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MONITORING AND EVALUATION SUPPORT ACTIVITY II (MEASURE II)

***ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION AND POLITICAL PROCESSES
IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA***

November 2022

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEO	Association of Election Officials
AIR	American Institutes for Research
ALPI	The Advanced Leadership in Politics Institute
AT	Assessment Team
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CCPI	Catalyzing Cross-Party Initiative in BiH
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
DO	Development Objective
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FCR	Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (EU)
IRI	International Republican Institute
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEASURE	Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity
MEC	Municipal Election Commission
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSCP	National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PSC	Polling Station Committee
RS	Republika Srpska
SPPG	Supporting Political Pluralism and Good Governance Processes
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this assessment is to investigate electoral and political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in order to inform future USAID/BiH programming. More specifically, USAID requested an analysis of how best to address voter apathy and distrust by improving the integrity of the 2024 and 2026 BiH elections through targeted technical assistance at the local level.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

ASSESSMENT QUESTION 1: WHAT GAPS OR OBSTACLES EXIST FOR TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

Polling station committees (PSCs) have been described as “the cancer of BiH elections” and are the primary obstacles to transparent and accountable election administration at the local level. Fifty-seven percent of citizens said that most irregularities occur in counting ballots at polling stations or voting at polling stations. PSC members are randomly selected from nominees by political parties; to improve their odds of selection, parties create multiple allied parties on paper so they can nominate additional PSC candidates. After the selection of PSC members, parties openly trade seats so they can gain control of polling stations. This enables PSCs to operate without oversight and commit fraud, such as annulling ballots cast for opponents, casting leftover ballots after polls close, prefilling ballots handed to voters, instructing voters how to vote, and misreporting the vote count.

There is a need to professionalize and depoliticize polling stations by including politically nonaligned PSC officials and giving them adequate training. One model is to staff PSCs with civil servants who have other government jobs with independent standing. The High Representative (HR) promulgated changes to election law with immediate effect that seek to address electoral problems, but it is too soon to assess their impact. Other obstacles include:

- Municipal election commissions (MECs) are under the control of local politicians and vulnerable to political influence.
- MECs and the Central Election Commission (CEC) communicate inadequately with citizens.
- The CEC faces shortcomings in staffing and budget, resulting in the CEC being slow in processing appeals during the election process.
- The total number of registered voters significantly exceeds the sum of adults living in BiH and voters registered for mail-in voting living abroad.
- Shortcomings in the absentee voter process enable people to commit fraud by requesting absentee ballots in the name of registered voters, some of whom are dead.
- There are not enough electoral observers from political parties, and party observers do not receive adequate training.

ASSESSMENT QUESTION 2: WHAT TYPES OF IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TECHNICAL CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL COULD INFLUENCE PUBLIC TRUST AND VOTER BEHAVIOR?

An overwhelming majority of BiH citizens do not trust the election administration. Only one-third say that elections are fair, and 89 percent believe that election fraud occurs. Nevertheless, 56 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in the last parliamentary election in 2018, which is comparable to the rate of neighboring countries and the United States. The most frequent reasons for voting are to perform one's civic duty, to prevent votes from being stolen, or to advocate for change. Nonvoters cite futility, apathy, and distrust for not voting, particularly their dissatisfaction with candidates and the choices available.

Improvements to PSCs could include professionalization of PSC leadership, increased training for PSC members, and resources for PSCs. Support for election observation would help deter fraud in the technical conduct of elections and increase public trust. Technological improvements like ballot scanners, biometric identification, and surveillance cameras could increase trust.

In addition, there are national-level interventions, unrelated to the technical conduct of elections at the local level, that could improve voter trust and turnout, including youth leadership and candidate training programs; support for training of the CEC, prosecutors, and judges on how to recognize and prosecute electoral fraud; and improvements to the voter registry.

ASSESSMENT QUESTION 2A: WHAT TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL MAY COUNTER INTIMIDATION AND CONTROL BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND/OR HAVE A CONSTRUCTIVE IMPACT ON ETHNIC TENSIONS?

Addressing problems with PSCs, improving enforcement of sanctions against election administrators committing election fraud, and deploying more election observers to detect and report fraud by election administrators could reduce control and intimidation by political parties. Ensuring that PSC members come from multiple parties would help eliminate intimidation by PSCs, but it would not eliminate intimidation outside the polling station, e.g., employer coercion of employees.

Freer and fairer elections might give multiethnic parties a better chance to win elections, thereby reducing the influence of ethnically based parties that ramp up ethnic tensions before elections. Technical improvements in election administration are unlikely to reduce ethnic tensions directly.

ASSESSMENT QUESTION 2B: WHAT APPROACHES WOULD ENCOURAGE VOTER PARTICIPATION AND COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT BY WOMEN AND YOUTH?

Women vote at the same rate as men, and adults under 30 vote at the same rate as older adults, so there is no need for an activity aimed specifically at women and youth to increase voter participation. Women, however, are underrepresented in elected office. While many challenges facing women are societal, programs that encourage women's leadership have proven effective in increasing political engagement and accomplishment. The two most effective approaches are (1) education for women on political leadership and civic activism and (2) support for political parties to support, coach, mentor, and integrate women in activities in leadership.

Political engagement by youth could be encouraged through civic education campaigns working through schools, universities, and social clubs. Hands-on activities like youth parliaments can complement curricula. More targeted approaches could include work with political parties to help them recruit, mentor, and promote young members as well as training programs for young leaders.

The USAID-funded Advanced Leadership in Politics Institute (ALPI) program has demonstrated successful results in helping young leaders get elected and advance in their political parties, including its use of peer-to-peer training and mentoring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Continue to support the CEC.** USAID should consider continuing support to the CEC, with a particular focus on the CEC's ability to communicate with the public.
2. **Improve voter outreach.** USAID should consider working with the CEC, MECs, and/or the Association of Election Officials to improve outreach and voter education to advance public perception of election officials' work and increase their professionalism.
3. **Pilot initiatives for the use of technology in the electoral process.** USAID should consider providing funding for pilot initiatives to explore the use of technological improvements in the electoral process, such as ballot scanners, biometric voter identification, and surveillance cameras.
4. **Support the professionalization of PSC staff.** USAID should consider developing a new policy and/or procedure with the CEC for the professionalization of PSC staff, including appointing staff from existing civil servants to be trained, seconded to PSCs, and rotated among polling stations.
5. **Fund a system for the Registry Office to share data with the CEC.** USAID should consider funding a system that automatically shares Registry Office data with the CEC in order to establish a system in which the voter registry accurately reflects population figures.
6. **Train judges, law enforcement, and prosecutors on electoral dispute resolution.** USAID should consider establishing a training program for prosecutors and judges that educates them in the technical specifics of election law to promote the successful prosecution of electoral fraud.
7. **Support training for civil society and party election observers.** USAID should consider supporting training for political party and civil society election observers.
8. **Support projects and legacy bodies that promote women's engagement.** USAID should consider providing support to existing donor projects and legacy bodies that encourage women's political engagement and leadership. Support should be provided to political parties to support, coach, mentor, and integrate women in leadership activities.
9. **Support youth participation through civic education and ALPI.** USAID should consider support for civic education for youth through school-based programs. USAID should continue to support ALPI and consider providing support to political parties for activities that promote, coach, mentor, and integrate youth into their leadership structures.

INTRODUCTION

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) has been commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (USAID/BiH) under USAID/BiH's Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity II (MEASURE II) to conduct an assessment of elections and political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), focusing on the technical conduct of elections and voter behavior change.

This assessment will inform future USAID/BiH programming that will contribute to the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) through (1) Intermediate Result 1.1: Impact of inclusive citizen engagement improved and/or (2) Intermediate Result 2.1: Social cohesion strengthened. USAID seeks to support voting by addressing the election administration factors that prevent or enable civic participation and engagement. Public faith in elections is not high, and confidence in adequate representation and accurate vote count is low. Generally, the population sees elections as a means for political elites and political parties, based on ethnicity, to maintain power.

Current USAID activity in this area is Supporting Political Pluralism and Good Governance Processes (SPPG) in BiH, implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS).¹ SPPG is a \$4 million activity that runs from September 2019 to September 2023. Under CDCS Development Objective 1: Government accountability to citizens strengthened, SPPG activity is envisaged to contribute to Intermediate Result 1.1: Impact of inclusive citizen engagement improved and Intermediate Result 1.2: Governance effectiveness in targeted areas strengthened.

