



AUDIT

OF

UNDP GLOBAL PROGRAMME FOR ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT (GPECS)

Report No. 1297

Issue Date: 29 May 2014



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Report on the audit of UNDP Global Programme for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) Executive Summary

The UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) conducted an audit of UNDP Global Programme for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) from 3 to 21 March 2014. The audit aimed to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control processes relating to the following areas and sub-areas:

- (a) governance and management (organizational structure and delegation of authority, leadership, ethics and values, risk management, planning, monitoring and reporting, and financial sustainability);
- (b) programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation (selection of implementing partners, results setting, reporting, and evaluation);
- (c) national programme component oversight (oversight over the design and implementation of the national component; service tracking systems);
- (d) knowledge management (knowledge management strategy, capacity building approach, knowledge products);
- (e) donor relations (partnerships and donor relations management); and
- (f) operations (human resources, procurement).

The audit covered the activities of GPECS at the headquarters level from 13 July 2009 to 20 March 2014. GPECS recorded programme and management expenditures totalling \$19.8 million at the headquarters level. GPECS has never been audited by either OAI or the United Nations Board of Auditors at this level.

The projects implemented at the country level are covered by UNDP direct implementation or national implementation audit arrangements.

The audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

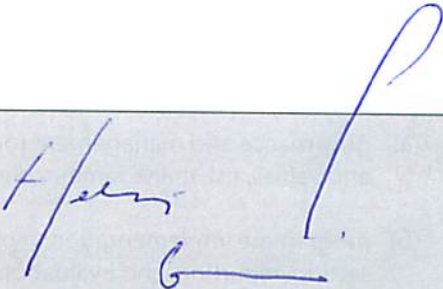
Overall audit rating

OAI assessed GPECS as **satisfactory**, which means “Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were adequately established and functioning well. No issues were identified that would significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity.”

The audit did not result in any recommendations.

Management comments and action plan

Issues with less significance have been discussed directly with management and actions have been initiated to address them.



Helge S. Ostveiten
Director
Office of Audit and Investigations

I. About the Programme

The Global Programme for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) represents the main UNDP contribution to the formulation and implementation of the United Nations electoral assistance policy. At the time of the audit GPECS was in the last stage of implementation in 20 countries. GPECS had four main components: (a) Global – providing leadership, advocacy and capacity development on electoral assistance; (b) Regional – enhancing the exchange of good practices between all regions, with the particular emphasis on Africa; (c) National – working with national electoral management bodies so that they are increasingly able to conduct transparent and credible elections; and (d) Gender – ensuring the political environment is conducive to women playing a stronger role in shaping the political landscape.

GPECS had faced challenges with programme implementation, especially given that the initial target budget of \$50 million had significantly decreased to \$36 million due to the unforeseen unavailability of donor funds. In view of this, programme implementation was focused on countries in transition with complex political environments, coupled with highly visible elections-related activities. A report issued by the then Evaluation Office of UNDP in 2012 indicated that GPECS was positively rated for “promoting a holistic approach to electoral assistance, which uses the electoral cycle framework to provide support in the areas of leadership, advocacy, capacity and regional knowledge development, exchanges, women’s empowerment and administration.”¹

II. Audit results

Satisfactory performance was noted in the following areas:

- (a) Governance and management. Management structure, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities were clearly defined. Coordination initiatives with other United Nations offices (in particular with the United Nations Department of Political Affairs) were well established and following the framework as prescribed by the General Assembly Resolution A/47/138. The Steering Committee convened regularly to assess the GPECS related risks, the programme progress and to ensure timely decision-making. At the time of the audit, OAI noted on-going fund-raising efforts to ensure continuation of core advisory and knowledge management functions built by the GPECS.
- (b) Programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation. GPECS has defined clear and measurable results with specific timeframes. Initially designed in a flexible manner, the Results and Resources Framework was, upon project approval, translated into a detailed plan for achieving specific results that contributed to programme goals. The links between the projects implemented through the national component and GPECS were clear and there was consistency among outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs at both national and global levels. Proper oversight was exercised over the staff and the programme activities in the regions. The process of identifying the implementing partner and the selection of the grant recipient was timely and transparent. Monthly, quarterly and annual reports were regularly prepared, technically reviewed and shared with all stakeholders and donors. All stakeholders, and donors in particular, appreciated the good practice of preparing and distributing the ‘Monthly Activities Tracking Tables’ reports.

