



**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD: C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-AZE-07-173 Underpinning and developing the democratic electoral
processes in Azerbaijan**

Date: 23 August 2011

some impact on women's empowerment, it had none on democratization, as observers - both national and international - continued to be critical of the elections process in Azerbaijan throughout the project's implementation period. With the exception of the United Nations Human Rights Council, international observers have been broadly critical of the situation regarding

clear on the face of the proposal and the mid-term report that the implementing NGO required support. If UNDEF wishes to continue financing high-risk projects, and it appears to be part of its strategy

II. Introduction and development context

(i) Project and evaluation objective

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled “*Underpinning and developing the democratic electoral processes,*” implemented by the Center Women and Modern World in partnership with Baku Volunteer Center (BVC), and New Shamakhi Foundation (NSHF). The project focused on elections and women (with journalists and local NGO leaders as secondary beneficiaries), and was carried out in 10 regions located close to Shamakhi (which is three hours’ drive outside Baku). The project’s main activities were: 1) 10 civic voter education trainings for 250 women, 2) 10 Training of Trainers (ToT) and capacity building on democracy and civil rights of women for 250 women, 3) production and dissemination of awareness raising materials, and 4) a training for journalists. The project had a total budget of US\$180,000 (the total UNDEF grant \$200,000 minus UNDEF M&E costs \$20,000).

The project was directed to propagation of democratic values and mobilization of women for

parliamentary and municipal council elections, among the rank of Ministers, and female under-representation in local and the national election commissions. As we describe below, the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) has taken steps in recent years designed to increase female representation in governance structures. In Annex 6, we describe the unsatisfactory state of civil society and media freedom.

A problem specific to elections is the phenomenon of “family voting” in which the male head of household collects the identification documents of female household members and, at the polling place, casts ballots on their behalf. The problem, while still present, is slowly receding. In other areas as well, both national and international experts interviewed reported slow but steady progress in women’s rights and empowerment. Parliament passed a new law on the status of women in 2010, although the means of implementation remain unclear.

Good governance

Azerbaijan is a Presidential Republic. The President is head of state and the executive branch of government. Elected by the people, the President appoints the Prime Minister and all cabinet-level government administrators. The National Assembly of Azerbaijan is the unicameral legislative branch of government which confirms the President’s appointee for Prime Minister and has 125 seats. Of these, 72 are held by the YAP, 40 are held by what are referred to as “independent” parties but which are in fact controlled by Government, and 13 are from what is referred to as the “legal opposition.” Islamic fundamentalism, to the extent it exists, is not an organized political force. Azerbaijan does not rank well on a range of good governance indicators.¹ As documented in Annex 5, the electoral process in Azerbaijan

III. Project strategy outcomes, strategy and implementation

(i) Objectives and strategy

The objectives of the project were described in the project document as:

- To actively draw women to participate in election processes;
- To increase their awareness of their election rights;
- To actively encourage female nominees;
- To create the necessary conditions for active participation of women in elections;
- To focus on rural parts of Azerbaijan;
- To contribute to carrying out fair and democratic elections in Azerbaijan.

The results framework (Annex II of the project document) described intended outcomes that would allow for progress in achieving these objectives as

