your audience in your context should have been simplified by the audience analysis outlined above in 4.4. *Audience survey: exploring attitudes, identifying influencers.*

Also consider both challenges to and opportunities for possible electoral education activities for your target(s). See, as an example to conduct your evaluation, the following indicative list produced by the Forum:

- **Reaching IDPs**

Challenge

Most IDPs and those who returned into internal displacement are not in camps. This makes it more difficult to identify and reach them. IDPs may also face more serious economic and social problems and be less inclined to participate in activities.

Opportunity

IDPs having settled over the past few years in their new area, it is likely that local community leaders will be able to help identify neighborhoods where IDP families reside. Contacting some of these families and analyzing their context (see 4.4. *Audience survey: exploring attitudes, identifying influencers*) will help you determine entry points and approaches. In the Kurdistan region, special distribution centers have been set up for IDPs, while, in the southern governorates, it may be helpful to approach local offices of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement. In many cases, specific NGOs which support IDPs could also help.

- **Reaching women**

Challenge

Accessing women, especially in rural conservative areas, where they have limited access to the media and are more likely to be illiterate.

Opportunity

Is it possible to identify a place and time, a social activity where they can be reached: markets, sewing / carpet workshops? weddings, etc.? Do you have enough female volunteers and staff working in your campaign to reach directly women?

- **Reaching youth**

Challenge

Youth who are attending schools and universities will have greater access to electoral information than youth who are outside of these institutions. Youth in rural areas also face greater challenges to accessing information, as they have limited access to media and electronic information.

Opportunity

Where do non-schooled youth congregate? Males may be reached on football playgrounds, internet cafés, youth clubs, etc.

- **Context where key influencers oppose elections**

Challenge

Opinion, community and public leaders in some areas are against elections (they may think that elections are useless, unfair, and even forbidden religiously). They may forbid people to participate and engage in electoral education activities.

Opportunity

If they wield real influence, you will not be able to do much without them, so consider them your first audience, and try and approach them with the support of people with similar background and sensibility (clerics, tribal leaders, leaders of similar political affiliation, etc.), and convince them that being leaders for their community entails ensuring that their community has its voice heard in the political process.

Finally consider the tools at your disposal in your governorate (which media outlets, for example), and the strengths and capacities of your organization (have you done this type of activity before, if not can you identify appropriate resource persons?).

4.5.3. Defining the approaches per target group

The following suggested best approaches to reach each target audience have been identified by the Forum:

- **Youth and first time voters**

TV, printed materials and new media, especially through frequently visited social websites. Mobile phones because the majority of the youth are using mobiles. For youth in more rural areas who have less access to media and technology, non-traditional methods like engagement outreach through sports (by visiting playgrounds and using football players that can attract a large group of youth), games, and mobile cinema/theater can be very effective in attracting large groups of youth. Electoral information and printed material/public relations products can be disseminated at these meetings.

- **IDPs**

Most IDPs and those who returned into internal displacement are not in camps, i.e. not in congregated locations. The most appropriate approach to reach IDPs is the media (TV and radio), according to an IDP survey carried out in 2006. IDPs were asked to identify their most important source of information. While 47% said that family and friends are most important, 47% ranked television and radio as their primary information source. Religious, political, and community leaders are the most important source for 4%, while only 2% ranked newspapers as most important.⁴ Therefore, special radio/TV spots containing voter education for IDP should be produced and broadcast. Direct outreach should also be used through meetings arranged with IDP participants in order to properly explain the upcoming electoral processes and particularly how they can registration during the voter registration update and vote in the governorate elections. Special printed material with a focus on IDP voter education should be produced to support meetings. These materials can be stocked for distribution at places where IDPs come to receive food and relief assistance.

- **Women**

Radio is usually an effective means to reach women, especially in rural areas which may be conservative, through radio programs broadcasted during the day. Where possible, organize direct meetings in socially acceptable contexts should be arranged with women (especially for illiterate women) to explain the electoral context and processes and convey necessary voter information (such as where, when, how to register and vote).

⁴ Source: From UNHRC comments to UNAMI IDP Paper on IDP registration.

- **Illiterate people**

Direct outreach is best in order to explain electoral processes and procedures and convey important voter information. Radio/TV is useful to reinforce key message and create general awareness. However, this form of media is limited in actually *explaining* to people.