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE

The main purpose of this assessment is to investigate electoral and political processes in BiH in order to inform future USAID/BiH programming. More specifically, USAID requested an analysis of how best to address voter apathy and distrust by improving the integrity of the 2024 and 2026 BiH elections through targeted technical assistance at the local level.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

The assessment was guided by two research questions and two sub-questions:

- Q1. What gaps or obstacles exist for transparent and accountable election administration at the local level?
- Q2. What types of improvements to the technical conduct of elections at the local level could influence public trust and voter behavior?
 - Q2A. What technical improvements to election administration at the local level may counter intimidation and control by political parties and/or have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions?
 - Q2B. What approaches would encourage voter participation and collective engagement by women and youth?

¹ CEPPS comprises the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

BACKGROUND

Nearly the entirety of BiH's institutional apparatus is under the control of an oligopoly of political parties that act without constraints and wield excessive control over public procurement and an expansive system of public enterprises and public administration. Ruling political parties control virtually all processes in the country, leaving very little room for alternative actors or opposition. Consequently, the political arena is strongly tilted in the ruling parties' favor. Ruling parties are deadlocked in an unresolvable conflict over who gets to dominate; at the same time, they maintain very strict separation over who controls what and cooperate quite well on a functional level, as demonstrated by various appointments, the awarding of public procurement contracts, and so on. Government underperformance and corruption are obscured by intensive conflict over "major" issues of inter-ethnic relations and individual versus collective rights. These issues have been at the forefront of political discussion for more than 15 years, yet major actors have failed to reach any compromise whatsoever. Instead, ethnic interests and the ruling parties that claim to protect them have become entrenched in their diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive positions.

Pervasive corruption, which is deeply intertwined with ruling political parties' structures, remains the main hindrance to social, economic, and political development and progress toward European Union (EU) accession. Moreover, endemic corruption manifests itself in different forms in BiH, including undue political influence and interference, clientelism, patronage, bribery, and abuse of public office. In 2021, BiH ranked 110th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. The 2020 and 2021 USAID/BiH-supported National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions (NSCP) identified corruption as one of the main drivers of emigration from BiH.

The current BiH political system rewards extreme ethno-nationalist and divisive narratives, perpetuating the ruling positions of the same political elites since the end of the war. Those political elites continue to exacerbate inter-ethnic relations by instilling fear and division and maintaining the status quo. To maintain their position of power, the ruling parties not only encourage and produce ethnic division, but also maintain control over mainstream media. Furthermore, much of their control is achieved through influencing elections. The 2018 general elections were characterized by democratic deficiencies, including fraudulent absentee voting schemes, manipulation of the election process by polling station committees (PSCs), and a lack of confidence in the impartiality of the election administration at all levels, largely due to suspicions of political and ethnic biases of commissioners.² In addition, there are few credible public opinion polls that address the electoral process. After the general elections, BiH continued to struggle with the formation of a government, challenged at the Federation of BiH (FBiH) level by controversy over electoral reform and at the state level by conflict over potential North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession, resulting in a "caretaker" government and non-implementation of elections results on the FBiH level.

As highlighted in a report³ produced by the election-monitoring coalition *Pod Lupom* (Under the Magnifying Glass), the run-up to the 2020 local elections process was characterized by the abuse of voting by mail (more than 5,000 citizens were victims of identity theft and had their votes cast by others); trading of positions in local PSCs⁴, which is used to circumvent regulations; and abuse of

² Freedom House. 2019 BiH Country Report.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2019>.

³ Pod Lupom, March 2021. <https://podlupom.org/biblioteka/izvjestaji-o-posmatranju-izbora/lokalni-izbori-2020-finalni-izvjestaj-o-gradjanskom-nestranackom-posmatranju-lokalnih-izbora/>.

⁴ Election Law of BiH, Article 2.19, Paragraph 14 (post-Office of the High Representative enactment, previously Paragraph 13): "Only one representative of a political subject can be a member of a Polling Station Committee."

public resources for campaign purposes (including the engagement of civil servants in the campaign). Furthermore, a total of 24 local election commissions (municipal and city) documented violations of election deadlines, which did not result in any consequences.

The competent authorities responsible for the conduct of elections are the seven-member Central Election Commission (CEC), municipal (or city) election commissions and the PSCs. Members of the CEC are appointed by the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. The CEC determines the required qualifications for members of local election commissions, who are appointed by municipal or city assemblies and approved by the CEC, and members of PSCs, who are appointed for each election.⁵

BiH is holding new general elections in October 2022 and political tensions are rising. The Election Law of BiH must change to comply with ECHR and BiH Constitutional Court rulings. Amendments have been debated for 15 years with no results. Recently, the High Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Christian Schmidt, enacted changes to election law in an attempt to restore the integrity of electoral processes. These include changes to Article 2.19. by introducing the text, “The abuse of the right to participate in the work of the Polling Station Committee by fictitious representation as prescribed... shall be prohibited.”

The United States and the EU have been working with BiH officials to resolve the election law crisis and draft electoral reforms that tackle corruption and discrimination prior to the elections. Despite their efforts, domestic elites have failed to reach a deal. Difficulties associated with the tripartite presidential structure and with Republika Srpska (RS) efforts to seize state-level authorities have distracted from electoral, economic, and judicial reforms needed to advance EU accession efforts. Political tensions that highlight the vulnerabilities of the BiH joint governance structure present a particular threat in the current context, characterized by regional and global crises of democracy, growing nationalism, and authoritarianism. This is the backdrop against which different types of electoral fraud take place at the local level in BiH, such as those related to PSCs. An example of such activities can be observed in political parties swapping their PSC seats in places where they would be more likely to get votes because of the ethnic makeup of those areas, which results in mono- and bipartisan PSCs that facilitate widespread manipulation and fraud.

ASSESSMENT METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

METHODOLOGY

The assessment team (AT) conducted this assessment from the end of June to September 2022, utilizing mixed methods, including a desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). A more detailed methodology can be found in Annex 2.

PHASE ONE: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

This independent assessment began in July 2022, when the AT commenced document review and began preparing the Workplan, which was submitted to USAID/BiH on July 15. During the planning phase, the AT reviewed relevant documents, prepared the Workplan, and formulated the assessment design.

⁵ Ibid., Articles 2.4 and 2.5.

PHASE TWO: DATA COLLECTION

The AT used a qualitative assessment design consisting of document review, 39 KIIs and 3 FGDs with key informants as well as 12 FGDs with citizens, including both state, entity, and municipal level insight when possible. MEASURE II staff and local consultants carried out interviews in four languages, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and English. The data collection protocols to guide fieldwork are in Annex 4.

PHASE THREE: DATA ANALYSIS

The team co-leads oversaw and managed the systematic analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The team's data analysis approach utilized data triangulation to cross-check results, and it applied several analysis methods to provide evidence for the assessment's findings and conclusions.

PHASE FOUR: DISSEMINATION AND UTILIZATION

Following fieldwork and data analysis, the team presented the findings, conclusions, and recommendations during a remote out-briefing to USAID on September 8, 2022. MEASURE II submitted a draft assessment report answering all of the assessment questions on September 22.

LIMITATIONS

- **Difficulty in reaching key informants.** The majority of fieldwork was conducted in August, when many BiH citizens are away on vacation. The team addressed this limitation by extending fieldwork by two extra weeks, to five weeks in total.
- **Selection bias.** The assessment required meeting with Bosnian citizens who did vote and BiH citizens who did not vote in recent elections. However, politically disengaged individuals like nonvoters are less likely to volunteer their time for meetings. The team addressed this by ensuring that FGDs included both voters and nonvoters.
- **Interviewer/Moderator bias.** Interviewer or moderator conduct and actions may lead KII or FGD participants to respond in a certain way. To prevent this from happening, key informant interviewers and FGD moderators were trained to ask questions in a neutral way; to restrain from giving body language signals or making facial expressions; and to ask all questions in the interview protocols.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

ASSESSMENT QUESTION I

What gaps or obstacles exist for transparent and accountable election administration at the local level?

POLLING STATION COMMITTEES

Described by an international organization official as “the cancer of BiH elections,” PSCs are by far the weakest element of election administration. This is confirmed by citizens’ distrust at the polling station level. Fifty-seven percent of citizens said that most irregularities occur in counting ballots at polling stations or voting at polling stations; 22 percent said that someone at the polling station told them personally who to vote for; and only 12 percent said they trust PSCs completely or mostly.⁶ In BiH, PSCs are completely political, which is uncommon among Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) member states.

