



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/072

**Audit of the electoral support provided
by the United Nations Assistance
Mission for Iraq to the October 2021
elections**

**The Mission broadly delivered the electoral
assistance mandate but needed to establish
and implement measures to determine the
reach and impact of public information
campaigns**

**16 December 2022
Assignment No. AP2022-812-01**

Audit of the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to the October 2021 election

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for the October 2021 election. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of UNAMI's processes to deliver technical advice and electoral support for the October 2021 parliamentary election in Iraq. The audit covered the period from January 2020 to March 2022 and included: (a) strategic and governance mechanisms, (b) technical advice and operational support, and (c) public information campaign.

UNAMI provided advice, support and technical assistance as required for holding the October 2021 parliamentary election in Iraq. Governance mechanisms to guide the electoral assistance process were implemented and public information campaigns targeted audiences at the community level as required. The Mission also provided logistical support, security and medical facilities, and personnel to facilitate the smooth running of the elections. The Electoral Assistance Office oversaw the electoral project and planned and provided technical advice to the Independent High Electoral Commission. The Secretary-General's reports on the Iraq elections were prepared and submitted as required. However, the after-action electoral assessments to guide improvements for future elections were not finalized and an assessment to determine the best communication means to effectively reach voters and key performance indicators to determine reach and impact of public information campaigns were not established.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNAMI needed to:

- Finalize the after-action review on the electoral support provided to the October 2021 elections of Iraq, including follow-up on the implementation of recommendations from the lessons learned.
- Strengthen policies and procedures for its public information campaigns that include: (a) an assessment to determine the best communication means to effectively reach its target audience; (b) establish measurements, including key performance indicators, to determine their reach and impact; and (c) measure the effectiveness of the activities.

UNAMI accepted both recommendations and implemented the first one. UNAMI initiated the implementation of the second recommendation, and action required to close it is indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to the October 2021 election

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for the October 2021 election.
2. Established in August 2003 by Security Council resolution 1500, the Mission is mandated through successive resolutions, to assist the Government of Iraq in its electoral processes and to provide logistical and institutional support to empower the electoral bodies in Iraq. After the 2018 elections, the Iraqi Government requested assistance from UNAMI in drafting revised laws for the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), which required several changes to IHEC structure and functions prior to the Iraqi parliamentary elections planned for 6 June 2021. Also, on 11 February 2021, the Iraqi Government requested the Security Council (S/2021/135) to further strengthen the role of UNAMI to provide additional advice, support, technical assistance and electoral observation during the election. The elections were postponed to 10 October 2021, and with this postponement, IHEC requested more time to implement the required changes to its legal and logistical mechanisms for the election.
3. Security Council resolution 2576 (2021) requested the Mission to support the elections in Iraq including (a) prioritizing the provision of advice, support and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation; and (b) advising, supporting and assisting the Government of Iraq and IHEC with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections and referenda. The enhanced mandate required provision of support in three key main areas:
 - a. Broad geographic coverage by the United Nations to monitor and assist with the election in a manner that respects Iraqi sovereignty, and to report to the Secretary-General on the election process;
 - b. Logistical and security support to international and regional third-party observers invited by the Government of Iraq; and
 - c. United Nations strategic messaging campaign to educate, inform and update Iraqi voters on election preparations and United Nations activities in support of elections prior to and on election day.
4. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance was responsible for implementing UNAMI's electoral role with the Electoral Assistance Office (EAO) having the operational responsibility to coordinate the electoral support delivered by UNAMI and other United Nations entities in Iraq as one integrated electoral assistance team. The approved staffing table for EAO is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Electoral Assistance Office staff posts as of August 2022

Position	Grade	Location	Number of Staff
Principal Electoral Affairs Officer	D1	Bagdad	1
Senior Electoral Officer	P5	Bagdad	2
Electoral Officer	P4	Bagdad	2
Field Language Assistant	G5	Bagdad (2)/Erbil (1)	3
Electoral Assistant	G5	Vacant	2
Associate Electoral Officer	NO-B	Bagdad/Erbil	2
Total staff			12

5. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) in New York provided strategic guidance, including technical support and advice to UNAMI. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and United Nations focal point on electoral assistance approved a project entitled “Support to Iraq’s electoral processes” developed by UNAMI in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project aimed to assist IHEC with capacity building and support to various technical areas, both at headquarters and governorate level, in preparation for the elections. Funding for the project amounted to \$34 million provided by a number of donors¹ under agreements with UNDP. UNAMI also developed another project for \$18 million in coordination with the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) to deploy 150 United Nations international electoral experts and approximately 550 support personnel in advance of, and on, election day. Table 2 summarizes the details of these projects.