- **Opinion and community leaders**

Outreach with opinion leaders should always start with direct meetings. This will also help facilitate access to their communities. Opinion leaders can also help to spread messages effectively to their communities. Meetings with opinion leaders should also include the distribution of printed and promotional materials which will ensure that they convey accurate information to their communities.

- **Residents of rural areas**

Direct meetings and radio are the best approaches to reach out to populations in rural areas, who may have limited access to electronic media, newspapers and television coverage.

- **People with special need (handicapped)**

Special material should be produced targeting people with special needs. This material should include relevant information like who can help, for example the blind, in casting their ballot. Special motivational messages to encourage people with special needs to participate should also be produced. Meetings with organizations and associations that work with people with special needs should be held. Radio/TV spots should also include messages for people with special needs. During all meetings, information for people with special needs should be disseminated as participants may have special needs, or may have family or friends with special needs. If you organize events for people with special needs, you should make sure that the venue chosen is easily accessible to them and that the type of activity chosen is compatible with their handicap.

- **Minorities**

NGOs working with minority groups should produce material in minority languages. Similarly meetings held with minority groups should be done so in their own language.

4.5.4. Tailoring, localizing the approach

You need to choose and adapt to your campaign and your local context the most appropriate approaches proposed in *4.5.1. Generic approaches*. Review your audience analysis, identify the specific challenges and opportunities. Review the suggestions from the Forum, and then outline your own mix of methods and tools.

Keep in mind that you will also be able to rely on tools produced by other electoral education partners, the IHEC first among them, which will produce print materials that can be distributed during your activities.

For more detailed suggestions on direct outreach activities, and a specific focus on participatory methods, see the Electoral Education Manual.

4.6. Key themes and messages: developing the content

The Forum has identified five areas of focus and the following list of themes and sub-themes, to be addressed during the campaign. They have been identified based on perceived needs among the public and structured according to the electoral operational calendar.

Each theme should be addressed in your electoral outreach activities, but you may have to prioritize themes and sub-themes, according to the electoral phase, your audience, the duration and frequency of your activity. You will likely not treat all sub-themes.

4.6.1. Focus areas

- Basics of civic education: democracy, rule of law, government and local governance.
- The electoral framework and the IHEC
- The voter registration update
- The electoral process

The Forum has also identified a cross-cutting theme: citizen's engagement, with a focus on the inclusion and participation of women, IDPs and youth.

4.6.2. Themes and sub-themes

The themes are elaborated upon, using the same structure, in the Electoral Education Manual, companion document to this National Electoral Education Plan. The sub-themes are indicative and will be detailed in further versions by the Forum.

- **Basics of civic education**
 - **Democracy, the rule of law and the constitution**
 - **The roles and functions of government, including local governments (governorate and district councils)**
 - **The role of people in government, including the importance of elections**
 - Concept of citizenship and its importance in the decision making process
 - Right and responsibilities of citizens to participate in the political process
 - Importance of engaging women, youth and IDPs (their rights to participate in the political process, their importance in the decision making, gender equity and social balance)
 - Importance of elections
 - Concept of free and fair elections

- Importance of participation and voting
 - The Electoral Calendar in Iraq (Governorate elections; Referenda for the Constitution and disputed territories, CoR elections 2009)
- **Elections: the framework and the actors**
 - **The electoral framework: principles, the framework in Iraq.**
 - The Iraqi Constitution
 - Law of the Independent High Electoral Commission, Law of Governorates Not Organized into a Region and other laws impacting on elections
 - Draft Electoral/Referenda Law,
 - Other regulations and guidelines by IHEC and other legal institutions that impact on the conduct of elections⁵
 - The electoral system and processes
 - Open/closed list system
 - How the vote translates into seats
 - Quota system for women
 - **The electoral actors**
 - Principle: Candidates and voters
 - The election authority: IHEC
 - Mandate, roles, functions and structure of the IHEC at the national and governorate level.
 - Independence of the IHEC
 - IHEC procedures, regulations, code of conduct
 - How to contact the IHEC
 - Rights, role and responsibilities in elections of candidates and political entities
 - Role and responsibilities of political entities and candidates
 - Rights of political entities and candidates
 - Code of Conduct for political parties
 - Rights, role and responsibilities in elections of other actors: media, observers, judiciary
 - Your role as a citizen

