



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/092

Audit of electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

The Department established adequate guidance to coordinate United Nations system electoral support, but needed to update electoral policies and guidance and enhance management of the roster of electoral experts

**29 December 2022
Assignment No. AP2021-560-01**

Audit of electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of electoral assistance provided by DPPA to Member States. OIOS conducted this audit from July 2021 to September 2022. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021 and included a review of planning and monitoring strategies, coordination and collaboration mechanisms, support to Member States, strategic partnerships and performance assessment.

The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) in DPPA supported the implementation of its electoral assistance mandate. It implemented adequate processes to proactively anticipate and respond to Member States' requests for electoral assistance. It also effectively coordinated United Nations system electoral assistance activities, mainly through the Inter-agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance (ICMEA), and set up strategic partnerships with various regional and intergovernmental organizations to facilitate technical support and coordinate global electoral initiatives and events. While EAD had initiated the review and update of electoral assistance policies and guidance materials, this had stalled partly due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the single roster of electoral experts maintained by the Division was not being used optimally and there was an imbalance in the gender and geographical distribution of its members. Also, EAD did not have adequate measures to assess the impact of electoral assistance.

OIOS made three recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, DPPA needed to:

- Resume the review of the electoral policies and guidance materials to confirm their continuing relevance, incorporating best practices of United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance;
- Collaborate with other United Nations system stakeholders, including through ICMEA and the Department of Operational Support (DOS), to optimize utilization of the electoral roster as envisaged in the electoral assistance mandate; and
- Coordinate with DOS to establish an action plan to address the gender and geographical distribution imbalance in the roster of electoral experts to achieve the Secretary-General's priority strategies for gender parity and geographical diversity.

DPPA accepted the recommendations and initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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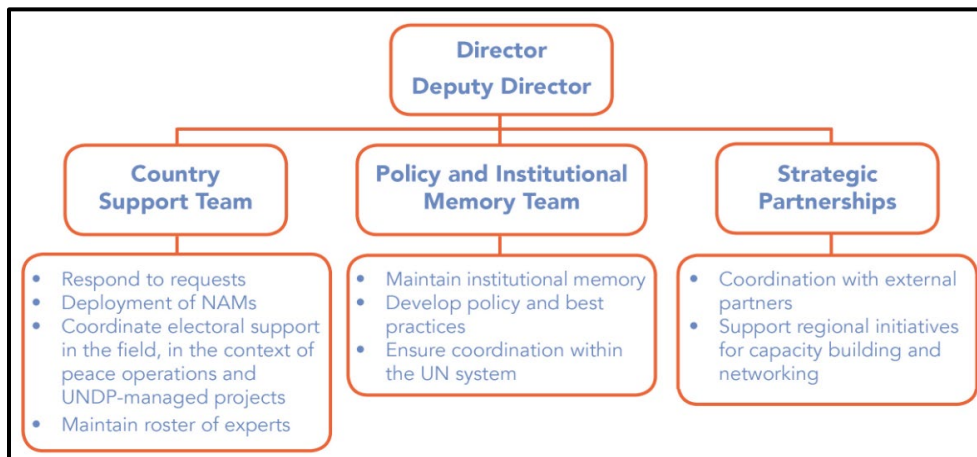
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Audit of electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).
2. DPPA has a global mandate of conflict prevention and resolution as part of the United Nations' broad responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The Department is the lead entity in the United Nations for good offices, political analysis, mediation, electoral assistance, peacebuilding support and political guidance.
3. The Under-Secretary-General for DPPA (USG, DPPA) is the United Nations System focal point for electoral assistance, responsible to ensure coherent, coordinated and consistent electoral assistance activities. The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) in DPPA, established under General Assembly resolution 46/137 dated 9 March 1992 supports the focal point.
4. EAD's objective is to strengthen the capacity of Member States to organize and conduct periodic, inclusive, peaceful and genuine elections, especially in transitional and post-conflict situations. The Division provides electoral support based on Security Council or General Assembly resolutions, or at the specific request of a Member State.
5. EAD is structured into three teams based in New York coordinating United Nations system support to Member States, developing policy and sharing electoral knowledge and best practice, and enhancing external electoral partnerships as shown in Figure 1. The Division also has a D-1 level Director based in Addis Ababa to support the demand for high-level electoral expertise in the Africa region and liaise with the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit of the African Union Commission.