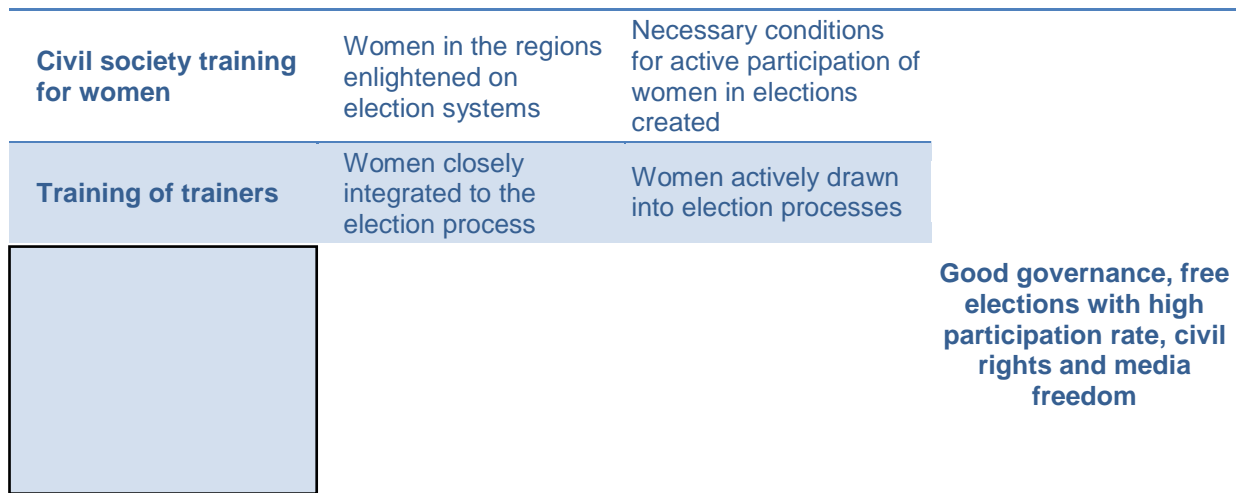
- Enlightenment of women regarding election systems,
- Achievement of close integration of women to election processes,
- Dissemination of published materials and handouts, and
- Training of journalists regarding elections.

There is confusion however, when in the accompanying table in Annex II, these same “outcomes” are then described as “outputs,” each with an associated set of main activities that will produce the output. The accompanying table summarizes the information in Annex 6.

Output / Outcome	Main associated activity
1. Enlightenment of women in the regions on election systems.	10 civic voter educations implemented.
2. Achievement of close2.integration of	

women nominees and, most strikingly, how it would encourage open, fair, and democratic elections, is not clear. In point of fact, the last objective was not explicitly served by any project activity; not a fatal weakness of the project, but one that needs to be confronted. Editing liberally from the project document, an attempt to reconstruct project strategy in logical impact form is given in the accompanying diagram.

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procedures for the second funding round, in particular, dropping the requirement for recommendations by the UN agencies in the country. Also according to CWMW, the theme of the project was established by initial assessments in the districts, where women complained in particular about “family voting,” and was adopted in view of the fact that there were a number of upcoming elections.

IV. Evaluation Findings

The evaluation is based on a set of evaluation questions or EQs, designed to cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability; plus the issue of UNDEF value added. The Evaluation Questions and related sub-questions are presented in Annex 1.

(i) Relevance

The project's stated objectives were relevant to country needs. The need to improve the electoral process is clear from Annex 5 and there were three elections scheduled during the project period: 2008 Presidential Elections, 2009 Municipal elections, and 2010 Parliamentary elections. The project was highly relevant for increasing women's participation as voters and candidates. Yet, the relevance of the project for democratization was much lower since all of the planned outputs consisted of increasing the affiliation of women (and journalists) to the existing, flawed election system described in Annex 5. The only aspect of project strategy recognizing fundamental problems in the democratic process was the last objective, contributing to the carrying out of open, fair and democratic elections in Azerbaijan, a goal towards which no significant steps were either foreseen or taken.

There was only a weak relationship between the project, either in strategy or implementation, and broader needed governance reforms. As stated by one international expert interviewed, "Voter turnout is low because there is a lack of confidence in the electoral system; there is apathy in the form of no faith that democracy can lead to change, and a lack of meaningful dialogue between citizens and the state". The project addressed these issues only indirectly.

The choice of partner, much stronger in the area of women's empowerment broadly speaking than in the technical area of elections, also confirms that, in implementation as well as in strategy, this project was much more relevant to gender needs than democratization needs. Increasing women's participation in the form of voter turnout was a laudable goal, but voter turnout overall, not just women's turnout, is low. To the extent that the project contributed to the emergence of women leaders, not just women voters, its contribution would be much more relevant to needs. There is some evidence, given below in discussing impact, that women benefiting from the project did, in fact, present themselves, which is a positive result.