⁵ Available on IHEC website: <http://www.ihec.iq/laws&of-Ihec&iraq/laws,Ihec/A3.htm>

- **Elections: the process (focusing on the forthcoming Governorate Councils elections)**
 - **The Voter Registration Update**
 - How was the provisional voter registry created? The food distribution coupons.
 - An update, what is it and why? Verification, additions, corrections, marking persons who no longer meet eligibility.
 - Importance of ensuring you are registered
 - Practical modalities: when, where, how, documents needed
 - Special focus on IDP, women, youth, special needs – where and how
 - Offences and penalties for fraudulent registration
 - Complaints and appeals process, when, where, how, final decisions by who
 - Rights, role and responsibilities of observers and political party agents in the Voter Registration Update centers.
 - **The Candidates' nomination**
 - Formation, registration and accreditation of political entities, coalitions, candidates
 - Nomination and accreditation of candidates – Who can be/how to be a candidate
 - Complaints/appeals - Challenges and objections – when where, how, period, final decisions
 - Political entities memberships, manifestos
 - Role of political entities during each phase of the electoral process (registration, campaign period, elections, post election)
 - **Polling**
 - Where, when, how, documents needed
 - Importance of voting
 - How to mark your ballot paper
 - Secrecy of the vote
 - Offences and penalties, Complaints and appeals
 - Importance of non-violent elections
 - Role of observers and political party agents
 - **Counting**
 - Spoilt, rejected votes
 - The counting and tallying processes at different levels (polling center, district, Governorate Electoral Office and national tally centre)
 - Announcement of results and declaration of winners

- Acceptance of results

4.6.3. Message development

Key messages and content have been developed in order to guide and support the detailed development by NGOs of the content and messages that they will use in their awareness raising activities. These messages can be found in the Electoral Education Manual. They will be revised and updated by the Forum.

The development of messages is closely linked to the type of approaches and activities NGOs will implement. You need to have defined these (see above 4.5. Approaches) before you can fully develop your content and messages.

4.6.3.1. The framework

In developing the messages you will use in your electoral education activities, it is important that you start from the themes and sub-themes detailed in this NEEP and in the Electoral Education Manual. The Manual details key messages/information for each of these themes and sub-themes.

For legal and technical information, it is important that you respect the official information communicated by the IHEC.

4.6.3.2. Tailoring, localizing the message

You should select/prioritize the key messages outlined in the Manual, according to your audience. You also need to adapt the wording and presentation of these messages - presented in the Manual in a factual and didactic format - to your audience. You may need to simplify notions, use metaphors adapted to the context.

The audience analysis, carried out at an earlier stage (see above *4.4. Audience survey: exploring attitudes, identifying influencers*), will have given you the indications you need to tailor the message to the audience.

You do not have to produce a whole new content for each audience. Your messages may vary only slightly from one audience to the other: you will focus on some key points and not others, you will simplify or detail, you will use different metaphors or “eye-catchers” to capture their attention.

4.6.3.3. Creativity in content development

Democracy, elections and civic responsibility are all complex notions and serious issues. Yet electoral education cannot be boring. You need to engage your audience, and turn concepts, laws and duties into meaningful ideas and realities that they can relate to, that they feel have an impact in their daily life.

Do not hesitate to be creative when you develop your content/messages/communication products. To help boost your creativity and the impact of your messages, organize a brainstorming session. Assemble the person in charge of developing the messages, a “creative” type if this first person (in charge of developing the messages) is more of a traditional pedagogue, and a person who has an intimate

knowledge of the audience. Make sure they have an understanding of the themes and content to be developed and of your audience, by studying the Electoral Education Manual and your audience analysis. Then give them free rein in presenting new ideas. As a rule, aim for short, simple and repeated messages.

Ideally, you would want to test your messages/content in a focus group (see 4.4.2. *Producing a basic audience survey*). If you do not have the time and resources, simply evaluate the efficiency and impact of your messages after the first activities: what were the reactions to your radio program? What did the participants think of the face-to-face session or seminar?

4.7. Resources

You have access to several resources, beyond this NEEP, to prepare your electoral education activities:

the **Electoral Education Manual**, developed by the Forum, which will provide a summary corpus of key electoral education content, as well as guidelines on planning and designing your direct outreach activities, and basics of participatory methodology;

IHEC materials: fact sheets, backgrounders, frequently asked questions; posters, leaflets, pamphlets, guidelines and manuals, which can be **resource documents** in your preparation, for use during your activities, or for distribution;

the **IHEC website** (www.ihec.ig), where all materials and legal, regulatory documents and the latest information on the electoral process is published;

the **Forum website** (www.eefiraq.org), where information and documents pertinent to the Electoral Education Campaign is posted.