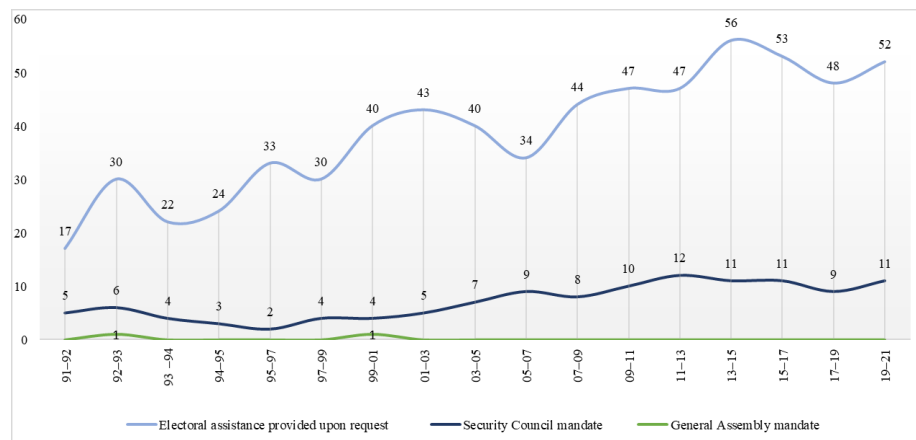
Figure 1: Electoral Assistance Division structure



Source: DPPA website on electoral assistance
NAMs - Needs assessment missions

6. Statistics on United Nations electoral assistance since 1991 are shown in Figure 2

Figure 2: Statistics on electoral assistance from 1991 to 2021



Source: A/76/266 Report of the Secretary-General

7. EAD has an authorized staffing of 25 posts headed by a Director at the D-2 level supported by 1 D-1, 4 P-5s, 7 P-4s, 3 P-3s and 6 General Service staff funded through the regular budget, and an additional 1 D-1, 1 P-4 and 1 General Service staff funded through extrabudgetary resources. EAD’s 2021 financial resources of \$5.3 million included \$1.5 million of extrabudgetary funding.

8. Comments provided by DPPA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of electoral assistance provided by DPPA to Member States. The audit addressed three main audit questions:

- a) How efficiently did EAD address Member States’ requests for electoral assistance?
- b) How adequate and effective were EAD’s collaboration and coordination mechanisms in providing electoral assistance?
- c) How effectively did EAD monitor and evaluate the implementation of electoral assistance activities and the Division’s performance?

10. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the criticality of electoral assistance in the peace and security pillar.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from July 2021 to September 2022. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021 and included: a) planning and monitoring strategies; b) coordination and collaboration mechanisms; c) support to Member States; d) strategic partnerships; and e) performance assessment.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; and (d) sample testing of electoral assistance and support activities for 33 Member States.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Planning and monitoring strategies

Electoral assistance work plans reflected DPPA's conflict prevention mandate

14. The Office of the USG, DPPA initiated the division-level annual work planning process based on DPPA's three-year strategic plans that reflected the conflict prevention agenda of the peace and security pillar. EAD internal consultations to develop initial division-level work plans focused on: (a) strategic mandate objectives and expected accomplishments per DPPA's results framework; (b) integrated cross-cutting priorities such as gender mainstreaming in electoral support; (c) mandate implementation risks/challenges and possible mitigation measures; and (d) lessons learned and best practices from previous year's work plan implementation results.

15. EAD developed an implementation plan to address its identified priority objectives, with lead roles assigned to specific teams. Activities included supporting Member States; maintaining the roster of electoral experts; and developing the capacity of electoral management bodies and regional and sub-regional organizations to enhance their joint response capabilities and effectiveness. After internal consultation and review, EAD submitted the draft work plan to the Office of USG, DPPA for approval and subsequently circulated the approved plan within the Division.

16. OIOS concluded that EAD's consultative work planning process enabled it to prioritize and undertake its mandated electoral assistance and support activities to Member States.