Of interest from both the standpoint of relevance and efficiency, while it is likely that the trainings were suited to direct beneficiary needs, the method by which participants in the civic education trainings (the first round of trainings) were selected has not been made entirely clear by CWMW. According to CWMW, assessment visits were made to ascertain training needs. Application forms were distributed to women who participated in community meetings and training beneficiaries were selected on the basis of these applications. In order to promote discussion and exchange of views, a wide range of women; in particular, both educated and uneducated women, were selected.

Equally unclear, CWMW staff interviewed first stated that participants in the ToT trainings were selected out of the first pool of trainees based on their active participation and excellent communication skills; then later stated that all women who participated in the initial trainings also participated in the ToT training. The latter appears to be the case. The same two trainers implemented both trainings, so it appears that the ToTs were really more in the way of follow-up trainings. This, in implementation terms, suggests that the strategic distinction made in the

project document was not substantive. The choice to concentrate on a region outside Baku and choose an implementing partner not based in the capital was innovative and appropriate, a point supported by text above. The relevance of training journalists must be qualified by the view of international media experts interviewed that, while journalistic capacity is satisfactory, freedom of expression is limited (see Annex 6).



has advised it on increasing women's participation.

This conclusion follows directly from the discussion above and does not require elaboration. It could be expressed in terms of the supply side of democracy (public institutions) and the demand side (civil society). In this case, demand for democracy was stimulated to some extent, but there was no impact expanding its supply.

(vi) The poor articulation of project activities, outputs, outcomes, and objectives in the project document was a significant impediment to project relevance and impact.

Logical frameworks are a double edged sword. A great deal of time and effort can be expended in designing detailed and fully articulated log frames which prove to be of limited utility in actual project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Even more can be expended making them visually attractive whatever their inherent strengths or weaknesses. The fact that UNDEF does not require a detailed logframe is, on balance, probably a positive point for the program.

VI. Recommendations

According to CWMW,

In the future, this project can be realized in other regions of Azerbaijan and create a feminine leadership "Network" in which the activity can be integrated into government activities in this area. Based on the Network, in the future it is planned to establish a monitoring program and compilation of national reports on the situation with the elections and other related topics. We believe that this project is thematically and financially sustainable. In addition, the project will be included in the system of long-term planning of our organization, that the future can be predicted on the basis of current trends.

What recommendations, following from the conclusions above, can help CWMW pursue this goal?

(i) If CWMW wishes to continue to work in the area of political participation, it needs a more focused partnership strategy

Democratization, especially elections, is a well-populated field in Azerbaijan and one in which many NGOs have a high level of technical expertise, whether it is in the form of legal capacity, media expertise, or general political science. CWMW has a strong comparative advantage as a locally-based NGO outside Baku specialized in women's empowerment, but it needs to leverage that comparative advantage by forming partnerships with groups with greater capacity in democratization. CWMW is concerned about maintaining cordial relations with government but this need not be a fatal barrier to forming such partnerships.

(ii) CWMW needs to address capacity issues

The world of development cooperation and the NGO world are becoming increasingly competitive. If CWMW does not upgrade, for example, the quality of its proposal writing and reporting, it is likely to find itself left behind in the struggle for funding. CWMW is lucky to have several highly articulate, motivated young staffers with good potential as social entrepreneurs; these should be the focus of an effort to increase capacity in the organization, a strategy that would also allow the Director to concentrate on what she does best, which is cultivating and further developing her excellent network.

(iii) CWMW should think more critically and strategically about training

The trainings administered appear to have been of good quality, but were never tied together in a credible strategy. This was particularly evident in the fact that there was no real difference between the civic education and training of trainers events, nor does there appear to have been any consistent effort to monitor or follow-up either the ToT or the training of local journalists. In developing future proposals, CWMW needs to be more careful to present a more convincing strategy for the trainings, including an explicit link between activities, outputs, and expected impact, including indicators.