4.8. Implementation

At the implementation stage of your electoral education activities, always ensure that you adapt your activities to the electoral phase, and that you coordinate with other partners.

4.8.1. Respecting the electoral phases

You should make sure that your timeline for implementation is in line with the key phases of the electoral process calendar, and adapt your messages accordingly, to reflect the information priorities of that specific phase.

The IHEC Public Outreach Department outlines in its strategy four distinct electoral phases. Under each phase, main messages and timeframe will be specified and all media broadcasting or publishing IHEC outreach products will use the timeline for message dissemination to ensure harmonization and consistency.

The phases of the campaign are: the Voter Registration Update period, the Candidate Nomination period, the Campaign period and Polling day, the Counting process and announcement of Results.

To ensure that you are in coherence with the electoral phases, you can use the following practical guidelines, which refer to the Electoral Education Manual (see also 4.6.2. *Themes and sub-themes*), to decide on the content for your electoral education activities. They are based on the following assumptions: face-to-face direct outreach activities reaching the same group once or twice only over the course of this electoral process.

Before and during the Voter Registration Update period

Basics of civic education (including the system of local governance, i.e. the institutions to be elected)

Elections, Framework and actors (Principles + IHEC only, until the Electoral Law is publicized, and the Manual updated)

Voter Registration Update

After the Voter Registration Update period

Basics of civic education (including the system of local governance, i.e. the institutions to be elected)

Elections, Framework and Actors (Principles + IHEC only, until the Electoral Law is publicized, and the Manual updated)

Elections – The Process (with the emphasis on Polling)

Prior to and during the Candidate Nomination period

Basics of civic education (including the system of local governance, i.e. the institutions to be elected)

Elections, Framework and Actors (Principles + IHEC only, until the Electoral Law is publicized, and the Manual updated)

Elections – The Process (with mentions of Candidate Nomination)

After the Candidate Nomination period until Polling

Basics of civic education (including the system of local governance, i.e. the institutions to be elected)

Elections, Framework and Actors (Principles + IHEC only, until the Electoral Law is publicized, and the Manual updated)

Elections – The Process (Polling and Counting, with the emphasis on Polling)

Counting

Focus on Counting and acceptance of results

4.8.2. The benefits of coordination

In the implementation of your activities, coordinating and utilizing the input and strength of partners will help. You should fully utilize the Governorate Electoral Education Committee (GEEC), as a coordinating mechanism in your governorate with the Forum, other CSO grantees and the IHEC Governorate Electoral Office.

You should coordinate with them:

on your messages – to obtain the latest information, ensure the accuracy and the overall coherence of electoral education messages reaching the population;

for materials – to possibly standardize the materials used by all partner NGOs and to obtain IHEC printed, audio or video materials for distribution and use;

on your implementation plans – to avoid overlaps in targets, or the concentration of activities in certain areas, or link up with new partners and thus maximize the reach of electoral education activities;

on your best practices and lessons learned – to make sure you all benefit from each other's experiences to improve your programs.

to communicate results of attendance at your events and contribute to building up a global national campaign progress update.

4.9. Evaluation and revision

It is important that as you implement your activities, you evaluate honestly their impact, assess what could be improved and revise your modus operandi accordingly.

It is advisable to ask people attending your events / activities to evaluate them. You can ask them to field a questionnaire after an activity to rate their level of interest and satisfaction, what worked and what did not work; or you can use other techniques such as posting an Evaluation Board in the venue / location of your activity and ask participants to write in their evaluation on it. Finally, an informal discussion will also provide valuable feedback.

5. Conclusion

The National Electoral Education Plan is an open, living document. It will be updated by the Forum to incorporate new data and insights, new information on the electoral rules and procedures as it becomes available, and more importantly the comments, feedback and best practices from the GEO staff and partner civil society organizations, which implement all over Iraq the Electoral Education Campaign Project.

6. Annex - Electoral Education Pledge

We (Name of the Local NGO), working in electoral education are committed to upholding the Electoral Education Pledge

Preamble

NGOs operating in Iraq are committed to the advancement of the people, including improvements in their quality of life, and the promotion of social justice, particularly for those who are disadvantaged and marginalized.