EAD's active Member State monitoring strategy enabled it to manage late requests for electoral assistance

17. EAD compiled annual global electoral calendars that highlighted current and potential Member State recipients of electoral assistance, and routinely monitored country-specific information and political developments to update Member State profiles. This enabled EAD to provide the Deputies Committee with a biannual update on electoral engagement and a list of upcoming elections as part of its monthly conflict prevention discussions. EAD also participated in integrated coordination mechanisms that support conflict prevention activities such as the Inter-agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance (ICMEA)¹, which kept the Division apprised of threats to peace and security, including the risk of conflict around elections. These activities facilitated the Division's preparedness to anticipate and respond to requests for assistance at short notice, close to upcoming electoral events.

18. EAD typically engaged with United Nations system counterparts including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and relevant resident coordinators to consider the United Nations system's capacity to undertake short notice electoral assistance requests. The assessments normally resulted in limited targeted assistance to cover the most essential areas during the prevailing electoral cycle. Member States were required to submit new formal requests for any longer-term support requirements. Examples of targeted electoral assistance proposals approved during the audit period included:

¹ ICMEA was established in 2009 as a formal platform to enhance coordination, coherence, information exchange, policy dialogue and stronger partnerships within the United Nations system. Its membership comprises representatives from Department of Peace Operations (DPO), UNDP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Volunteers programme and the Peacebuilding Support Office of DPPA.

- a) Technical and advisory support for voter registry, tabulation centre and procurement of electoral materials to support planning, organizing and supervising a proposed calendar of 11 electoral activities during 2021; and
- b) Institutional capacity development of an independent electoral commission to manage elections and improve its communication/outreach strategy to boost public trust. This was in response to a mission's request for more electoral advice, support and technical assistance in view of early elections and a tight electoral calendar in the host country.

19. OIOS concluded that EAD's active monitoring enabled it to anticipate and customize assistance to support late/emergency requests for assistance, including those received close to election dates.

B. Coordination and collaboration mechanisms

EAD facilitated United Nations system complementarity in electoral assistance

20. As the secretariat for ICMEA and through its convening role in ICMEA's primary structures², EAD coordinated the strategic level support necessary to enhance consistent implementation of the electoral mandates of United Nations system entities. Key coordination activities during the audit period included collating electoral updates and information exchange on global or internal initiatives; initiating the planned review of existing policies for continuing applicability; and reviewing ICMEA partners' knowledge products on international human rights standards on elections, the role of the internet or social media on elections, and public health and social measures for elections within the context of COVID-19.

21. EAD led all needs assessments for electoral assistance in collaboration with UNDP, as the main implementing partner in the field, together with relevant United Nations system entities and divisional, regional and field presences³. EAD also consulted and collaborated with UN Women and/or United Nations system gender advisors and developed checklists to guide the gender perspective of electoral assistance. Additionally, through the ICMEA platform, EAD and participating United Nations entities managed the potential overlap of political affairs/good offices activities within the peace and security architecture and technical assistance within the purview of the development pillar.

22. Moreover, EAD in partnership with UNDP continued to provide guidance to all United Nations system electoral assistance providers during the COVID-19 lockdown period between April 2020 and March 2021. This was largely through webinars for Member States, electoral authorities and other stakeholders, with speaker panels composed of leading electoral authorities and experts including UNDP and EAD representatives. The webinars covered various aspects of the impact of COVID-19 on democratic institutions and electoral processes, and the role of electoral management bodies in promoting women's political participation.

23. Although ICMEA's primary structures did not meet as frequently as outlined in their terms of reference, EAD's interactions with representatives of the member organizations were instrumental in coordinating electoral support. These included extensive email consultations, thematic discussions on

² ICMEA's primary structures consisted of: a) the Electoral Assistance Steering Committee, a senior level decision making body chaired by the Director, EAD comprising senior level officials from member organizations; and b) the Electoral Assistance Working Group, a working level forum chaired by the head of the Policy and Institutional Memory Cluster of EAD with membership drawn from the working level representatives of member organizations.

³ Consulting partners on electoral assessments reviewed included DPPA-DPO Regional Divisions, United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, United Nations Office to the African Union, UN Women, UNOPS, UNESCO, OHCHR and UNHCR.

specific guidance documents and quarterly meetings convened as part of the continuous efforts to refine programme coordination with other United Nations system entities.

24. OIOS concluded that EAD effectively facilitated United Nations system complementarity through leveraging collective electoral assistance expertise and capacities.