(iv) A high-risk project such as this requires increased scrutiny and monitoring on UNDEF's part

UNDEF finances projects implemented in difficult environments, increasingly by partners that are finding their legs in a competitive environment. Nothing in this evaluation suggests that UNDEF

VIII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<p>Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context?</p> <p>Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why?</p> <p>Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?</p>
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<p>To what extent have the project's objectives been reached?</p> <p>To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not?</p> <p>Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives?</p> <p>What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?</p>
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<p>Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs?</p> <p>Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability?</p> <p>Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?</p>
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<p>To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?</p> <p>Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative?</p> <p>To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization?</p> <p>Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?</p>
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<p>To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact?</p> <p>Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?</p> <p>What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the</p>
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Project-related documents

- Project document
- Mid-term/Annual Progress report
- Milestone verification report
- Project final narrative report

Other documents

- Amnesty International report 2010 Azerbaijan.
- Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, Final Report, The results of monitoring of the referendum on amendments to the Constitution of Azerbaijan held on March 18, 2009.
- Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, Final Report, The results of monitoring of the municipal elections held in the Republic of Azerbaijan on December 23, 2009.
- European Commission Progress Report on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (SEC(2010) 519; Brussels, 12/05/2010)
- Human Rights Watch 2010, *Beaten, Blacklisted, and Behind Bars: The Vanishing Space for Freedom of Expression in Azerbaijan.*
- Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2010.
- Law and Development Public Association, Final report on election complaints to commissions and courts summary.
- Law and Development Public Association, Report on monitoring of investigation of the election complaints in 23 December 2009 municipal elections.
- OSCE/ODIHR Elections e3.35 Tm[] TJET EMC /P (n)-ervt

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

28 March 2011

Annex 5: Elections and Political Freedom in Azerbaijan

Since regaining its independence in 1991, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been developing a democratic society based on such fundamental principles as the respect for political and civil rights and liberties; the protection of interest of every citizen irrespective of her/his ethnic, religious or any other affiliation; the division of power; and the rule of law. Achievements in the field of democratic state-building include political pluralism, more than 800 functioning mass media outlets, abolition of censorship in 1993, development of civil society with approximately 1,400 non-governmental organizations, and the establishment of a modern judiciary system.

Three Parliamentary and two Presidential elections were held in the country after the adoption of Azerbaijan's Constitution in 1995.

However, a range of deep concerns has been raised.

Elections

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission (EOM) preliminary report on the 2010 Parliamentary elections concluded (p.1)

while] the 7 November parliamentary elections ... were characterized by a peaceful atmosphere and all opposition parties participated in the political process, the conduct of these elections overall was not sufficient to constitute meaningful progress in the development of the country.”

This conclusion was joined in by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament, who had participated in the EOM. The OSCE/ODIHR Final Report included over 20 concrete recommendations on how to lift the restrictions that still characterize Azerbaijan's electoral environment.³ These include ensuring an inclusive candidate registration process, building an election administration that enjoys public confidence, and allowing for a campaign period where the fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression are respected. It also recommends stepping up efforts to ensure the freedom and independence of the media; improve the conduct of the voting, counting and tabulation process; and develop transparent and effective election dispute resolution mechanisms.

Representatives of Baku-based national NGOs active in election monitoring expressed the view that the OSCE underestimated the extent of election violations. They characterized the OSCE/ODIHR report as highly accurate concerning the run-up to the election, but overly positive regarding the events of 7 November itself.

Opposition candidates face problems of registration. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, district Election Commissions disallowed many signatures required for registration. Permission to hold meetings and events is often denied, and the degree of access of candidates to the all-important national television medium is strictly restricted. As election day draws near, pressure and intimidation against opposition candidates are not unknown, ranging from a summons to appear at the police station to threats of physical violence. On election day 7 November 2010, opposition candidates were on the ballot in only 37 districts, and in 27 districts there was no opposition candidate.

The Parliamentary Coalition 2010 Election Monitoring, a pro-Government NGO, identified some problems in the 2010 parliamentary elections, especially official pressure, not only on opposition candidates, but on Election Committees trying to carry out their official duties. However, they are

³ See: OSCE/ODIHR reports - <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/azerbaijan> , the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe's reports - http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/ATListingThesaurus_E.asp?DescID=5454.

of the view that there are no problems with registration, especially as compared to the 2005 elections. The Coalition agrees that there is not enough access to media for candidates and that, here as well, official interference is a problem. IREX, a USAID-supported organization specialized in media, expressed a stronger view, namely that Government, through its six TV and 4 radio station essentially controls access to mass media.

Voter participation in municipal elections is particularly low. The high level of apathy reflects the fact that Municipal Councils have very little power.