Table 2: Summary of projects to assist UNAMI with the October 2021 parliamentary elections

Agency	Responsibility	Contract value \$ million	No. of elections personnel hired
UNDP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide services for capacity development of IHEC staff and commissioners and recruitment of personnel to assist with capacity development, technical assistance, and support to IHEC. 2. Provide services to UNAMI for finance, procurement, human resource, information technology (IT) and general administration. 	34	92
UNOPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide services for recruitment of national and international personnel for monitoring, logistical arrangements, training, security, medical support, and to source vehicles from the United Nations country team (UNCT) in Baghdad and field offices. 2. Provide additional accommodation and IT equipment. 	18	700
Total		52	792

6. The official results of the elections were released by IHEC on 30 November 2021. Voter turnout was 44 per cent (9,629,601 out of 22,116,368 eligible voters), the lowest since 2005. Figures 1 and 2 provide some statistics on the election results and Figure 3 shows a trend analysis of voter turnout since the 2005 election.

¹ United States of America, Germany, Norway, France, Netherlands, the European Union, Philippines, New Zealand, Denmark, Japan and the United Kingdom

Figure 1: Voter turnout

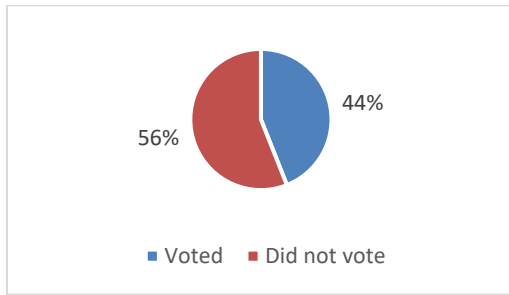
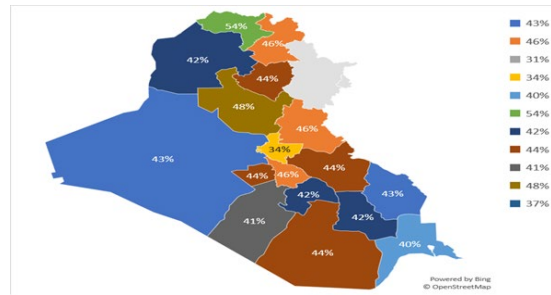
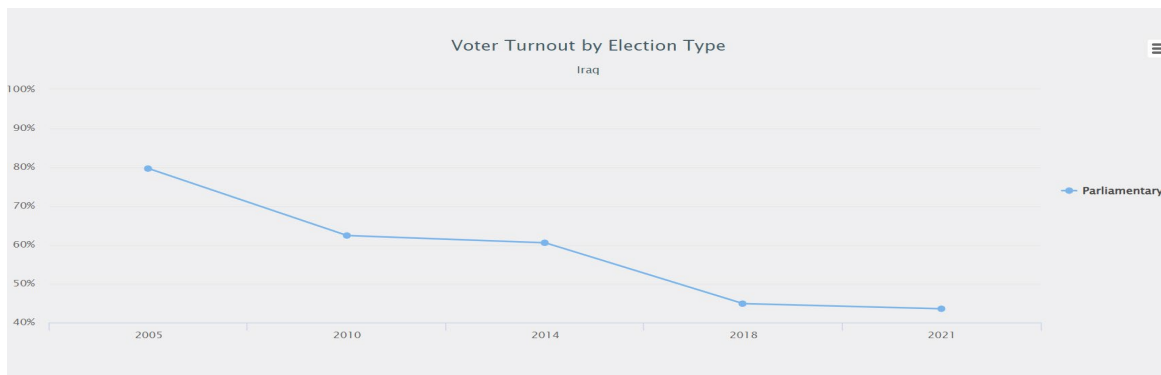


Figure 2: Voting by Province



Source: UNAMI Gender Unit Analysis of Iraq’s October 2021 national elections report (March 2022)

Figure 3: Voter turnout in the last five Iraqi elections



Source: Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) database – Iraq elections

7. The final election results led to clashes and protests between security forces, political party supporters and militias. Approximately 356 complaints on the preliminary results were received by IHEC with some indicating many Iraqis had no confidence in Iraq’s electoral system. After an initial lack of consensus, on 13 October 2022, the Council of Representatives elected a President, who also named his Prime Minister.

8. Comments provided by UNAMI are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of UNAMI’s processes to deliver technical advice and electoral support for the October 2021 parliamentary election in Iraq.