In addition, good programme design has enabled flexibility and adaptability in different regions and countries. Given that the programme design focused primarily on the provision of timely and good quality support to electoral cycle and not purely on the geographic scope and coverage, GPECS did not

¹ Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to Strengthening Electoral Systems and Processes

suffer significantly from the sudden decrease in donor funding. In order to monitor services provided to countries, a tracking tool was designed by the GPECS team and it was used effectively. The information gathered was also used for planning and fine-tuning future activities. The evaluation recommendations were also found to be well-managed.

- (c) National programme component oversight. Oversight over the national programme component at the regional and global level was provided through engagement of advisors in all stages of the national project's implementation cycle. Oversight and quality assurance was provided by comparing projects and GPECS annual work plans, review of the periodic reports, annual programme and project reviews and field visits. OAI noted that the timelines and ability of GPECS to react promptly to country needs was particularly appreciated by the Country Offices. In some instances, projects were approved and funds were deployed within a week, which ensured the credibility of UNDP in complex situations.
- (d) Knowledge management. The knowledge products generated as a part of the GPECS programme provide the knowledge base for future UNDP programmes. In addition to the GPECS management team, the EC-UNDP Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance played a key role in the development of knowledge products. A large number of reports and best practice advisories in both UN and non-UN languages were developed. Through its leading participation in the Administration and Cost of Elections knowledge network partnership and the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections programme, it was ensured that the knowledge developed by GPECS was accessible by the development community at large.
- (e) Donor relations. The most significant donor to GPECS was the Government of Spain (90 percent of contributions). The donor representative expressed satisfaction with GPECS management and with results achieved, despite financial challenges in the donor's country that forced a decrease in contribution from \$50 million, as initially pledged to \$36 million. Given the success of GPECS, the donor was assessing the option of providing additional funding by the end of 2014. In particular, good quality and timely reporting, as well as having the donor constantly updated on the status of GPECS implementation, were highly appreciated by the donor representative OAI met. OAI also analysed the contribution status of different donors from the risk management perspective and noted that the risk mitigating efforts were undertaken in this regard.
- (f) Operations (human resources, procurement). OAI reviewed all seven staff recruitment cases. The processes of staff selection, recruitment and staff performance appraisal were in accordance with the 'UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures'. In addition, OAI reviewed a sample of 9 out of a total of 16 consultants recruited during the period audited. No reportable issues were noted.

The audit did not result in any recommendations.

Low priority issues/recommendations were discussed directly and agreed with the Office and are not included in this report.

Definitions of audit terms - ratings and priorities

A. AUDIT RATINGS

- **Satisfactory** Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were adequately established and functioning well. No issues were identified that would significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity.
- **Partially Satisfactory** Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were generally established and functioning, but needed improvement. One or several issues were identified that may negatively affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity.
- **Unsatisfactory** Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were either not established or not functioning well. The issues were such that the achievement of the overall objectives of the audited entity could be seriously compromised.

B. PRIORITIES OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **High (Critical)** Prompt action is required to ensure that UNDP is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UNDP.
- **Medium (Important)** Action is required to ensure that UNDP is not exposed to risks that are considered moderate. Failure to take action could contribute to negative consequences for UNDP.
- **Low** Action is desirable and should result in enhanced control or better value for money. Low priority recommendations, if any, are dealt with by the audit team directly with the Office management, either during the exit meeting or through a separate memo subsequent to the fieldwork. Therefore, low priority recommendations are not included in this report.