The Electoral Education Pledge shows the dedication of NGOs working in electoral education to implement their activities upholding the highest values, principles and quality; and ensuring the most effective co-ordination and collaboration with the Government, the IHEC, the general public and other partners.

The Electoral Education Pledge for NGOs implementing electoral education activities in Iraq or the Pledge as referred hereafter includes two parts. These are **Basic Principles of Conduct** and the **Articles**. The Basic Principles of Conduct are the norms and principles that need to be adhered to while the Articles sets out specific commitments in relation to the Electoral Education Campaign.

Definitions

1. *Pledge*: is a set of norms, principles and values to standardize the conduct, action and behavior of NGOs, and which recognizes an NGO as a voluntary, not-for-profit, no self-serving, non-governmental, non-partisan and independent organization or association involved in the promotion of social justice and development.
2. *Electoral Education Campaign*: refers to the implementation of electoral education activities.
3. *Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)*: refer to a variety of institutions, groups, foundations, trusts, and associations formed by citizens to address social, political and environmental issues. CSOs include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and also encompass associations or organizations inclusive of unions; political parties; tribal affiliations; academic institutions; research centers; and, the collective representations of people through networks.
4. *Electoral Education Forum*: Has been established under the EECP and is composed of 4 IHEC members and 19 members from civil society.
5. *National Electoral Education Plan (NEEP)*: is developed by the Forum and outlines the themes, target groups, educational methods and messages for the Electoral Education Campaign.
6. *Nonpartisan and independent*: indicates that the NGO is controlled and directed by its founders in keeping with its mandate honoring community values and obligations and its responsibilities.
7. *Signatories*: are NGOs whose duly accredited representative has signed and accepted this 'Pledge.

8. 'We:' refers to all the NGOs which are signatories to the Pledge.

Purpose of the Pledge

The Pledge will:

- ensure transparency and accountability in the operation of NGOs implementing electoral education activities;
- improve the quality of services provided by NGOs by helping NGOs to adopt high standards of conduct;
- improve communication between the NGO community and the various stake holders;
- improve the performance of the NGO community by encouraging the exchange of experiences among its members and learning from proven best practices.

The Electoral Education Pledge shall be made available to NGOs, Government bodies, donors, target communities and the public at large to use as a reference and a guide.

Basic Principles of Conduct:

1. Iraqi Citizen Centered

1.1. We see our efforts as a means for ensuring a true representation of the spirit of free will of the Iraqi people.

1.2. Our programs will be planned and implemented with egalitarian practice and the participation of the people concerned.

1.3. We shall respect and adhere to internationally recognized human rights and the principles of democracy which include the right of political participation and of the right to free expression of opinions.

1.4 We commit to supporting the electoral process, as one of the most important indicators of, democracy and government legitimacy and as an important contribution to the peaceful transformation of power and authority.

1.5 We acknowledge that wide active public participation in elections is the main indicator of success of the electoral process and the most important factor for the progress of democracy and insurance for the legitimacy of the electoral process.

2. Recognition of the Iraqi Legal Framework

2.1. We shall conform to the constitution, laws, rules and regulations of the Government of Iraq.

2.2. We recognize, based on the Iraqi Constitution, the IHEC as the only legitimate and national institution to organize elections and its importance in the democratic process in Iraq.

2.3. We shall respect the constitutional role of the IHEC and its rules, regulations, procedures and decisions.

2.4. We recognize the constitutional right of Iraqi civil society to participate in the political process. This right is supported by the values of the United Nations which calls for the active and wide participation of civil society.

2.5. We recognize the importance of a partnership between the IHEC, civil society, the media and legislative institutions in the electoral process and are committed to the success of such partnerships.

3. Fairness, Neutrality and Equity

3.1 We shall have non-partisan, neutral, non-violent methods of conducting all our electoral education activities within the framework of the law and IHEC regulations.

3.2. We shall not use the implementation of our electoral education activities to promote any political or party agenda that is related to political parties or entities whether they are participating in the elections or not. This includes not using their resources, symbols, places and platforms and anything else related to them in the electoral education process.

3.3. We shall exercise and promote fairness, impartiality and equity in all of our activities and in our dealings with interested parties, community partners and the general public. We will not discriminate against any sector of the Iraqi populations and will deliver our electoral education activities fairly to all the different sectors of our society.