10. The audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the strategic, operational, and reputational risks relating to the electoral assistance by UNAMI.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from April to October 2022 remotely from Kuwait with a field visit to Baghdad. The audit covered the period from January 2020 to March 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas, which included: (a) strategic and governance mechanisms; (b) technical advice and operational support; and (c) public information campaign.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation including the Secretary-General’s reports to the Security Council, service level agreements

(SLAs) between UNAMI and UNDP/UNOPS, progress reports and minutes of senior management meetings; and (c) analytical review of data.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Strategic guidance and governance mechanisms

Strategic guidance and governance mechanisms were established

14. The Security Council through its extended mandate to UNAMI, resolution 2576 (2021), provided direction for the United Nations' role in the Iraq election. DPPA's policy on principles and types of United Nations electoral assistance² served as a guide to UNAMI on elections.

15. From August 2021, EAO, Office of Political Affairs (OPA) and the DSRSRSG – Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance held bimonthly meetings with DPPA on the political situation in Iraq and the Middle East region and analyzed the political landscape. Meetings were aimed at keeping abreast with political developments while updating DPPA and receiving technical guidance where necessary.

16. DPPA provided further assistance to UNAMI on its extended elections mandate role by:

- a. Clarifying the United Nations elections support role to the Government of Iraq and on the expectations of the Security Council.
- b. Developing UNAMI's elections communication strategy, which guided the launch of the United Nations strategic messaging campaign with the aim of educating, informing and updating Iraqi voters on election preparations and United Nations activities in support of the elections in July 2021.
- c. Clarifying technical issues and addressing challenges faced during the urgent recruitment of electoral experts and granting access to the rostered eligible list of candidates for UNAMI to use in its recruitment.

17. UNAMI established the following electoral mechanisms to prepare for the elections:

- a. An election strategic committee composed of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), DSRSRSG Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, OPA and EAO. The committee met three times between August and October 2021 to plan the technical assistance provided to IHEC and advise on UNAMI's role in public information and communication.
- b. An election coordination group that comprised the DSRSRSG Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, OPA, EAO, Chief of Staff (COS), Chief Mission Support (CMS) and the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) office in Iraq. The group met six times during the period of August to October 2021 and discussed (i) resource allocation, including the provision of vehicles to UNCT, and (ii) coordination with UNCT, international observers and civil society organisations.

² Regarding (i) technical assistance and advice to national authorities; (ii) operational, financial, administration, mobilization, and coordination support; (iii) training of judiciary; ((iv) support to security institutions and political parties; (v) registration technical assistance; and (vi) media monitoring/compliance.

- c. Substantive heads of UNAMI sections held four meetings from August to October 2021 in preparation for the election. Participants at these meetings included DSRSG Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, and heads of EAO, OPA, Joint Analysis Unit (JAU), Public Information Office (PIO), Human Rights Office (HRO), and the Gender Unit. The meetings discussed information to be included in UNAMI's advisories to IHEC, EAO progress reports and Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council. The reports indicated the technical assistance provided by UNAMI to IHEC regarding electoral laws and the election process. Human rights and gender related issues, as they pertained to the elections, were also discussed.
- d. The Senior Management Team (SMT) met weekly to discuss security matters, the political situation in Iraq, coordination with UNCT and progress on UNAMI's preparation for the elections and received updates from substantive and mission support sections. The team comprised the DSRSG for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, staff from the offices of COS, CMS, OPA, EAO, PIO, HRO, Guard Unit, Development Support Office (DSO), JAU, and also staff from the Erbil and Kirkuk field offices. EAO coordinated with the Gender Unit, OPA, HRO, DSO, Medical, Security and Transport Units through weekly meetings to plan election activities. Additionally, security, medical and transport units developed integrated work plans for the elections. The workplans aided logistical arrangements on election day as they facilitated arrangements for the provision of adequate security escort from the Government of Iraq for vehicles to transport election monitors, language assistants, volunteers and other various electoral teams.

18. A review of meeting minutes of the SMT, election strategic committee and the election coordination group indicated the SRSG provided strategic direction to the EAO on a regular basis through these meetings. Challenges that arose while preparing for the election including logistics, accommodation, recruitment, security clearance, and coordination with international observers and government institutions were discussed and resolved.

19. UNAMI provided its report to the Security Council on the electoral process in Iraq, S/2021/932 dated 8 November 2021 as required in its mandate for a detailed summary report on the electoral process in Iraq and the assistance provided by UNAMI. The report was required to be submitted no later than 30 days after the conclusion of the elections.

The electoral project was implemented with oversight by the project board

20. The implementation of the electoral support project was overseen by a project board that reviewed and monitored progress against targeted results, supported the identification of solutions to challenges faced by the project, and reviewed risks and lessons learned. The project board was composed of the UNDP representative in Iraq, UNAMI SRSG and the Chairperson of IHEC, and was expected to meet at least once annually and on an ad hoc basis as needed. UNDP was responsible for the management of the project funds, in accordance with their financial and programme management guidelines. EAO was responsible for ensuring that substantive project activities milestones were completed. EAO was also responsible to update the Electoral Affairs Division in DPPA on the implementation status of the project.