EAD disseminated system-wide electoral policies and guidance and initiated their update

25. The EAD Policy and Institutional Memory Cluster is responsible for developing/revising and issuing system-wide policies and technical guidance in consultation with ICMEA to ensure consensus over written policy and guidance. The Cluster also maintained the institutional knowledge comprising various election-related document management platforms of core policy directives, guidelines and best practices. These included: a) the electoral assistance thematic page of the DPPA-DPO Policy and Practice Database; b) the elections page on the Political and Peacebuilding Affairs public website; and c) the electoral calendar included in DPPA resources on iSeek. The Division also maintained a Microsoft Teams channel for key electoral staff and advisors, and the Electoral Assistance Institutional Memory folder on SharePoint.

26. EAD adopted a strategy to raise awareness and develop capacity to address emerging concerns over the growing influence of information technology and digital communication platforms for political communications and government-initiated internet shutdowns or access restrictions. In this regard, EAD developed a concept note on the impact of social media on elections and, as part of ICMEA, developed a discussion paper on options for United Nations engagement regarding internet shutdowns during elections. The Division also included a segment on social media and the internet and current United Nations messaging on elections in induction/briefing materials for senior leadership in the peace and security pillar and resident coordinators.

27. As shown in Table 1, EAD developed and approved 12 electoral policy and guideline documents between 2012 and 2016. Although EAD initiated discussions in December 2019 to review all existing policy directives with expected completion in 2020, the updates had not been completed.

Table 1: Electoral assistance policy directives and guidance

Policy directives and guidelines	Approval Date
United Nations Electoral Needs Assessments ⁴	11 May 2012
UN Support to International Election Observers ⁵	29 June 2012
Promoting the Electoral Rights of Persons with Disabilities through UN Electoral Assistance	29 June 2012
United Nations Support to Electoral System Design and Reform	16 September 2013
Promoting Women’s Electoral and Political Participation through UN Electoral Assistance	24 December 2013
United Nations Support to the Design or Reform of Electoral Management Bodies	26 June 2014
United Nations Statements and Public Comment Around Elections	1 December 2014
Conduct of United Nations Personnel in and Around Electoral Sites	4 August 2015
Operation and Management of the United Nations Single Electoral Roster	5 February 2016
Preventing and Mitigating Election-related Violence ⁶	1 June 2016
Principles and Types of United Nations Electoral Assistance	1 March 2021
United Nations Electoral Assistance: Supervision, Observation, Panels and Certification	1 February 2022

Source: DPPA website on Electoral Assistance

⁴ This policy directive was circulated for review by ICMEA member representatives in June 2020.

⁵ This guideline was circulated for review by ICMEA member representatives in July 2020.

⁶ EAD in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College has provided training on “A Political Approach to Preventing and Responding to Election-related Violence” since 2012

28. The Division attributed the delays in reviewing and finalizing policy updates to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and resulting reprioritization of operational activities, and the large number of United Nations entities involved in the policy revision.

(1) DPPA should resume the review of electoral policies and guidance materials to confirm their continuing relevance, incorporating best practices of United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance.

DPPA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that EAD had already resumed the revision process and hoped to complete the revision and approval of at least three policies by the end of 2023, as part of an indicative schedule for completing the remaining revisions in consultation with United Nations system partners.

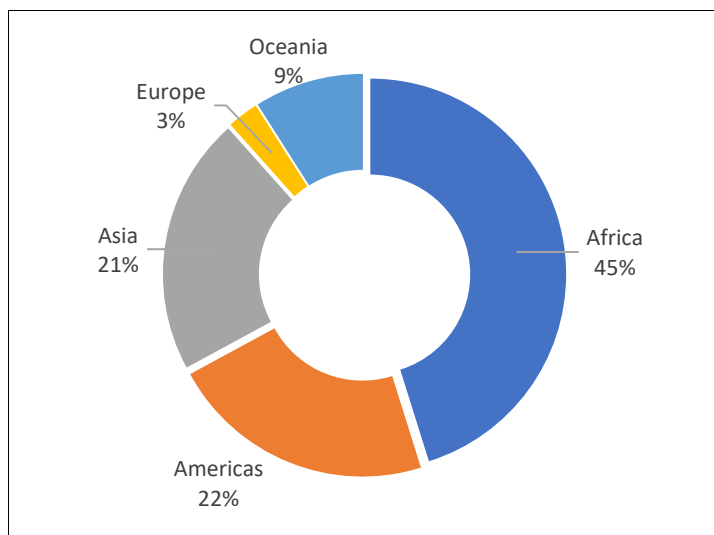
C. Support to Member States

EAD promptly assessed and prioritized Member State requests for electoral assistance

29. The EAD Country Support Cluster assesses all Member State requests for electoral assistance through the deployment of NAMs or the conduct of desk reviews as a first response to such requests. This enables EAD to recommend whether or not assistance should be provided and determine the parameters (scope, type and timing) of electoral assistance, and formulate strategic system-wide responses to the requests.

