

GPECS II



Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support II



REGIONAL COMPONENT



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Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support: Asia and Pacific Region

In the Asia-Pacific region, significant progress on democratic development has been achieved. Today, transparent and democratically elected governments are in place in several countries. Though, while many countries in Asia have a strong history of electoral democracy, there are some countries in the region that follow a more interrupted path to sustainable democracy. Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in Asia and Pacific are more technically competent and skilled than ever before. They are having greater access to technical information, expertise, capacity building initiatives and professional relationships with other EMBs. Yet, at the same time, elections are becoming more complex and thus the management of this processes is also becoming more challenging.

EMBs are more than ever required to complement technical skills with political nuance, understanding, diplomacy and convening skills, since they play an increasing role in regulating political party financing, electoral violence as well as including all segments of the society in the electoral process, while sustaining EMB administration and operations in a cost-effective manner.

To address these issues, UNDP has launched the Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) which is commencing its second phase in 2015 and focuses on the global, the regional and the national level, as well as on gender mainstreaming in electoral processes.

GPECS is UNDP's main tool in electoral assistance and promotes the electoral cycle approach to support countries in their consolidation of democratic processes. Therewith, UNDP's electoral assistance goes beyond technical EMB support. Significant importance is given to creating an enabling environment by strengthening other key stakeholders such as civil society, legislators, political parties and the media through the electoral cycle, while integrating a long-term vision for democracy and human development.

Next to country support, GPECS Asia and Pacific has a strong regional focus, aiming at connecting EMBs from the region and strengthen their capacities through stronger networks, exchanges and regional capacity developing measures. One of the regional focus topics of GPECS I, which will be continued under GPECS II, is the **prevention of electoral violence**. UNDP has established itself as the lead organization in the Asia-Pacific region working on developing an understanding of the triggers and actors of electoral violence. Research from the region has illustrates that political party (supporters) are the most common instigators and victims of electoral violence. This highlights the responsibility of EMBs for the regulation and coordination of political actors around an electoral event and their need to be adequately prepared and resourced to mitigate the risk of electoral violence. In order to foster these capacities, UNDP will identify 10 high priority countries for 2015/2016 and develop a



training course where UNDP and EMB staff can produce electoral risk mitigation frameworks for implementation. Each framework will be based on an analysis of the political, electoral, historical, economic and social environment of a given country, and provide actionable measures to mitigate the risk of electoral violence. Electoral violence has also unique and adverse impacts on women voters and candidates, particularly during an electoral period. Political tensions create vulnerabilities for women's political participation, and can result in their exclusion from the process. Hence, responses to prevent and mitigate political violence during elections must integrate this gender dimension

Enhancing the **Political Empowerment of Women** is a further thematic focus of GPECS II. In Asia, women constitute less than one-fifth of all parliamentary seats, and in the Pacific it is only 2%, the lowest number in the world. In over half the elections held annually, women's representation either stagnates or decreases. Recognizing that it will take at least 50 years to reach gender parity in national assemblies if no fast-track institutional reforms are taken, UNDP launched 'Gender Equality in Elected Office in Asia-Pacific: Six Actions to Expand Women's Empowerment' in 2012. This publication proposes six institutional "windows of opportunity" that a country can select from and adapt to their specific political environment to develop National Action Plans that accelerate women's political empowerment. The launch of the publication resulted in political stakeholders from Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam developing their own national plans that have since been incorporated into and implemented through

Parliamentary Steering Committees and relevant government ministries.

Building on this success, UNDP facilitated the development of National Action Plans for political equality for Bhutan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam. Four more countries in Asia-Pacific will be selected to develop and implement National Action Plans. National and sub-national stakeholder consultations will be held in each country to ensure an inclusive, sustainable process that promotes national ownership of, and political commitment to, each National Action Plan. Furthermore, a professional network in Asia to connect women caucuses will be created to strengthen and support women who have been elected to parliament. To begin this initiative, a mapping will be conducted of all the women's caucuses in Asia, and following this a working group will be established of representatives from all women's caucuses on what skills, knowledge and support the network should focus on.

Another key objective is the collection of sex-disaggregated data to highlight where special consideration should be given to strengthen women's political participation and to overcoming constraints as candidates and voters. Currently, no coherent data-base with this information exists beyond the number of female parliamentarians at a national level. Consolidated research will be conducted to inform programming and advocacy tool for countries in the region to address problem areas.