21. The project board met twice during the election period and at its meeting on 6 October 2021, extended the completion date for the project to December 2022, after the adoption of a revised project document. The extension was also reflected in donor agreements signed by UNDP and UNOPS with contributing countries at no additional cost. In addition to providing technical advice and support, EAO carried out capacity building and training of IHEC officials and staff on management of election processes.

22. UNAMI also entered into an SLA with UNDP for operational support to the project. The project was executed through a project implementation unit based in Baghdad comprising four UNDP staff funded on a cost recovery basis, working with EAO. The UNOPS operational support project was executed through a project implementation unit with a UNOPS project manager based in Baghdad who reported to the UNOPS Head of Programme in Amman. UNDP and UNOPS responsibilities for the projects are indicated in Table 2.

23. UNAMI performed its roles and responsibilities as per the signed SLAs by providing accommodations in its compound, office space, security clearance, facilitation of visas and transport services to all international staff in Baghdad and field locations recruited under the UNDP and UNOPS projects. Additionally, UNAMI assisted in the shortlisting and interviewing of staff recruited by both UNDP and UNOPS as stipulated in the respective SLAs.

B. Technical advice and operational support

UNAMI planned and provided technical advice to IHEC

24. EAO's work plan approved in March 2021 outlined the Office's objectives, indicators of achievements, outputs, activities, actors and gender/disability dimensions. Indicators of achievements included technical meetings that EAO planned to hold with relevant IHEC sections and committees regarding the planning and preparation for the election process, technical reports, and written advisories provided to IHEC to enhance their capacity to manage and organize elections.

25. EAO reported on electoral advisory provided on a daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis through progress project reports. Examples of areas of technical advice to IHEC included:

- National identification card system for voter registration
- Gender quotas and seat allocation for women candidates
- Audit and reporting centers
- Candidates and coalition registration
- Withdrawal of registration by candidate or representative of political party
- Accessibility of accredited observers and political party agents to polling centers and stations
- COVID-19 procedures
- Results display centres
- IHEC regulation on complaints and challenges
- Classification of complaints.

26. EAO also produced fact sheets of various topics on the elections, including processing complaints and appeals from various parties and voters, information gathered from international observers on women quotas and the United Nations' role in the election. The information was shared on UNAMI's website and used to provide input to the Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council. EAO assisted IHEC in the preparations for the announcement of final election results.

27. A new Security Council mandate for Iraq, resolution 2631 (2022) requests UNAMI to advise and assist the Government of Iraq, IHEC and other Iraqi institutions to further strengthen electoral preparations and processes.

Logistical support, security and medical plans were provided

28. UNAMI's electoral mandate required the Mission to provide logistics support including, accommodation, medical services, security and transportation for electoral workers. Logistics support was coordinated through various UNAMI working groups which developed integrated work plans for the elections. EAO coordinated the support provided for UNAMI substantive sections including DSO and OPA, and agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs); provided staff volunteers; and requested armoured vehicles for transportation. Additionally, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) provided an aircraft to assist with air movements while the Iraqi Government provided security escort to vehicles transporting monitors, language assistants, volunteers and electoral teams.

29. Also, DSS in Iraq had a task force for the elections, which developed a comprehensive operational plan on the election process, including a medical support plan for Baghdad and field offices. The plans included security escort coordination from the Government of Iraq in Baghdad and field offices during the elections and security clearances for international personnel and observers involved in the election process. The medical support plan provided for contracted medical facilities in Baghdad and field offices to offer medical services during the elections, and an aeromedical evacuation contract for emergency cases. UNAMI's security and medical units held joint security and medical team drills for security and medical evacuations.

Female candidate representation improved

30. Paragraph 4 (e) of UNAMI's extended mandate resolution 2576 (2021) required UNAMI to approach gender as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate, through meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels including for the elections. In response, UNAMI mainstreamed gender-related issues in the election processes and included them in the approved EAO workplan activities. Advisories were provided to IHEC on gender quotas, seat allocation for women candidates and women representation in the leadership of IHEC, and for training to be provided to women candidates on their rights during the election process.

31. UNAMI's Gender Unit implemented two main projects from October 2019 to January 2022, which helped to promote the involvement, representation and participation of women at all levels, including for the October 2021 elections. The projects were implemented through an implementing partner, a civil society organization based in Baghdad and were funded by extrabudgetary resources from DPPA.