30. EAD coordinated United Nations electoral assistance to 68 Member States, including 50 that received support more than once during the audit period. The overall geographical distribution of electoral assistance activities was as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Electoral assistance by geographic region from January 2019 to December 2021



Source: United Nations electoral assistance statistics

31. OIOS sample review of 21 NAMs and 9 desk reviews indicated that EAD conducted them in accordance with the United Nations Electoral Needs Assessment Guideline, completed the gender and elections checklist to incorporate the gender perspective of electoral assistance and prepared the assessment reports in line with the accompanying standard reporting template. The final assessment reports informed

the focal point’s decision on whether to provide support, and proposed recommendations for electoral assistance. Once approved, the focal point formally communicated the final decision to the requesting Member State/institutional authority through their Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. No needs assessments were required for three Member States that had existing Security Council electoral mandates.

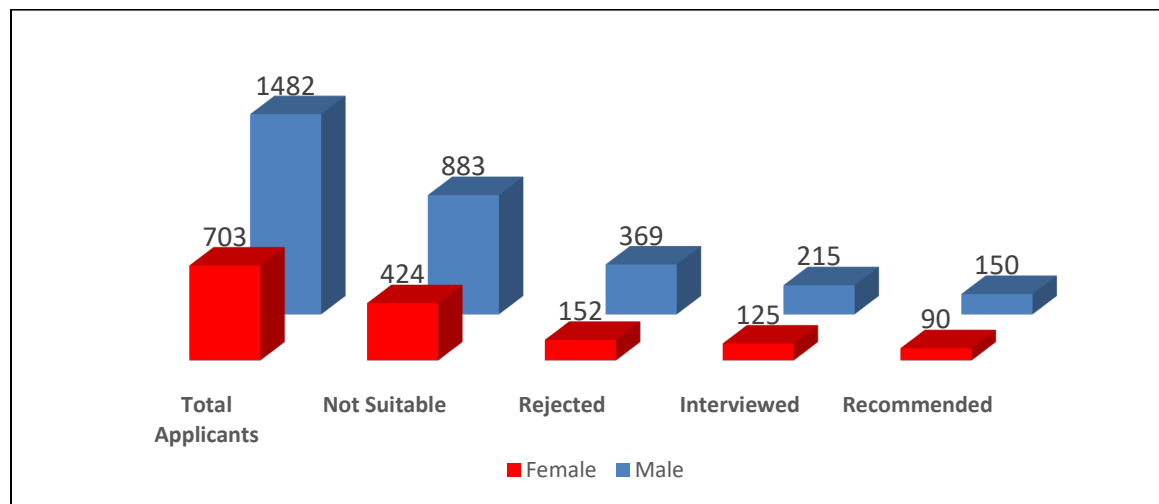
32. OIOS concluded that EAD had established adequate procedures to assess and effectively lead the methodical conduct of NAMs and desk reviews and report on Member State requests for electoral assistance.

There was a need to strengthen monitoring and optimize utilization of the roster of electoral experts

33. The General Assembly mandated maintenance of a single United Nations electoral roster to ensure there is a standing capacity of pre-cleared candidates to support efficient and timely staffing of electoral assistance activities. EAD aims to update the roster every three to four years in collaboration with the Department of Operational Support (DOS), and in consultation with UNDP, UNOPS and UN Women.

34. EAD engaged a consultant to coordinate the 2020 roster campaign, whose broad objective was to increase the existing talent pool of electoral experts from D-1 to P-3 levels. EAD publicized the campaign extensively⁷ and managed the development and grading of written assessments and the conduct of competency-based interviews. The 2020 campaign registered 2,185 applicants (68 per cent male and 32 per cent female) with 240 candidates ultimately recommended for inclusion in the electoral roster as shown in Figure 4. However, the special notice section in generic job openings at the time did not include the Secretariat’s commitment to gender parity and geographical diversity.