3.4. Our messages and activities shall not contain any sectarian, partisan, or ethnic signals. It shall not promote any ideology nor shall it not use any ethnic, sectarian, or partisan symbols in the materials used in the Electoral Education Campaign.

3.5. Our messages and activities used in the Electoral Education Campaign shall be peaceful and non-violent. We shall not make any armed appearance or use words encouraging violence. Instead our messages and activities shall encourage active and peaceful participation in the electoral process and forbid the use of violent methods, messages and resources.

4. Moral and Ethical Integrity

4.1. We are committed to upholding high moral and ethical values during the implementation of our electoral education activities.

4.2. We shall be truthful in all our activities and refrain from practices that undermine the moral and ethical integrity of our organizations

5. Transparency and Accountability

5.1. We shall be transparent and accountable in our dealings with the Government, the IHEC, the public, donors and other interested parties.

5.2. We shall manage our accounts honestly and in keeping with financial best practice that ensures the use of resources in accordance with intended purposes.

5.3. We shall abide by the principle to allocate resources efficiently and effectively within our organization and our target communities.

5.4. All of our organizational transactions shall be free of conflicts of personal and professional interest.

6. Partnership and Collaboration

6.1. We shall foster an atmosphere of collaboration and co-operation in our partnerships and supportive relationships to the best advantage of our organizations and target populations. We shall promote harmony, collaboration, and team spirit within and outside the sector.

6.2. We shall support positive interaction of people on topics pertaining to electoral education and engage citizens by using the local capacities and experiences available in the local targeted communities as related to electoral education

6.3. We shall share and exchange information, experiences and resources pertinent to our mission with the view to promoting, learning and, common understanding within and outside the sector.

6.4. We are committed to establishing a unified national work for the electoral education by coordinating with similar initiatives.

6.5. We shall work hard and actively monitor the effectiveness of the Electoral Education Campaign on the targeted groups through coordination between the Forum, the IHEC and GEECs.

7. Gender, Victims of Violence and Special Needs

7.1. We shall seek to advance gender balance and equity and endeavour to ensure the equal participation of women in the implementation of all our activities. We are committed to raising the awareness about the necessity of active and wide women's participation in the electoral process.

7.2. We shall deliver electoral education messages that are neutral to all the victims of violence and terrorism (including the IDPs, and families of martyrs and the people that are effected psychologically and physically by terror attacks), making sure that their agony and pain is not used to promote messages and engaging them in a positive manner that improves their access to electoral education.

7.3. We shall ensure the availability of required resources for electoral education for people with special needs. This include considering different levels of knowledge between the targeted groups and designing special methods and messages for people with special needs.

Articles

Article One: Relationship with the Electoral Education Forum

1.1. We recognize the Electoral Education Forum (the Forum) as an important part of the electoral education process by providing strategic direction and message standards of the Electoral Education Campaign in keeping with the electoral calendar.

1.2. We commit to continuous cooperation with the Forum during the implementation of our electoral education activities. This includes providing reports and feedback on implementation of the Electoral Education Campaign as requested and including Forum members at our meetings and activities.

Article Two: Commitment to the National Electoral Education Plan

2.1 We recognized the NEEP, which has been approved by the Forum as the blueprint for organizing the implementation of our activities under the Electoral Education Campaign and recognize its necessity.

2.2. We commit to developing our messages and organizing our activities in keeping with the NEEP and its content. This includes its plan on themes, sub-themes, target groups, methods and messages.

2.3. We consider the NEEP as a reference guide to our work in electoral educations.

2.4. We understand that the NEEP is a 'living document' that will be periodically reviewed and updated by the Forum and we commit to implementation of our activities in line with the changes and updates made to the NEEP.

Article Three: The Governorate Electoral Education Committees

3.1 We recognize the Governorate Electoral Education Committees as the only bodies mandated by the Forum for coordination of electoral education activities at the governorate level.

3.2. We recognize the Chairmanship of the IHEC in these Committees.

3.3. We commit to participating and supporting the work of the GEECs, including all public outreach activities that will be implemented directly by these Committees.

3.4. We accept that the GEECs are venues for coordination and monitoring of the electoral education activities in the Governorate, and not for monitoring the performance of the IHEC operations at the Governorate level.