- a. "Election Watch": Conducted an election campaign from 1 April 2021 through 31 January 2022, that assisted women candidates to counter gender-based violence and hate speech during the elections.
- b. "Strengthening Women's Political Participation in Iraq": Provided specialized training courses targeting a group of women and girls active in political and civic affairs in Iraq to help acquire better skills to empower them to play political roles. The project spanned from October 2019 to January 2022 and was conducted in three phases.³

32. UNAMI also mainstreamed gender in its public information and campaigns. Several training sessions were held for women candidates, which resulted in significant participation of women both as voters and as candidates. The results of the election indicated that Iraqi female candidates obtained 95 of the 329 (29 per cent) seats, an increase from 25 per cent in 2010, 2014 and 2018 and above the

³ Phase 1: October 2019 to February 2020; phase 2 April 2020 to November 2020; and phase 3 April 2021 to January 2022

constitutionally established quota of 25 per cent. Additionally, the number of female registered voters increased, as 48 per cent were female and 52 per cent were male, with 5 provinces registering more female voters than males. Figures 4 and 5 show political candidates and elected candidates by gender.

Figure 4: Political candidates by gender

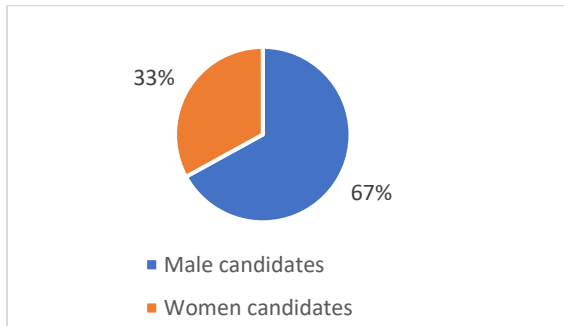
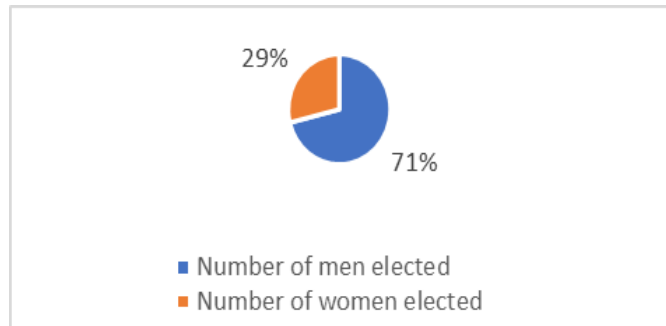


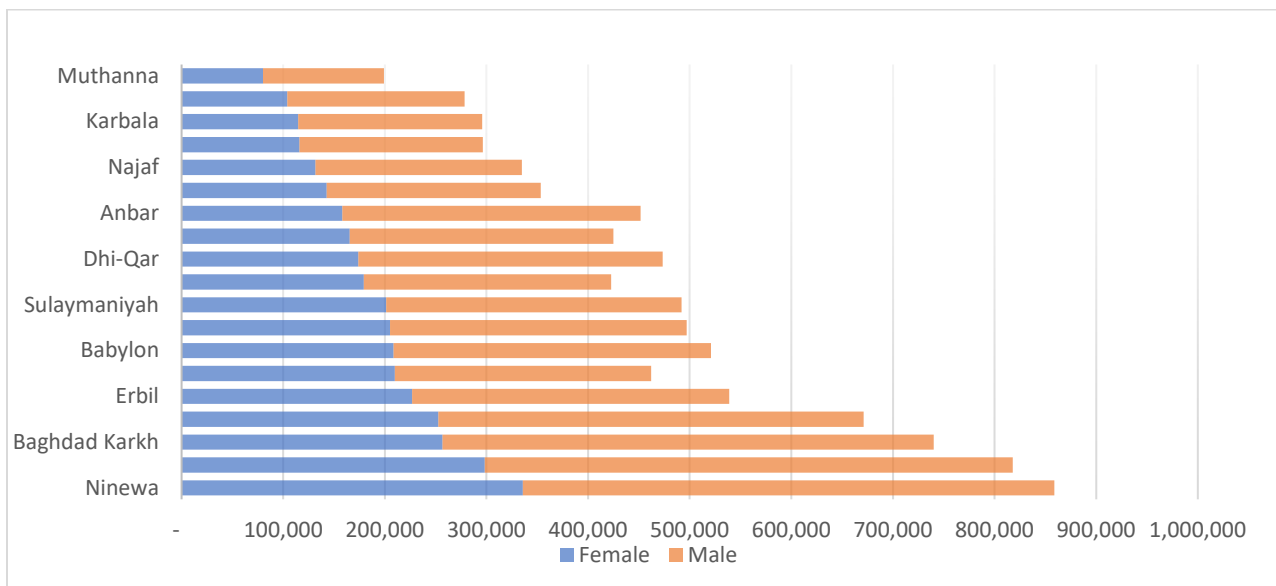
Figure 5: Elected candidates by gender



Source: UNAMI report on Gender analysis of Iraqi 's October 2021 elections (March 2022)