Key informants and the desk review all confirmed that the **trading of seats**, which results in single-party and/or single-ethnicity PSCs, is a major problem that enables widespread fraud and manipulation.⁷ Established parties often create additional “fictitious” parties to inflate the number of their party members running as candidates for PSC seats, thereby increasing their chances of having a party member selected to a PSC. The **appointment** process is problematic too. Candidates are selected late in the election process (approximately one month before elections). Low financial compensation, coupled by the significant workload (members are supposed to spend 20 hours at a polling station on election day) and liability for wrongdoing, leads some members to resign shortly before the election. Key informants confirmed that some PSC members leave as soon as they can on election day and fail to observe post-closing fraud. According to most key informants, **education** for PSC members is brief (training is limited to two days) and insufficient; as a result, even honest PSC members may not recognize fraud or may not understand proper procedures. Even key informants who said training was good observed that PSC members failed to master the material.

Numerous kinds of fraud take place at polling stations. Key informants reported instances in which PSC members decided among themselves how to divide blank ballots remaining at the end of election day or annul opponents’ ballots. Key informants also confirmed that PSC members manipulate ballots to advance preferred candidates on open lists, such as prefilling ballots for their supporters to cast.⁸ Fraud typically requires all PSC members to collude, and key informants confirmed that corrupt members of PSCs often send members home when they are not amenable to fraudulent behavior. FGD participants were found to be well informed about fraud being committed or had witnessed fraud firsthand.

⁶ OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Public Perceptions of Elections in BiH: Reforms Needed,” March 25, 2022. <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/514606> (accessed September 5, 2022).

⁷ Azra Husarić, “Bosnian Polling Station Abuses are ‘Mechanism for Vote Theft,’” *Detektor*, September 4, 2020.

⁸ The CEC introduced a number of technical changes to improve visibility in polling stations and reduce ballot-switching fraud, such as altering the orientation and height of ballot boxes.

“For example, me, few years ago, I accompanied my elderly mother to the polling station and when she wanted to vote, it turned out that she was registered as someone who already voted that day, even though she just arrived with me.” – Citizen focus group participant

Key informants and one FGD participant confirmed that votes that are counted by hand at polling stations after polls close are vulnerable to manipulation. The count can be intentionally changed, and ballots can be spoiled by PSC members. One OSCE official said there were polling stations in 2018 in which 15 percent of ballots were invalidated, compared to an expected rate of 1 percent.⁹ One key informant recounted a situation where ballots, for which a voter cast a vote for a party but did not vote for an individual candidate, were subsequently manipulated and accompanying forms either falsely filled in and signed or doctored at a later stage to generate more than 5,000 new preferential votes for candidates.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION COMMISSIONS

As stipulated by the Election Law of BiH,¹⁰ members of municipal election commissions (MECs) are appointed under the authority of city council presidents and mayors, though the CEC has some authority to block appointments. A high-ranking member of one of the biggest political parties confirmed that MECs can be under the political influence of an elected mayor or a president of a municipal assembly. MECs are poor at public relations and fail to explain the process adequately to citizens before elections, according to two international organization officials.

“Municipal election commissions and polling committees are somewhat invisible. Citizens do not understand the process and what is the organization between the national and local level. So, improving local level capacities not only at the CEC, but also in terms of how they are recognized by the citizens, is a trust-building measure.” – International organization officials

Key informants confirm that transporting ballots from PSCs to municipal commissions is not secure and allows the ballots to be compromised. This is important because those ballots would be used for recounts. According to two MEC members, the biggest problems are insufficient financial resources, lack of facilities, and technical capacities for conducting elections on the local level.

CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION

The CEC, the main body tasked with administering elections, also lacks citizens' trust, according to public opinion surveys and the AT's interviews. Sixty-eight percent of citizens distrust the CEC either somewhat (31 percent) or a great deal (37 percent).¹¹ There is also a noticeable distrust in the CEC's ability to organize legitimate elections, evidenced by only 7 percent of citizens having a great deal of confidence in the commission. Similarly, only a small percentage of survey participants are confident in the CEC to be impartial in conducting elections (8 percent) and only a slim number

⁹ Joeri Maas, OSCE, quoted in Azra Husarić's "Bosnian Polling Station Abuses are 'Mechanism for Vote Theft,'" *Detektor*, September 4, 2020.

¹⁰ Election Law of BiH, Article 2.12, Paragraph 5: "The members of the Municipal Election Commission shall be appointed by the Municipal Council/Municipal Assembly, subject to the approval of the Central Election Commission of BiH based on a public advertisement according to the procedure established by the Central Election Commission of BiH under a separate regulation."

¹¹ International Republican Institute, "2022 Western Balkans Regional Survey," January–February 2022.

of participants believe the CEC has the ability to provide accurate and unbiased information (7 percent). In 2020, 39 percent of respondents had not changed their level of trust in the CEC since 2018, and 42 percent had less trust in the CEC than they did two years earlier.¹² An IRI poll from 2022, however, indicates that citizens' trust has improved since 2020: in 2020, the CEC was trusted by 19 percent of citizens; in 2022, this number rose to 27 percent. (This may be due to opposition party members being able to appoint some CEC members, but causality cannot be established.) The CEC is more trusted than other institutions, such as Entity Prime Minister (20 percent in 2020 and 25 percent in 2022), the BiH Presidency (21 percent in 2020 and 23 percent in 2022), or BiH political parties (17 percent in 2020 and 19 percent in 2022).¹³ As an institution, the CEC was captured soon after the ownership was transferred from international to local actors. Since then, there has been a reversal of norms and procedures and the affirmation of almost complete political control,¹⁴ which contributed to citizens' distrust in the electoral process. Several key informants noted that the current CEC setup represents an improvement over the previous one.

Generally speaking, electoral commissions can be comprised of political faction leaders (e.g., Mali and Guyana) or a combination of partisan and technical actors (e.g., United States, Spain, Russia) or purely apolitical (e.g., France, Ireland, Sierra Leone). The overt politicization of polling staff is unusual and generally not accepted as it can interfere with exercising the right to vote and is linked to voter intimidation (e.g., Mozambique). Politicization is also synonymous with factional strongholds and is linked to a greater incidence of fraud because the number of people you have to co-opt into fraud and the cost of doing so is reduced (e.g., Kenya). The fact that it is locally prevalent does not mitigate these factors, meaning that the pattern is generally something that has to be addressed with a view to controlling if not eliminating it.

KIIs and FGDs confirmed that the CEC fails to intervene in cases of alleged election fraud. One key informant mentioned the case of an MEC member who said that the CEC was ignoring their request for assistance. Key informants cited the CEC's lack of capacity as a cause for its shortcomings. The commission faces problems with its ability to provide obligatory training, which is where IFES is assisting in improving methodology and developing e-learning modules, but also in terms of handling the CEC's mandate at the local level.

IFES is also providing support to the CEC to improve communication and voter registration processes and to strengthen cybersecurity. Key informants note that efforts are being made to improve CEC communication yet there is still room for progress. With support from the Embassy of Switzerland in BiH, the CEC and the Association of Election Officials (AEO) published a series of podcasts under the title "General elections 2022," which dealt with diverse topics. With support from the EU, a strategy for election integrity and transparency was developed. Part of it focused on the communication strategy—as part of an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) system that requires the adoption of sectoral strategies—that was never adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. Nevertheless, the strategy was used as a basis for both CEC and international donors' projects.

The OSCE Mission to BiH and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw are working with the CEC to support the implementation of ODIHR recommendations by improving bylaws and practices. Their activities also include working with BiH

¹² International Foundation for Electoral Systems, "Information Integrity and Trust in the Election Process and the Central Election Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina," 2020.

¹³ International Republican Institute, "2022 Western Balkans Regional Survey," January–February 2022.

¹⁴ Srđan Blagovčanin, *The Rule of the Cartel*. Transparency International, May 2020, p. 30.

institutions on legal reform related to elections, including amendments to the electoral law and legislation related to political party financing. According to the ODIHR website, “Currently, the Mission is implementing a project that will develop a CEC voter education strategy, support the CEC audit department, increase transparency on election-related complaints, and make the asset declarations of elected officials more accessible.” OSCE support to Bosnian elections is part of its Support to Electoral Reforms in the Western Balkans project, a €1.72 million activity that runs from January 2021 to December 2023, with funding from the EU and the Austrian government. It follows the Support to Elections in the Western Balkans project that ran from 2017 through 2020.