Figure 4: 2020 roster campaign progression by gender



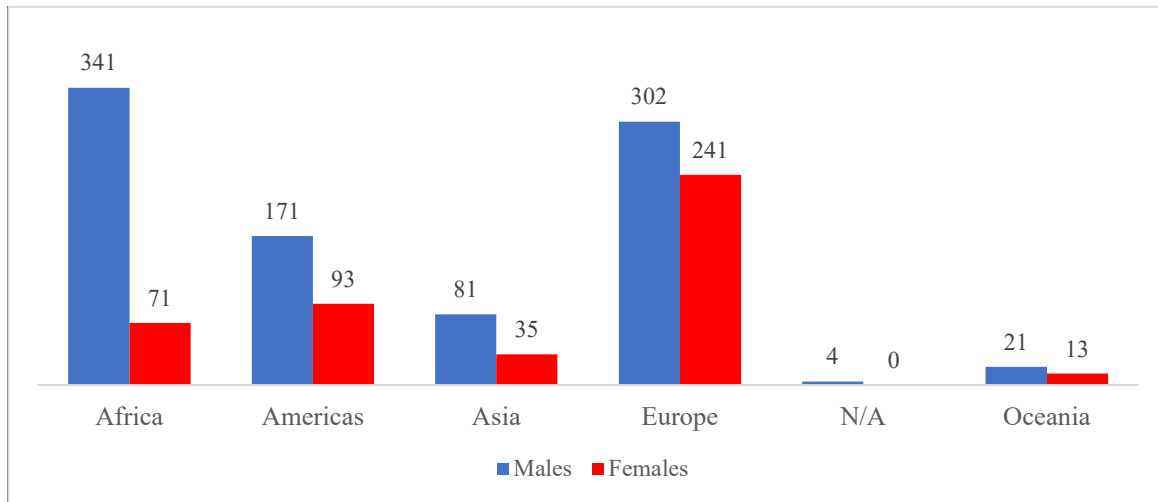
Source: Roster campaign statistics

35. The 2020 roster campaign selections increased the roster to a total of 1,373 pre-qualified electoral experts as of 31 August 2021. The updated gender distribution of 920 (or 67 per cent) males to 453 (or 33

⁷ This included the use of social media platforms (LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook) and targeted emails to Member States through permanent or observer missions, electoral management bodies, regional organizations and candidates in the Senior Women Talent Pipeline with electoral backgrounds.

per cent) females remained the same as it was prior to the campaign. The profile of electoral experts on the roster, as shown in Figure 5, indicated scope for improving both gender and geographical diversity.

Figure 5: Gender distribution of electoral experts by geographical region



Source: Roster of electoral experts at 31 August 2021

36. EAD periodically supported field offices in the recruitment of electoral experts by providing relevant lists of pre-qualified candidates from the roster. Between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2021, field offices selected 133 male and 76 female candidates (or 63 per cent) from the roster for the estimated 331 positions recruited. Despite the existence of rostered electoral candidates, recruiting entities did not have to justify staffing positions through other recruitment modalities. This was in part due to the delegation of authority for human resources management including recruitment that enabled heads of entities to conduct recruitment exercises without involving EAD or consulting the electoral roster. OIOS further reviewed a random sample of 29 electoral experts rostered for 54 positions as an independent check of roster utilization and noted that only 2 of them had been selected for assignment, one as an independent consultant.

37. EAD did not adequately review the utilization of the roster as an indicator of the relevance and effectiveness of its mandated role to maintain the roster. Nevertheless, three field missions (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia) emphasized the relevance of the roster for their staffing requirements and shared their good experiences of the successful recruitment of electoral experts from the roster.

- (2) The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should, as the focal point for electoral assistance, collaborate with other system stakeholders, including the Inter-agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance and DOS, to optimize the utilization of the electoral roster as envisaged in the electoral assistance mandate.**

DPPA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that EAD would, in consultation with DOS, finalize an action plan on how best to optimize the utilization of the roster by the United Nations system.

- (3) DPPA should coordinate with DOS to establish an action plan to address the gender and geographical distribution imbalance in the roster of electoral experts in an effort to achieve the Secretary-General's priority strategies on gender parity and geographical diversity.**

DPPA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that EAD would, working closely with DOS, finalize an action plan aimed at addressing gender parity and geographical diversity in the roster within the existing regulation and rules of the Organization.