33. Figure 6 shows voter turnout per governorate by gender.

Figure 6: Voter turnout per governorate by gender



Source: UNAMI report on Gender analysis of Iraqi 's October 2021 elections (March 2022)

After-elections assessments were conducted but not finalized

34. UNAMI conducted three after-election assessments: (a) a retreat in March 2022, jointly led by IHEC and UNAMI and attended by UNAMI, IHEC and UNCT, (b) an after-action review in January 2022 led by DPPA, which contracted an independent consultant to provide an evaluation of the election project (including execution, results achieved, challenges faced and lessons learned during the election process, and issues and specific action plans to be addressed in the future); and (c) a self-assessment/lessons learned exercise in July and August 2022 led by UNAMI. The results of the after-election assessments were as follows:

- a. **The election retreat** – Following the retreat, EAO drafted a list of 49 lessons learned for implementation and another list of 89 lessons learned for follow-up with IHEC and the legal Committee of Council of Representatives. The list of recommendations included the review of complaints and appeals and instructions for receiving them and clarification regarding the legal periods for announcing preliminary and final results. UNAMI was, however, yet to finalize the follow-up of the recommendations.
- b. **DPPA-led after-action review** – The review required the interview of key personnel in UNAMI who were involved with the elections to provide a background for recommendations. While a draft report was prepared, it was not accepted by UNAMI and was not finalized. Instead, UNAMI decided to conduct its own internal assessment with lessons learned from the election.
- c. **Self-assessment/internal lessons learned** – The objective was to provide a brief checklist of recommendations on special political missions’ collaboration with UNCT members that may be reluctant to assist in political matters, since they are keen to be seen as neutral by the host country. However, the checklist was yet to be finalised.

35. The after-elections assessments are even more important as the Iraqi Government deliberates in the coming months on the decision to hold another parliamentary election in 2023.

(1) UNAMI should finalize the after-action review on the electoral support provided to the October 2021 elections of Iraq, including follow-up on the implementation of recommendations from the lessons learned.

UNAMI accepted recommendation 1 and submitted the checklist entitled “Steps to consider in response to the government’s request for electoral assistance,” and the Quarterly Narrative Report on the Electoral Project for the third quarter of 2022 that included progress made in implementing action points from the March 2022 lessons learned workshop. Based on the evidence submitted OIOS closed recommendation 1 as fully implemented.

C. Public information and campaign

Strategic public outreach was mainstreamed into mandated activities; however, its effectiveness was not assessed

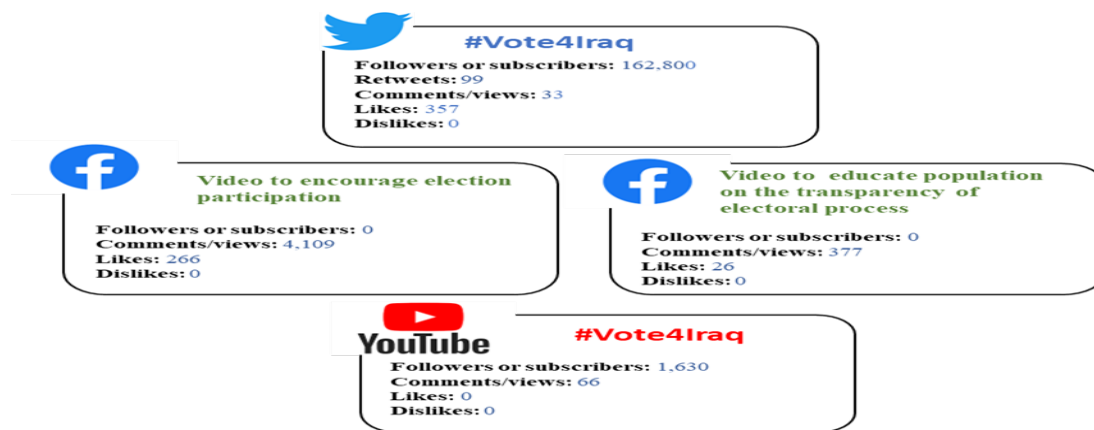
36. UNAMI’s extended mandate required the Mission to launch a United Nations strategic messaging campaign to educate, inform and update Iraqi voters on election preparations and United Nations activities in support of elections.

37. EAO’s quarterly progress reports on election activities indicated that UNAMI conducted joint press conferences with IHEC and used various channels of communication including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, videos, mainstream television, radio channels, print media, focus group workshops and information sessions (at community level) to promote the work of IHEC. As part of its communication strategy, campaigns included: 900 social media posts (in Arabic, Kurdish and English) across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube; 20 web stories; 14 videos; 9 fact sheets; 7 media interviews; 2 press conferences; 1 digital dialogue and online workshop for youth; public artwork; promotional materials, such as #Vote4Iraq t-shirts, stickers and buttons; and engagement with popular Iraqi artists/entertainers and influencers. All social media messages were approved by the SRSG before being released.