In the absence of hard data, interviews on voter participation of women differed radically. The OSCE expert on democratization and elections in Baku reported that women's participation has been declining; representatives of 2010 Parliament Coalition Election Monitoring, a GONGO,

Annex 6: Civil Society and media Freedom Freedom in Azerbaijan

Civil Society

In the last five years, restrictions to freedom of assembly and the activities of political parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have persisted.

NGOs can apply for the registration only to Baku Office of the Ministry of Justice. The law on the state registration of legal entities states that that registration shall be carried out by the relevant executive power. As a procedure, presidential decree determines which ministry is authorized to carry out the registration. The relevant presidential decree empowered the Ministry of Justice to register commercial legal entities and NGOs. The Ministry of Justice has 10 regional offices which are eligible to carry out registration. Therewith, according to the internal decree of the

Even prior to the new restrictions, NGO's room for maneuver had been constrained by the difficulties experienced by NGOs wishing to officially register in order to obtain legal status. The European Court of Human Rights has on several occasions ruled that impediments and delays instigated by the Ministry of Justice have been in violation of Article 11 European Charter on Human Rights (Ramazanova and others v. Azerbaijan, Appl. No. 44363/02, judgment of 01/02/2007; Nasibova v. Azerbaijan, Appl. No. 4307/04, judgment of 18/10/2007; Aliyev and others v. Azerbaijan, Appl. No. 28736/05, judgment of 18/12/2008; Ismayilov v. Azerbaijan, Appl. No. 4439/04, judgment of 17/01/2008.).

Media Freedom

Azerbaijan's state-run and public media compete with private and opposition publications and broadcasters. TV is the most-popular medium. A public broadcaster, set up in 2005, is intended to be free from government control. Freedom of speech is guaranteed by the constitution, but in 2010 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said journalists and bloggers "work in a climate of endemic impunity and under persistent pressure from the authorities". State influence over broadcast media "stifles diversity", it added. State television does not air alternative voices. The government has refused to free Eynulla Fatullayev, the editor-in-chief of Gundalik Azerbaijan (Daily Azerbaijan) despite evidence that the case is politically motivated⁴. Local relays of the BBC and US international radios were closed in late 2008 by the broadcasting regulator. Violence against journalists is not uncommon.

More details about repression of media freedom is given in the text box above. The recent trend is summarized in the title of the 2010 Human Rights Watch report *Beaten, Blacklisted, and Behind Bars: The Vanishing Space for Freedom of Expression in Azerbaijan*.

However, it is to be noted that the criticisms expressed by the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and others do not resonate with the positive report on freedom expression given by the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/WG.6/4/AZE/1, 4 November 2008, paras. 107-13)). Moreover, in its *Annual Report 2010*, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Human Rights drew attention to the positive aspects of recent developments in freedom of expression, as well as to the release of a number of a journalists, the position that it had advanced in favour of non-detention penalties for journalism-related violations of the law, and improved cooperation with mass media..

This is an evaluation of the UNDEF-financed project, not of the Government of Azerbaijan. However, the preponderance of evidence is that whatever improvements in media freedom have occurred have been overshadowed by setbacks. Under these circumstances, the training of local journalists was certainly a relevant project component, but impact could only be expected to be modest.

Annex 7: Other NGOs Active in Elections and Political Freedom in Azerbaijan

Election related NGOs

Elections Monitoring and Democratic Studies Centre (EMDS) has worked towards improved election legislation, increased voter activities, and provided voter education and election monitoring since 2001. It has been cooperating with the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) since 2001, implementing domestic programs as the NDI local partner. EMDS conducted

The Norwegian Human Rights House was closed by government order.

The Open Society Institute supports activities on voter education and increasing voter participation.

The European Union has funded projects on improvement of the electoral system, election legislation, and voter education. The EU collaborates with For the Sake of Civil Society, Legal Education Society, Law and Development Center and Democracy Learning Union.

GMF funds programs on election monitoring, voter education, increasing voter participation, awareness raising election rights, and investigating election 6221(an)3(d)-219(i)on)14(,(t)-4(i)5(on)4)-4prov