D. Strategic partnerships

EAD effectively collaborated with regional and inter-governmental organizations

38. EAD coordinated and collaborated with a range of international, regional, governmental and non-governmental partner organizations in the provision of electoral assistance. These included the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Caribbean Community, Commonwealth Secretariat, League of Arab States (LAS), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Organization Internationale de la Francophonie, Organization of American States, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
39. The main platforms through which EAD interacted with partner organizations included:
- a) Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE), a joint initiative through which EAD worked in collaboration with UNDP and other partners to develop, implement and maintain a professional development curriculum and knowledge products on electoral processes.
 - b) ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, a comprehensive online repository of electoral knowledge products and resources, which also consolidated lessons learned and best practices on democratic reform including electoral processes. EAD and other partners such as the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an inter-governmental organization, jointly supported this platform through the development and update of comparative global knowledge products.
 - c) The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DOP) including the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, developed as a joint EAD-NDI initiative, as the foundation for credible international election observation. The DOP Community included key partner member organizations, such as the African Union, Commonwealth Secretariat, Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), IFES, IDEA and LAS among others.
40. Other examples of key EAD collaboration with strategic partners during the audit period included:
- a) A one-week staff exchange programme for Heads of Electoral Divisions from OIC and ECOWAS, and senior electoral staff from ICGLR in April 2019 to familiarize the participants with United Nations electoral assistance, mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, while exploring opportunities to enhance their partnerships.
 - b) BRIDGE training on election observation and a round table discussion on media, gender and elections for election management bodies of Member States comprising the ICGLR in July 2019.
 - c) A joint workshop with ECOWAS on sharing experiences and good practices on the prevention and mitigation of election-related violence in the region in September 2019.

- d) In collaboration with UNDP and LAS, development and launch of the first edition of the Electoral Arab Dictionary.
- e) In partnership with the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, a regional workshop for electoral management bodies of EAC partner states on sharing experiences and good practices for inclusive and credible elections in October 2021.

41. OIOS concluded that EAD had established strategic partnerships and coordination networks with a range of external partner organizations to support the exchange of knowledge, information and capacity development initiatives to support Member States.

D. Performance assessment

The upcoming revision of DPPA's evaluation policy could help EAD strengthen measurement of its effectiveness

42. EAD's annual work plan and results framework outlined its key operational priorities, which were aligned with the DPPA Strategic Plan. The Division assessed its annual performance against planned substantive deliverables, the key performance indicator being its ability to undertake NAMs/desk reviews within four weeks of the focal point's approval of Member State requests. EAD quantified other performance deliverables by the number of: documents generated such as Secretary-General's reports or intergovernmental meetings serviced; electoral assistance projects supported; and capacity development and knowledge management initiatives undertaken, such as seminars, workshops, training events, and technical materials produced.

43. EAD had established adequate procedures to record, monitor and follow up Member State requests and adapted to COVID-19 related travel restrictions by increasing the use of virtual assessments and desk reviews in lieu of field missions. The Division maintained a country support database and records of other electoral assistance initiatives, which were the principal sources of input for the Secretary-General's reports to the General Assembly on United Nations electoral assistance. OIOS sample review indicated that EAD completed needs assessments and the focal point communicated coordinated responses to requesting Member States within an average of six weeks from the date of the request, well within the eight-week target.

44. However, EAD's performance measures remained at the output level and the Division had not implemented measures to demonstrate the outcomes of its activities and how these had contributed towards enhancing electoral capacities and processes in recipient Member States in line with the electoral assistance mandate. The 2022 DPPA proposed programme budget listed the following planned results: (a) strengthened election management bodies; (b) more effective electoral frameworks and systems; (c) enhanced voter education and voter registration activities; (d) increased participation of women, young people, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups in electoral and political processes; and (e) peaceful and inclusive elections and more credible electoral processes. EAD had yet to define baseline indicators, data sources and methods of collection, and the methodology to be used to measure these results.

45. EAD stated that Member State representatives, electoral bodies and regional institutions sometimes submitted written appreciations of United Nations cooperation, partnership and support in enhancing their electoral processes and capacities. Member States also incorporated other commendations in their electoral assistance requests for subsequent electoral cycles. However, EAD needed more formal performance measures to assess the effectiveness of its output.