38. UNAMI, however, did not conduct an assessment to determine the best means of communication to effectively reach specific voters required by the mandate. This was necessary considering the complex socio-cultural environment in Iraq and restrictions to populations' access to various types of public information activities (e.g., internet access and power supply). Also, UNAMI did not indicate key performance indicators (KPIs) for its public information campaigns except for its overall reach for the election's social media campaign, which was targeted at 3 million users (a combination of all social media). Moreover, UNAMI was unable to determine the target reach for its videos.

39. OIOS analysis of a sample of the election's social media campaigns for the reactions received on social media accounts used for public outreach during the election is indicated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Analysis of social media audience



Data Source: Vote4Iraq tweeter – October 2021, #Vote4Iraq YouTube – September 2021, Facebook - October 2021

40. In the southern region, UNAMI, in collaboration with community-based organizations, assisted IHEC to conduct an awareness raising session for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Facilitators used sign language and 25 PWDs were trained on the election process, encouraged to collect biometric voter cards and participated in the voting on election day. All polling station staff were trained to assist voters with disabilities. Disabled voters were given the priority to avoid long queue and were assisted in gaining access to polling stations.

41. UNAMI published fact sheets on internally displaced persons (IDPs) regarding how many were registered, when they will be eligible to vote, how they will identify themselves at the polling centers and where the polling centers were located. The published fact sheets were easily accessible on UNAMI's website and included questions and answers on various topics. However, UNAMI did not conduct webpage monitoring analysis to assess website downloads or direct hits during the period leading up to the elections. Additionally, UNAMI advised IHEC to disseminate information materials for example brochures, leaflets, and informational videos, to IDP camps in Ninewa Governorate, to encourage IDP voters to pick their biometric cards and participate in the voting process. Leaflets totaling 21,000 were printed with messages targeting women, youth, PWDs and IDPs. Voter demographics for IDP were however not available.

42. The Mission stated that while it had a communications plan which was developed and fully implemented given the limited timeframe, the Mission's focus was on immediately setting the public information campaign in motion. This included the deployment of a team of United Nations communications experts led by someone recruited from United Nations Headquarters, and the implementation of various outreach and communication activities, including press conferences, the enhancement of the UNAMI website, maximizing the use of social media, community level activities,

murals, posters, promotional materials and engagement with various Iraqi influencers. While these activities helped promote the work of UNAMI in support of the elections, the focus on urgently implementing the communications strategy precluded the conduct of a thorough assessment of which communication tools were best suited to reach out to Iraqi voters. Additionally, an Iraqi-led and Iraqi owned public outreach and voter education programme, with UNAMI technical support as required, was best positioned to inform and sensitize Iraqi voters on the elections. Therefore, while UNAMI's technical assistance activities included supporting IHEC in developing and implementing its outreach programs, it was IHEC and related Iraqi institutions which were at the forefront of public outreach campaigns and who had to, with UNAMI support, spearhead the assessment of the effectiveness of their public outreach and communication activities.

43. However, absence of an assessment of the most effective communication tools and KPIs that are monitored, limited the impact and reach of the communication campaigns for the elections.

(2) UNAMI should strengthen policies and procedures for its public information campaigns that include: (a) an assessment to determine the best communication means to effectively reach its target audience; (b) establish measurements, including key performance indicators, to determine their reach and impact; and (c) measure the effectiveness of the activities.

UNAMI accepted recommendation 2 and stated that UNAMI's progress in implementing the recommendation would be reviewed in subsequent monitoring and reporting activities, based on Iraq's upcoming electoral calendar and in case the Security Council decides to incorporate an electoral information campaign as part of UNAMI electoral technical assistance activities. Any future electoral assistance project will also aim to establish measurements, including KPIs and evaluation methodologies, to determine the impact of technical assistance in relation to public outreach and electoral information. Recommendation 2 remains open pending inclusion in UNAMI's electoral guidelines, guidance on assessing the best communication means to effectively reach target audiences and measures to determine the reach, impact and effectiveness of public information campaigns.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

44. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNAMI for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to the October 2021 election

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
1	UNAMI should finalize the after-action review of the electoral support provided to the October 2021 elections of Iraq, including follow-up on the implementation of recommendations from the lessons learned.	Important	C	Recommendation is implemented and closed	6 December 2022
2	UNAMI should strengthen policies and procedures for its public information campaigns that include: (a) an assessment to determine the best communication means to effectively reach its target audience; (b) establish measurements, including key performance indicators, to determine their reach and impact; and (iii) measure the effectiveness of the activities.	Important	O	Receipt of strengthened electoral guidelines that include guidance on assessing the best communication means to effectively reach target audiences and measures to determine the reach, impact and effectiveness of public information campaigns.	30 June 2023