VOTER LISTS

Published studies have found that the number of eligible voters on the BiH electoral roll is significantly greater than the number of adults residing in the country. An IFES survey found that BiH citizens cited voter registration (37.9 percent) and the counting process (28.8 percent) as the most vulnerable parts of the election process when it comes to susceptibility to fraud.¹⁵

One 2020 study from the European Council on Foreign Relations found that there were almost 375,000 more names on the voter rolls than there were adults living in BiH, calculating there were 3.28 million registered voters and 2.91 million adult residents. The difference in those figures is 273,000 greater than the 102,000 emigres who were registered to vote. “A discrepancy of a quarter of a million in a country of 3.5 million people provides ample space to manipulate votes and swing an election,” the author wrote.¹⁶ Since 2014, the number of registered Bosnian voters has exceeded the number of adult residents by between 323,212 and 464,707 names. For context, the comparable figure in Croatia for the most recent elections is 193,326. In Slovenia, Austria, and the United States, there are fewer registered voters than the voting-age population.

A significant number of key informants and FGD participants confirmed these findings: Voter lists/centralized database for identification are not accurate or up to date and do not reflect voters who are out of the country or deceased. An election official argues that the problem with Registry Office data is backlogs, i.e., persons whose deaths were not reported to the Registry Office.

Key informants and FGD participants argue that this leads to fraud and manipulation, such as impersonation of registered voters who are outside Bosnia or deceased. They said some individuals can vote multiple times using different identities, with the collaboration of PSC members. Citizen FGDs in Banja Luka and Mostar found that citizens are going to the polls, among other reasons, to prevent the theft of their vote; one survey found that nearly half of BiH voters cast ballots for this reason.¹⁷

In order to prevent ballots manipulation, the CEC is working with the British Embassy to introduce stamps with advanced security features. Each ballot will be stamped and signed by the PSC president when handed over to an attending voter. This project is being implemented by the AEO.

¹⁵ International Foundation for Electoral Systems, “Information Integrity and Trust in the Election Process and the Central Election Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 2020.

¹⁶ Majda Ruge, “The Voting Dead: Why Electoral Fraud in Bosnia Should Matter to the EU,” European Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2020.

<https://ecfr.eu/article/the-voting-dead-why-electoral-fraud-in-bosnia-should-matter-to-the-eu> (accessed September 5, 2022).

¹⁷ National Democratic Institute, “Bosnia and Herzegovina Poll,” May 13, 2022.
<https://www.ndi.org/publications/bosnia-and-herzegovina-poll>.

ABSENTEE VOTING

The problems with the voter list discussed above lead to abuses with mail-in absentee ballots, where malign actors committing fraud request that multiple ballots in the names of registered voters be sent to their address abroad; these malign actors then cast those ballots fraudulently. One scholar wrote, “Such was the story of one man who found out that his deceased mother, who lived and died in Canada, was registered to cast an absentee ballot from Serbia. The ‘voting dead’ are not the only examples of falsified registration: a candidate for a municipal council in the municipality of Teslić in Republika Srpska found out by accident that he was registered to vote by mail from Serbia—a country he has never lived in.”¹⁸

Key informants confirmed that fraud happens by requesting a mail-in ballot in the name of a voter, but having the ballot mailed to the address of the person committing fraud. The CEC and OSCE, upon the recommendation of IFES, introduced a registration application for voting abroad, so the process can be streamlined and fraud reduced. Prior to introducing this application, the CEC had to purge 27,000 names from the voter list before the 2020 elections.

The OSCE and CEC developed an application for mail-in voter registration that aims to prevent fraudulent registrations for the 2022 elections, plus instructional videos. The application has several modules and introduces online applications for observers, candidate asset declarations, and an identity-management module through the CEC’s *e-Izbori* platform. The CEC reported that around 88,000 individuals opened accounts for voting abroad and some 10,000 never completed the registration. There were 10,749 applications rejected for missing required documents. In total, 69,966 voters were registered to vote from abroad.

ELECTION OBSERVATION

Election observation is generally regarded favorably, but it could improve to affect the electoral process more positively. In general, there are two major groups of observers, party and nonparty, though according to two key informants, this line is sometimes blurred. This assessment identified numerous problems and vulnerabilities. KIs and FGDs indicated that few observers possess the necessary expertise in election law, and they can be intimidated and distracted. Since they are not paid well, observers can be vulnerable to being bought off by parties on PSCs to turn their backs or go home before fraud is committed, while some observers leave not knowing how long they needed to stay.

Parties generally lack observers in the field and have no resources to cover all polling stations. Several key informants and participants in citizen FGDs mentioned that politically appointed observers assume only a minimal role at the polling station, observing the turnout of their voters and registering their votes. NDI is developing an application for party observers, to help them identify and report cases of fraud or manipulation of votes. *Pod Lupom* will have a legal team standing by to assist observers, but they cannot offer the same assistance to party observers as they maintain strict separation from political parties.

Nonparty observers are becoming harder to find. *Pod Lupom* officials said they are having problems with their own roster for 2022 elections as young people leave the country.

¹⁸ Majde Ruge, “The Voting Dead,” European Council on Foreign Relations.

ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The CEC's inadequate response to election disputes was frequently mentioned as a problem impacting the integrity of the electoral process. Such cases were handled by the Court of First Instance until 2007. Since then, the body was abolished, and the CEC was left to deal with cases and a correspondingly increased workload. Three key informants and two FGD participants mentioned that the CEC takes a long time and responds only to a fraction of cases.

One key informant believes the problem is the appeal procedure, which requires an individual to cite the specific article of law violated. According to another key informant, the legal framework appears to be the problem: the CEC will not examine fraud allegations unless the number of problematic ballots exceeds the margin of victory.¹⁹ Election law has a provision for a complaints council to refer cases to the public prosecutor's office in criminal matters (Article 6.8–6.12). However, one key informant and one FGD participant stated that prosecutors have insufficient understanding to prosecute election fraud cases, so criminal prosecution is rare. Lack of court proceedings is a huge problem, and frequently mentioned as such during interviews. Efforts are being made to improve the situation in this domain through better education of prosecutors as well as law enforcement liaison officers and improved coordination and responsiveness, but whether these strategies will rectify this shortcoming is too early to tell.

OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE

On July 27, 2022, High Representative Christian Schmidt attempted to address some gaps and obstacles for transparent and accountable election administration by mandating changes to the electoral law. The decision is broadly based on recent negotiations to change the electoral law, which had ground to a halt. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) package did not go as far as envisaged from the package that was on the table during negotiations, according to key informants.

Changes to election law enacted by the OHR²⁰ seek to address several important issues, such as delays in appointments or replacement of MEC members (Article 2), trading of seats in PSCs, penalties and fines, abuse of state resources, and hate speech. The Election Law of BiH now contains clearer provisions regarding impersonation (trading of seats)²¹ and foresees fines for both PSC members and appointing parties, ranging from 600–3,000 and 3,000–10,000 convertible marks, respectively.

Key informants believe that the direction of changes in the OHR package is good; however, it is generally advised that changes to election law take place well in advance of polling to protect the integrity of the process, certainty, and the rule of law. The international standard is to have no changes within 12 months of election day to prevent incumbent governments from changing rules

¹⁹ Election Law of BiH, Article 5.30, Paragraph 6: "The Central Election Commission of BiH shall order a recount if it is established that this law was violated and the violation affected the allocation of mandates."

²⁰ Decision Enacting the Law on Amendments to the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<http://www.ohr.int/decision-enacting-the-law-on-amendments-to-the-election-law-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina-7/>

²¹ Election Law of BiH, Article 7.3, Paragraph 2: "False impersonation on behalf of any political party, coalition, list of independent candidates or independent candidate shall be prohibited, as well as the abuse of the legal right to participate in the work of a Polling Station Committee on behalf of one political entity contrary to the provision of Article 2.19 of this Law by fictitiously representing a political entity entitled to a seat at the Polling Station Committee, in order to favor another political entity not entitled to the seat at the Polling Station Committee. This prohibition shall also be applicable to members of a Polling Station Committee."

arbitrarily. However, changes six months before elections can be tolerated, if necessary. Some key informants believe that the OHR decisions might help by reducing political parties' ability to intimidate and control voters. Significant numbers of key informants believe that these decisions are good and will have a positive impact on elections.