46. The administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3) requires programmes/subprogrammes to conduct evaluations at least once every six years to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of their activities based on their evaluation policy. DPPA explained that it was currently revising its departmental evaluation policy in line with the newly issued administrative instruction, and divisions were not expected to develop their own policies on evaluations. It further elaborated that while the revised DPPA evaluation policy will not go into the specifics of each division's work, it will present principles and rules that will guide the Department's decisions and action when planning, conducting, disseminating and using self-evaluations of mandate implementation. **OIOS suggests that EAD uses DPPA's revised evaluation policy to strengthen measurement of its effectiveness.**

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

47. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DPPA 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 electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁸ / Important ⁹	C/ O ¹⁰	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ¹¹
1	DPPA should resume the review of electoral policies and guidance materials to confirm their continuing relevance, incorporating best practices of United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance.	Important	O	Receipt of the revised electoral assistance policies and guidance materials.	31 December 2023
2	The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should, as the focal point for electoral assistance, collaborate with other system stakeholders, including the Inter-agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance and DOS, to optimize the utilization of the electoral roster as envisaged in the electoral assistance mandate.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of implementation of the action plan to optimize the utilization of the electoral roster by United Nations system.	31 December 2023
3	DPPA should coordinate with DOS to establish an action plan to address the gender and geographical distribution imbalance in the roster of electoral experts in an effort to achieve the Secretary-General's priority strategies on gender parity and geographical diversity.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of implementation of the action plan on addressing gender parity and geographical diversity of the electoral roster.	31 December 2023

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

¹¹ Date provided by DPPA in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

TO: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General
A: for Internal Oversight Services

DATE: 23 December 2022

REFERENCE: OIOS-2022-01811

CLASSIFICATION: Confidential

THROUGH:

S/C DE:

FROM: Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General
DE: for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs *Rosemary A. DiCarlo*

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of electoral assistance activities in DPPA**

OBJET:

1. Thank you for the above draft audit report submitted through your note dated 1st December 2022.
2. We have reviewed the draft report and wish to thank you for taking on board the comments and suggestions previously submitted by the Electoral Assistance Division of DPPA on initial drafts of the report.
3. In general, we find the most recent draft of the report and its recommendations helpful for further improving the work of DPPA in the area of electoral assistance. We accept all the three recommendations contained in the report.
4. Please find attached the completed annex in which we have included the requested information on timelines, responsible colleagues, and also our comments and understandings related to the implementation of the recommendations.
5. I would like to take the opportunity to extend to you and your team our sincere appreciation for the hard work, as well as the diligent and professional efforts made, by your team in undertaking this audit.

Management Response

Audit of electoral assistance activities in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DPPA should resume the review of electoral policies and guidance materials to confirm their continuing relevance, incorporating best practices of United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance.	Important	Yes	EAD Team Leader for Policy and Institutional Memory	31 December 2023	EAD has already resumed the revision process. We hope to see the next revised policy approved in the first quarter of 2023. And by the indicated deadline of 31 December 2023, EAD expects at least two further policies to have been revised and approved. We will consider this OIOS recommendation – to resume the review process – closed by the time that the next two policies have been revised and issued (i.e., 31 December 2023), as concrete evidence of this resumption, and as part of an indicative schedule for completing the remaining revisions in consultation with UN system partners.
2	The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should, as the focal point for electoral assistance, collaborate with other system stakeholders, including the Inter-agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance and DOS, to optimize the utilization of the electoral roster as envisaged in the electoral assistance mandate.	Important	Yes	EAD Team Leaders for Country Team and EAD Roster Team	31 December 2023	By the indicated deadline, working with ICMEA and DOS, EAD will finalize an action plan on how best to optimize the utilization of the roster by UN system.
3	DPPA should coordinate with DOS and establish an action plan to address the gender and geographical distribution imbalance in the roster of electoral experts in an effort to achieve the Secretary-General's priority strategies on gender parity and geographical diversity.	Important	Yes	EAD Team Leaders for Country Team and EAD Roster Team	31 December 2023	EAD, working closely with DOS, will finalize an action plan aimed at addressing gender parity and geographical diversity in the roster within the existing rules and regulation of the organization.

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.