⁴ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁵ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

⁶ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁷ Date provided by UNAMI in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response




SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR IRAQ

الممثل الخاص للأمين العام للأمم المتحدة في العراق

10 December 2022

To: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services

Attention: Ms. Muriette Lawrence Hume
Chief, New York Audit Service
Internal Audit Division,
OIOS

From: Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert 
Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of Mission

Subject: **Draft report on audit of the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to the October 2021 elections (Assignment No. AP2022-812-01)**

1. This is with reference to your memorandum dated 5 December 2022 on the draft report of the audit of UNAMI electoral support to the October 2021 Iraq elections.
2. Please find attached as Annex 1 the Management Response with our feedback on the two recommendations contained in the draft audit report.
3. Kindly note that recommendation 1 has been implemented as of 6 December 2022. The mentioned electoral checklist entitled “Steps to consider in response to government request for electoral assistance” has been finalized and is attached as Annex 2 for reference. Also, please find attached as Annex 3 the Quarterly Narrative Report for Quarter 3 of the electoral support project. This is submitted as evidence of the progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the March 2022 Lessons Learned Workshop referred to in the audit report.
4. With reference to recommendation 2, UNAMI accepts the importance of strengthening policies and procedures for adequately assessing the effectiveness of any electoral information and outreach campaign that it implements. The recommendation will therefore be taken forward in future activities once Iraq decides on its electoral calendar and in case the Security Council again decides to

include as part of mandated activities the implementation of a UNAMI public electoral information campaign. As such, the implementation date for the recommendation will be determined based on such Iraqi electoral calendar and a decision by the Security Council. It is thus suggested that the target date reflects these elements for subsequent monitoring and reporting of progress.

cc: Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, UNAMI
Mr. Aamir Arain, Principal Electoral Affairs Officer, UNAMI
Mr. Mark Rutgers, Chief of Staff, UNAMI
Mr. Ferdinand Schafler, Audit Focal Point, UNAMI
Ms. Cheryl Clarke, Chief Resident Auditor, Resident Audit Office Kuwait, OIOS
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Management Response

Audit of the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to the October 2021 election

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNAMI should finalize the after-action review of the electoral support provided to the October 2021 elections of Iraq, including follow-up on the implementation of recommendations from the lessons learned.	Important	Yes	Office of the Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance Electoral Assistance Office	6 December 2022	<p>This recommendation is implemented.</p> <p>The Mission has finalized on 6 December 2022 the checklist “Steps to consider in response to government request for electoral assistance”. The document is attached herewith as Annex 2 for reference.</p> <p>Also, as evidence of the implementation of the recommendations from the lessons learned workshop held in March 2022, please find attached as Annex 3 the Quarterly Narrative Report of the Electoral Project for the Third Quarter of 2022.</p> <p>Activities highlighted in this report include, for example, improving the voter registry (Item 1.1.9 on page 5) stating that “Following the Lessons Learned Workshop . . . , IHEC worked on technical specifications for the new Biometric Registration Project which also included the installation and configuration of printing capacity</p>

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>within the country. IHEC shared the draft of the feasibility study with OEA for review and input. Following the review of the feasibility study, IHEC indicated its openness to implementing the establishment of the printing facility taking into consideration its logistic aspect. Meanwhile, OEA is supporting IHEC in the process of reaching out to some of the potential vendors in the field of BVR to provide them with the best possible solutions for upgrading the current BVR process and addressing the challenges that IHEC is facing.”</p> <p>The quarterly report also mentioned the development of the capacity building matrix (item 1,2,1 on page 6) and the implementation of various capacity building activities as mentioned throughout the narrative report.</p>
2	UNAMI should strengthen policies and procedures for its public information campaigns that include: (a) an assessment to determine the best communication means to effectively reach its target audience; (b) establish measurements, including key performance indicators, to determine their reach and impact; and (iii) measure the effectiveness of the activities.	Important	Yes	Office of the DSRSG for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance	30 June 2023	Progress in implementing the recommendation will be reviewed in subsequent monitoring and reporting activities, based on Iraq’s upcoming electoral calendar and in case the UN Security Council decides to incorporate an electoral information campaign as part of UNAMI electoral technical assistance activities.

Management Response

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
				Electoral Assistance Office Public Information Office		Any future electoral assistance project will also aim to establish measurements, including key performance indicators and evaluation methodologies, for determining the impact of technical assistance in relation to public outreach and electoral information.