CONCLUSIONS

Current PSC composition and operation are the primary obstacles to transparent and accountable election administration at the local level. There is a need to professionalize and depoliticize polling stations by including politically nonaligned PSC officials and giving them adequate training. One model is to staff PSCs with civil servants who have other government jobs with independent standing. There is a need for PSC oversight measures and observation. The use of ballot scanners could improve public trust in vote tabulation; however, it could make suspicions rise as well if technological changes are not implemented transparently with enough time and without enough consultations. It is too soon to say whether the changes promulgated by the OHR will solve the problem of fictitious parties and trading of PSC seats.

MECs are under the control of local politicians and vulnerable to political influence. They see lack of financial resources, technical equipment, and proper facilities as major obstacles to proper conduct of elections. Communication with citizens is inadequate regarding election procedures and the importance of elections in general.

Shortcomings in the CEC are attributable to shortages in staffing and budget. Consequently, the CEC is slow in processing a significant number of appeals during the election process. Lack of prosecution in election fraud cases means illegal activities are not deterred, due to the low likelihood of consequences.

The CEC should work to improve its public communication. While it has taken steps in this direction, there is still room for improvement.

Greater communication is needed between registry offices and the CEC. Resolving the backlog in registry offices is necessary. Use of identification card scanners and/or biometric identification could address the problem of multiple voting.

Domestic civil society observers have adequate training and support facilities to properly observe elections at polling stations and local election commissions but face a recruitment problem. Political party observers are failing at various levels and need more training and support in filing complaints.

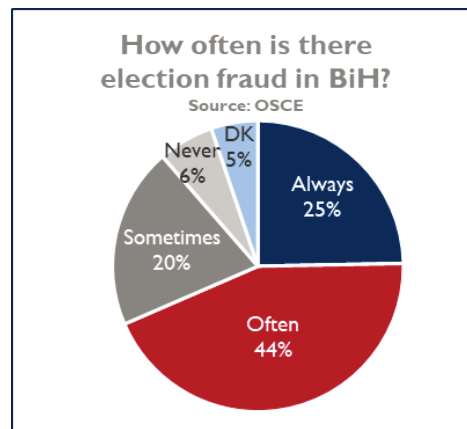
ASSESSMENT QUESTION 2

What types of improvements to the technical conduct of elections at the local level could influence public trust and voter behavior?

CURRENT STATE

PUBLIC TRUST

Public opinion polling found that an overwhelming majority of BiH citizens do not trust the electoral process, a finding that was corroborated in interviews and focus groups. The 2020 NSCP by MEASURE II found that only 33 percent of respondents agreed the 2020 elections were fair.²² According to an OSCE poll fielded in August 2021,²³ 89 percent of citizens believe election fraud occurs, including 69 percent who say fraud occurs “always” or “often.”

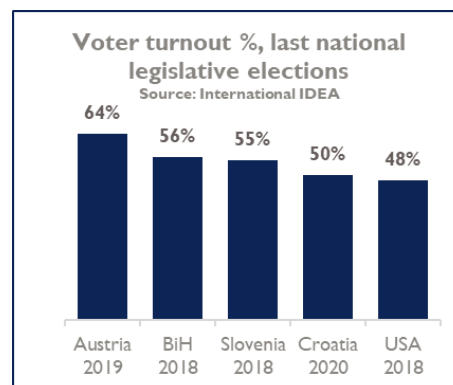


Distrust is most pervasive at the polling station level. The OSCE survey found that 57 percent of BiH citizens believe most irregularities occur in counting ballots at polling stations or voting at polling stations, and 22 percent reported that someone at the polling station told them for whom to vote. Only 12 percent of BiH citizens said they trust PSCs “completely” or “mostly.”

The AT’s interviews and focus groups also found distrust in the electoral system. Citizens said they view PSCs as inherently compromised, vote counting as manipulated, and elections as stolen. The most frequent response for why there is public distrust in the electoral system is that the process lacks integrity and there is widespread fraud.

VOTER BEHAVIOR

Despite the lack of trust in the electoral process documented above, BiH citizens vote at a rate similar to citizens in neighboring EU countries and in the United States. Looking at data from the most recent national legislative elections in five countries, BiH citizens voted at a higher rate than their counterparts in Slovenia, Croatia, and the United States, but at a lower rate than, for example, Austrians.



According to the Swedish think tank International IDEA, 56 percent of eligible BiH voters cast ballots in the 2018 parliamentary elections.²⁴

²² MEASURE II, National Survey of Citizens’ Perceptions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020 Final Report, August 2021, pp. 25-26. <https://measurebih.com/national-survey-of-citizens-perceptions> (accessed September 5, 2022).

²³ OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Public Perceptions of Elections in BiH: Reforms Needed,” March 25, 2022. <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/514606> (accessed September 5, 2022).

²⁴ For comparative international voter turnout data, see <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout>. The assessment team relied on the International IDEA database because of its consistent methodology across countries. Precise voter turnout rates in BiH are difficult to calculate because hundreds of thousands of Bosnian citizens have emigrated but still remain on official voter rolls, inflating the denominator in voter turnout calculations and decreasing the official turnout percentage. Official CEC data from the 2018 elections, based on the official voter rolls, found a 53 percent turnout rate. International project implementers, Bosnian CSOs, and elected officials said in interviews that real voter turnout is higher than CEC statistics.

According to a poll fielded in December 2021 by NDI, 84 percent of BiH citizens said they would “certainly” or “probably” vote, while 14 percent said they would “certainly” or “probably” not vote. According to NDI, “Correlation between research data and voter turnout in the October 2022 general elections may be hard to predict, but there are perceptible shifts from previous NDI research that suggest the possibility of robust voter turnout, with 58 percent of respondents across all three main ethnic groups saying they will certainly vote.”²⁵

Of the 17 percent of NDI poll respondents who said they certainly would not vote, probably would not vote, or didn’t know, NDI noted, “Those least likely to vote cite futility, apathy, and distrust.” Among likely nonvoters, the most frequent explanations concerned dissatisfaction with candidates and the choices available to voters. Only 11 percent of nonvoters said they lacked information about candidates, and 9 percent cited distrust of the electoral system as a reason for not voting. The 2020 MEASURE II NSCP survey found that nonvoters did not vote in 2020 because they believed nothing could be changed by their vote (24 percent), there was no difference between candidates/parties (23 percent), or votes were being manipulated (22 percent).

Focus groups found that BiH citizens vote despite the broad distrust of the electoral process cited above. FGD participants said their reasons for voting include a sense of duty to the state and society they live in. Many stated that it is their right to vote so they exercise it. Some pointed out that voting is the way for them to prevent their vote from being stolen.²⁶ Many FGD participants said voting is a way to change things, and they stressed a desire for good governance and improving their life conditions, including strategic economic development and creation of new job opportunities.

The NDI poll found that citizens held similar reasons for voting: 62 percent said they believe it is their civic duty to vote; 47 percent vote to prevent their votes from being stolen or misused; and 31 percent vote to advocate for necessary changes in society. Fewer than 14 percent of voters said they vote out of “belief in what the political party I support stands for.”

LOCAL-LEVEL IMPROVEMENTS

POLLING STATION COMMITTEES

Given the problems with PSC composition, training, and fraud cited in assessment question 1, and the distrust of PSCs cited above, improvements at the PSC level could positively influence public trust. Key informants cited several steps in this area:

- **Professionalization.** Key informants said professionalizing PSCs could result in more honest commissions that fairly administer elections at the local level and gain public trust. This step could include both changes to the composition of PSCs—such as requiring the president and vice president of each PSC to be nonpolitical—and providing periodic additional training for either those top officers or all PSC members. Key informants said training should be organized through the CEC.

International organizations that work on electoral systems noted that some countries require that civil servants—such as teachers, administrators, or postal workers—are seconded to serve as PSC officers for election day. As officials would be appointed to PSCs on a recurring basis, professional capacity would increase. An additional step to build trust could be to assign PSC

²⁵ National Democratic Institute, “Bosnia and Herzegovina Poll,” May 13, 2022.

<https://www.ndi.org/publications/bosnia-and-herzegovina-poll>.

²⁶ One method of fraud that was discussed in interviews involves PSC members marking unused ballots after polls close, thereby casting votes on behalf of nonvoters.

officers to polling stations outside their home communities. Increased pay for PSC members was also cited as a potential step to increase professionalization.

- **Seat trading.** Election fraud is made easier when political parties can trade PSC seats to gain full control of a given PSC, thereby ensuring no official oversight of their PSC administration. The changes to the electoral law promulgated this summer by OHR are intended to combat this practice, but key informants were uncertain if those changes would be effective for the 2022 legislative elections, noting that the implementation time was too limited. They said such changes should be promulgated at least six months, and preferably 12 months, before election day.
- **Polling station committee resources.** As part of the SPPG activity, IFES is developing smartphone applications and an online manual to support PSC members on election day. Such initiatives can help PSCs administer elections and adjudicate disputes properly.

ELECTION OBSERVATION

Key informants said election observers can play an important role in detecting and reporting fraud, and they suggested ways in which the training, motivation, and effectiveness of observers could be improved. Key informants who work with civil society and political party observers said civil society organization (CSO) observers are generally trained adequately, but political party observers could benefit from training.

Political parties also need to find more observers in order to cover more polling stations, but they face a challenge in that paid observers tend to be more susceptible to fraud. Key informants said paid observers often seek to leave the polling station as soon as polls close, leaving fraud unchecked, and some can be bribed. (Unpaid observers are more likely to be motivated by idealism, rather than financial gain.)

“Parties usually lack the number of observers they need. They need observers who are motivated by more than money” – Implementer

According to the CEC, the 2022 elections were observed by some 60,000 accredited observers. Out of these, nearly 50,000 were from political parties.

An implementer and a CSO noted that increased use of CEC data could help parties and CSOs more effectively deploy observers. They said observer organizations could review data from past elections to identify stations where fraud likely occurred—e.g., evidence of excessively high turnout rates or skewed gender or age data compared to previous elections—and target those locations for observation. “You can compare it to previous voter behavior and population data and ask, ‘Why did people vote this way when they didn’t before?’” one key informant noted. Another key informant said that the CEC itself used to send personnel to problematic polling stations, but it had discontinued the practice. Key informants added that some element of secrecy in the deployment of observers is essential.

The SPPG has implemented some initiatives to support election observers, such as an application for observers to report fraud and training for party observers. Key informants suggested additional steps to support observers, such as a hotline to the CEC to report fraud as it is in progress.

TECHNOLOGY

Key informants suggested several technological improvements at the local level that could increase trust in elections, but they cautioned that technology is not a panacea and could bring its own set of

problems. Because of this, some experts suggested that technology be tried first on a trial basis and the results reviewed to determine if full-scale implementation is warranted. “You could bring in a hundred machines somewhere and see if it works,” one international election expert said.

One technical improvement suggested is the use of **ballot scanners** in polling stations. Voters would mark a paper ballot, which would preserve an audit trail, and place the ballot into a scanner for electronic tabulation. This would address the problem of PSCs miscounting ballots. However, some key informants cautioned that electronic tabulation would require secure, reliable internet connections, which one expert said are not available at 2,500 polling stations out of roughly 6,000 nationwide. One expert suggested that vote tallies be posted at each polling station and communicated by telephone, rather than via the internet. Citizens in focus groups said the introduction of electronic voting would increase trust in the electoral system and would increase voter turnout.

Another such improvement would be **biometric electronic voter identification**, which would address the problem of voter impersonation or fraud involving deceased persons. Implementers said that the CEC already has improved its voter registration software, so electronic identification could be feasible. Challenges include the question of who would own the biometric data (international examples show cases of technology companies claiming ownership of the data), the aforementioned concern about internet connectivity, and a link to the national database. Participants in FGDs said fingerprint voter identification could increase trust in the electoral system.

A final technological improvement at the PSC level could be **surveillance cameras** that would record all activity at a polling station on election day. While feasible, some experts expressed concerns over ballot secrecy being compromised, and they noted that fraud could be committed outside the view of the cameras. One solution could be for the president and vice president of a PSC to wear body cameras that would record their activities and interactions. Footage could be included in the sensitive materials, to be made available where investigation is required. Use of cameras would require training for election officials.

The EU’s project foresaw the introduction of three models of technological advancements that were supposed be piloted at the 2020 elections: voting machines similar to those used in United States, scanners, and tablets that would retain biometrics for voter identification but would be used for vote tabulation too. These advancements were never piloted due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and will be piloted pending the decision of the CEC at an extraordinary local election or local community elections.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION COMMISSIONS

As noted above in the assessment question I discussion, key informants stated that MECs do not adequately explain to citizens how the voting process works and the importance of elections in general. Voter education was cited as a shortcoming, with key informants viewing older voters in particular as the least likely to understand the voting process. More generally, a broad range of respondents—from implementers, civil society, and the media—said a civic educational campaign is needed to explain the multiple layers of government in BiH, their distinctive roles, and the accountability of politicians to voters. Participants in FGDs said increased voter education would increase trust in the electoral system. According to election law, the CEC can direct MECs to provide voters with necessary information about elections.

NATIONAL-LEVEL IMPROVEMENTS

While the assessment question specifically directed the AT to focus its attention on improvements at the local level, the desk review and interviews identified several areas at the national level that could influence public trust and voter behavior. These are discussed here briefly.

- **Candidate quality.** Both public opinion surveys and this assessment’s focus groups found that nonvoters are dissatisfied with the candidates and the choices available to them. FGD participants said that “new candidates,” “better candidates,” and candidates who work in the field would motivate them to vote. They said positive examples of change would help persuade nonvoters that elections are an opportunity to vote for change. These findings suggest that voter turnout could be improved by helping new faces to run for office and by encouraging candidates to refine a message of change and communicate it effectively.
- **Sanctions for electoral fraud.** Key informants and focus groups observed that voters would have greater trust in the electoral process if cases of fraud were more frequently prosecuted and violators sanctioned. These findings suggest that support to the CEC, prosecutors, and judges on how to recognize and prosecute election fraud could help increase both trust and turnout. One CSO suggested that a team of trained prosecutors be available on election day to respond to fraud reports. The OSCE has a project underway working with the courts and police on electoral dispute resolution.

“If people get caught, they will stop stealing elections. But they don’t end up being prosecuted in a trial before a judge.” – International expert

- **More accurate voter registry.** The desk review and focus groups found that some distrust of the election process is due to concerns about the accuracy of the voter registry. The official voter rolls contain names that exceed the number of adults living in BiH, by hundreds of thousands; one expert calculated this number to be more than 370,000.²⁷ While some excess is due to emigration (almost 102,000 registered diaspora voters), there are concerns among experts and citizens that the names of deceased individuals remain on the rolls, providing an opportunity for fraud.
- **Get out the vote.** As noted at the beginning of this section, voter turnout in BiH compares favorably to neighboring EU countries and to the United States. If USAID were to contemplate a get-out-the-vote campaign, key informants suggested that it target the reasons that BiH citizens cite for voting, most notably civic duty and the opportunity for change.

The AT found no consensus on whether two other areas would increase public trust or voter behavior. First, key informants were divided on whether increasing awareness of parties’ campaign platforms would improve trust or turnout. While some key informants said such initiatives, like creating a web portal where voters could compare party platforms and pre-election promises, would raise voter awareness, the AT did not find evidence that this would increase trust in the election process or voter turnout. Some FGD participants said they believe that it would help when making voting decisions, while others believe that it would not help because few people visit platforms of this type. Polling data showed that increasing awareness of party platforms would have a limited effect on turnout; of nonvoters surveyed in one poll, only 6 percent said they do not vote because they do not know which candidate to vote for, and only 5 percent said they do not follow politics.²⁸

²⁷ Majda Ruge, “The Voting Dead,” European Council on Foreign Relations.

²⁸ National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, “What Matters to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Citizens?” Sarajevo: NDI, February 2022, p. 12.

“I don’t think the issue is citizens being informed; it’s whether voters believe they have options being offered” – CSO official

The team also received mixed responses on whether increased public opinion polling would influence public trust and voter behavior. Key informants said polling could help parties better understand how to reach voters who are receptive to their messages, enabling moderate parties to understand where they should focus campaign resources. However, key informants were skeptical that increased campaign polling would uncover silent support for moderate parties, leading more voters to support such parties in the belief that those parties could win an election. Furthermore, key informants cautioned that public opinion polling is “quite expensive and time-intensive.”

Several other changes that do not require modification of the legal framework have recently been introduced to the election process. Some of these have been mentioned above, such as the introduction of the *e-lzbori* portal and the stamping and signing of ballots, while others include turning voting booths toward PSC members (to prevent ballot swapping, family voting, photographs, and so on), implementing a mechanism to prevent voting assistance abuse (voters will now have to submit proof of disability), keeping ballots in a locked room at polling stations and under police surveillance, making lists of PSC members with clearly denoted party affiliation publicly available, and providing continuous training with online training platform for election officials.²⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Voter turnout in BiH compares favorably to other countries in the region, despite severe distrust in the election process. At the local level, the lack of trust centers on polling station activities. Improvements in the composition, professionalism, and operation of PSCs are most likely to influence public trust at the local level. Such interventions could include professionalization of PSC leadership, increased training for PSC members, and additional resources for PSCs to carry out their election day duties in accordance with electoral law.

Support for election observation, such as training of party observers and identification of polling stations where fraud is most likely, would help deter fraud and increase trust. Technological improvements such as ballot scanners, biometric identification, and surveillance cameras could increase trust, but challenges like limited internet connectivity suggest that an initial pilot program may be warranted before a full nationwide rollout. Voter education could be supported at the MEC level.

While USAID is specifically looking at improvements at the local level, there are several national-level interventions that could improve voter trust and turnout. These include youth leadership and candidate training programs, which could help give BiH citizens alternatives to established parties; support for prosecution of electoral fraud; and improvements to the voter registry that would ensure that deceased voters are removed from the rolls. While voter turnout is above 50 percent, a get-out-the-vote campaign would be most effective by targeting civic duty and the potential for change as its key themes.

²⁹ Pod Lupom. “Less Known—What Novelities and Improvements are in for the 2022 General Election?” <https://podlupom.org/press-kutak/vijesti/manje-poznati-koji-noviteti-i-unapredenja-nas-ocekuju-za-opce-izbore-2022-godine/>

ASSESSMENT QUESTION 2A

What technical improvements to election administration at the local level may counter intimidation and control by political parties and/or have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions?

INTIMIDATION AND CONTROL BY POLITICAL PARTIES

POLITICAL PRESSURE

Key informants and focus group participants said some BiH voters face real pressure to vote for certain parties. Most notably, employees may be pressured by their employer to vote for the employer's preferred party. In the case of employees in the public sector or of state-owned enterprises, support for a ruling party may be an explicit condition of employment. In some cases, key informants said, an employee may be expected to have a set number of family members and friends also vote for that party. Key informants said this practice is particularly prevalent in small towns where there's little opportunity and where people know one another and can track who voted. They said such voters are expected to photograph their ballot to prove they voted for the recommended party.

Key informants also reported that similar pressure can be applied to employees of private-sector companies owned by candidates or party leaders. FGD participants, however, did not share this view and said they are not afraid of parties learning how they voted.

“I have no reason to be afraid. Only public-sector employees need to be afraid.”
—Citizen participant in FGD

There was consensus among key informants that ethnic-based parties ramp up ethnic tensions before elections, then use fear of other ethnic groups to mobilize their own ethnic group to vote for them. Key informants said frequent elections in BiH enable those parties to amplify tensions every two years.

POLLING STATION TACTICS

The AT found that parties also intimidate voters in the polling station. As noted above, manipulation of the selection process for PSCs often leads to a single party from a single ethnic group controlling all of the seats on a PSC. An OSCE poll found that 22 percent of BiH voters reported being told for whom to vote by a PSC member.

Focus group participants said it is easy for party members to monitor who has voted and to pressure citizens who have not yet voted, which they found particularly threatening in small communities. Some participants described PSC members, after the polls closed and the votes were tabulated, attempting to identify which individuals in a small community might have voted against their parties. They added that some PSC members will hand voters a completed ballot to cast.

Key informants said single-party PSCs intimidate observers by telling them to leave the polling station at closing time, before the votes are tallied. They said tactics included threatening observers, misinforming them about their duties, or bribing them, which key informants considered to be particularly effective with observers who were paid for their time and less motivated than volunteers.

ABUSE OF STATE RESOURCES

Key informants said abuse of state resources, whereby a ruling party increases public spending in a community to gain votes, is a common tactic for parties to try to maintain control over the electorate. For example, public procurement in 2017 was 2.17 billion convertible marks; that rose to 3.14 billion convertible marks in 2018, an election year.³⁰ In addition to “pork-barrel” spending, key informants said ruling parties often increase employment in an election year, gaining the favor of new employees and their families. Even some local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are dependent on local government spending, giving ruling parties leverage over their members and employees. Transparency International, a partner of IFES, has led efforts to address abuse of state resources by working with the CEC and by advocating for changes in election law to address the issue, but an expert key informant said the issue was only “vaguely addressed” in the recent OHR amendments.

COUNTERING PARTY CONTROL

Key informants and one focus group said that fixing problems with PSCs, identified above, would be an effective way to reduce party intimidation and control. The amendments to election law promulgated by the OHR may have this effect by ensuring multiparty PSCs, but key informants said it is too early to judge their effect.

Beyond these changes, professionalizing PSCs was identified as an improvement that could reduce party control; in particular, MEC members were enthusiastic about this step. One international project implementer said this could help build a social norm and culture around the professional operation of PSCs, particularly if carried out outside of election periods when tensions are lower. Requiring at least one PSC member, perhaps the president, to be a trained professional could help build a professional culture among PSCs, several key informants said.

Key informants and focus group participants said party control and intimidation could be countered by reinforcing sanctions for election fraud, particularly by increasing the likelihood that fraud would be identified and prosecuted. They suggested initiating a public information campaign to publicize what actions are prohibited and what penalties they carry, as well as supporting prosecutors and judges to adjudicate such cases. They added that improved training and support for observers, both from civil society and from political parties, could help observers serve as a stronger check on parties seeking to intimidate or control voters.

CONSTRUCTIVE IMPACT ON ETHNIC TENSIONS

Most key informants and FGD participants saw no direct connection between technical improvements in local election administration and ethnic tensions. They said ethnic tensions would be best addressed at the national level.

However, some respondents did suggest an indirect link between election administration and ethnic tension, insofar as several major parties represent one ethnic group and those parties ramp up ethnic tensions before elections to influence members of their ethnic group to vote for them. In this regard, the steps identified above to counter party control could also have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions, as would approaches identified in assessment question 2 to ensure ethnic balance in PSCs by eliminating the trading of seats.

³⁰ Data from the Agency for Public Procurement. <https://www.javnenabavke.gov.ba/bs-Latn-BA/reports> (accessed September 8, 2022).

“It has less to do with administration and more to do with party manipulation: selling seats on the PSCs, trading seats, vote buying, forcing people who owe their jobs to patronage to vote a certain way. There is a case to be made that increased professionalization at the local election level could supersede the ethnic influence.” – International official

Key informants also suggested another indirect link between fairer elections and reduced ethnic tensions: diminishing the control of ethnic-based parties over the election process, which could provide an opportunity for multiethnic parties to come to power.

CONCLUSIONS

Addressing problems with PSCs, improving enforcement of sanctions, and broadening the use of election observers could reduce control and intimidation by political parties. Ensuring that PSC members come from multiple parties would help eliminate intimidation by PSCs, such as telling voters how to vote and handing them completed ballots to cast, but it would not eliminate intimidation outside the polling station, such as employer coercion.

Freer and fairer elections might give multiethnic parties a better chance to win elections, thereby reducing the influence of incumbent parties and ethnically-based parties that ramp up ethnic tensions before elections. Because several incumbent parties are mono-ethnic and promote ethnic tensions, technical improvements to election administration might indirectly have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions. However, technical improvements in election administration are unlikely to reduce ethnic tensions directly.

While ethnic tension has little to do with election administration, frequent elections provide opportunities for parties to increase ethnic tensions by ramping up fear. Less frequent elections could have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions. At this moment, off-cycle local elections are held every four years, two years apart from general elections. Synchronizing general and local elections would result in electoral campaigns once every four years.

ASSESSMENT QUESTION 2B

What approaches would encourage voter participation and collective engagement by women and youth?

VOTER PARTICIPATION

CEC DATA, 2020 LOCAL ELECTIONS			
Category	Electorate	Voted	Turnout (%)
Total	3,384,244	1,705,520	50%
Total >=30	2,825,068	1,417,879	50%
Total <30	559,176	287,641	51%
Male	1,687,689	863,934	51%
Male >=30	1,400,297	714,599	51%
Male <30	287,392	149,335	52%
Female	1,696,555	841,586	50%
Female >=30	1,424,771	703,280	49%
Female <30	271,784	138,306	51%

According to statistics from the CEC, BiH women vote at the same rate as men, and BiH youth vote at the same rate as older adults. In the 2020 local elections, overall voter turnout was 50 percent. The CEC provided the following breakdown:

- Women: 50 percent
- Men: 51 percent
- Youth, ages 18–29: 51 percent
- Adults, age 30 and older: 50 percent

OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT

While BiH women vote at the same rate as men, statistical evidence and interviews show that they are not as engaged politically as men. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), women hold 21 percent of seats in the state parliament, below the 26 percent European average and below the quota of 40 percent.³¹ More broadly, women make up 27 percent of all elected officials, despite being 42 percent of candidates.

The 2021 SPPG evaluation concludes that there are several primary reasons that women are less engaged: “The main obstacles to enhancing political leadership among women are traditional gender roles, female politicians’ exposure to hate speech and verbal attacks, and lack of motivation to enter politics.”³² That evaluation also concluded that a lack of democracy in political parties is an obstacle to women’s political engagement.

Key informants and focus groups identified more detailed obstacles to women’s engagement.³³ The obstacles cited by multiple sources were:

- **“Time poverty.”** In addition to their work outside the home, BiH women are expected to take on the primary responsibilities for housework and childcare, leaving little time and energy for political activities. A lack of social services, like nurseries and preschools, that would facilitate mothers’ engagement outside the home contributes to this problem.³⁴
- **Lack of family support** for political or civic engagement, particularly in rural areas, due to stereotypical beliefs about women’s roles.
- **Personal attacks against women** who are involved in politics or otherwise visible and active in the public sphere. “Why would a woman run?” one international program implementer asked. “She will be met with sexism, character assassination, and bullying. And not just her, but her family as well.” The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) found that “60 percent of women politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced some form of violence during their time in politics, including verbal abuse, online threats, and sexual harassment. Often, this is a

³¹ Adnan Kadribašić et al., *Baseline Study on Barriers to Political Participation of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: UN Women and UNDP, 2020), p. 11.

³² USAID Bosnia and Herzegovina Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity (MEASURE II), *Midterm Performance Evaluation: Supporting Political Pluralism and Good Governance Processes (SPPG) in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: MEASURE II, September 2021), p. 18.

³³ For a detailed discussion of the obstacles to women’s engagement, see *ibid.*

³⁴ USAID Bosnia and Herzegovina Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity, *Brief Gender Assessment of the Local Governance Level*, May 2022, pp. 18–19.

deliberate attempt to silence women who challenge the established brand of politics and bring new perspectives to the table.”³⁵

- **Political culture.** Both BiH men and women view men as better candidates than women, making women less electable due to this prejudice.
- **Lack of political party support.** Political parties lack internal democracy and do not develop women candidates, largely due to male leaders who do not value women in leadership roles, thereby discouraging women’s engagement at the grassroots level. Women candidates, especially in rural areas, experience lack of support such as adequate training or mentorship.
- **Lack of media coverage** for women and insufficient opportunities for communication for women who try to become engaged.
- **Lack of campaign financing** from political parties. “Women do not receive noteworthy financial support in their election campaigns, with the funds allocated for campaigning most often going to their male colleagues,” said an international implementer.
- **Cultural stereotypes.** Women are impeded by stereotypic roles. Local governments that do support women civic activism tend to do so in areas that are traditionally seen as female domains, such as preservation of old crafts, knitting, or cooking. In some towns in BiH, not a single CSO is involved in the promotion of women’s human rights.³⁶

APPROACHES TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT

Key informants and focus groups identified several approaches to encourage women’s engagement. Approaches cited by multiple sources were:

- **Training of women to be leaders and to become both politically active and engaged in civic activism.** “We need to develop leadership skills, to build a critical mass of women and help them develop capacity,” one international implementer said. Respondents emphasized that men need to be part of such an educational effort, to help them understand the benefits of women being engaged and moving into leadership roles. “Conferences and workshops should be organized to target the most influential men in political parties, the ones that are in charge of decision-making processes,” a female elected official said. “They are the ones that should be made aware of why it is important to have more women in various positions.”
- **Coaching and mentoring within political parties.** Key informants said that this approach needs to include work with political parties on how to integrate women into party operations and leadership and to develop internal mentorship programs with more experienced women. “We need to work with the parties, so they see the benefits of women as leaders,” one international implementer said. “We have to get parties to the point they see more women and young people as part of a winning strategy. So many outside of politics would run if there were the right circumstances.” Suggested approaches include positioning women candidates as fresh, honest leaders to a public tired of the same old corrupt politicians. Similarly, parties that promote women can be presented as modern and pro-European. Support to political parties in this area

³⁵ Edita Miftari, *Violence Against Women in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: Westminster Foundation for Democracy, May 2019), p. 5.

³⁶ Adnan Kadribašić et al., *Baseline Study on Barriers to Political Participation of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: UN Women and UNDP, 2020).

could be contingent upon their providing women with sufficient resources, like media exposure and financial support, to conduct successful campaigns.

- **Education campaigns for society at large.** Key informants suggested that changing laws on hate speech could reduce personal attacks on women and encourage more to run for office and that a public campaign encouraging voting for women candidates was needed.
- **Identifying and supporting women’s organizations,** both grassroots (such as Women of Krušćica that started as an environmental initiative) and local women’s associations that have the potential to engage in activities that address gender equality and the public and political life of women, with focus on the local context and communities. In cases where such initiatives do not exist, support could be directed toward youth initiatives that are interested in these topics and connecting them to women’s rights organizations.

According to key informants, most political parties have not engaged meaningfully to integrate women; however, there are differences among political parties. Newly formed political parties and those on the left side of the political spectrum are more likely to pay attention to women representation than older, well-established parties and those on the right side of the spectrum. Parties that achieved some success in this area did so mainly by engaging women in their youth forums, thus creating early in their lives a habit of political engagement as well as a sense of belonging to a political party.

The 2021 SPPG evaluation concluded that the ALPI program, implemented by CEPPS under the SPPG activity, was an effective initiative to improve political leadership among young women (as well as young men). CEPPS has created an ALPI Women’s Network to build on this success. That evaluation also concluded that training for women candidates contributes to leadership skills.³⁷

OTHER DONOR PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT

WFD supports women’s political leadership in BiH as part of its six-country Western Balkans Democracy Initiative. Its More than a Quota program in BiH directly supports women politicians, with the objective of encouraging them to advance in their parties and run for office. The WFD initiative includes a network of women municipal councilors and a mentoring program that pairs aspiring women politicians from eight parties with established women leaders. WFD is also working with party leaders to establish a code of conduct aimed at reducing harassment of women politicians.

The UNDP, in cooperation with UN Women, implemented the Women in Elections Project from December 2017 to February 2022, with funding from the Swedish government. Among the results of the UNDP project were the creation of the Women Forum for Development, a network for cooperation among women leaders, and leadership training for women in ten municipalities. A UNDP official said the Forum is unlikely to continue without outside support.

OBSTACLES TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The SPPG evaluation concluded that there are several obstacles to engagement by youth. These include passivity and apathy of BiH youth, lack of education and experience, manipulation by political parties, and selfish motives for entering the political arena. Lack of democracy within political parties is a hindrance to political leadership among both women and youth. A 2020 study found that only 7 percent of Bosnian youth were engaged in “social-political activism,” including 3 percent who are

³⁷ SPPG Evaluation, p. 18.

active in a political party. The authors concluded, “Such low percentages of youth engagement in political activities indicate very poor identification with the existing political system, institutions, and patterns of political activity, marginalization of the needs of young people in public policies, but also the lack of perception that they can change with their own action.”³⁸

Key informants and focus groups said that a lack of critical thinking among youth results in a mindset that leads them to follow authority. Key informants said young people who do not question authority are most likely to advance within political parties, as leaders favor young members who “mirror” the leaders. While young people are on party candidate lists, they are not often elected, key informants said. According to participants of FGDs held with BiH citizens in Stolac, young people who become engaged do so out of hope that this will help them get a job. These participants said youth activism is low, young people are focused on leaving the country, and they show no desire to fight for a better society.

APPROACHES TO ENCOURAGE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Key informants and focus groups most frequently said that political parties need to provide their young members with coaching and mentorship to encourage them to continue in politics and to rise through the ranks of their parties. According to participants of FGDs held with BiH citizens, young people are often held back and not given opportunities because older people are unwilling to relinquish their positions.

More broadly, respondents said civic education is an important element in helping young people to understand the political system and democracy. They said it is important to reach youth where they are—i.e., in schools, universities and youth clubs—both through academic curricula and outside of class, by developing a democratic culture in schools. Key informants said young people are more likely to embrace practical, hands-on activities, such as youth parliaments. Peer-to-peer education was mentioned by a key informant as an effective way of reaching young people, while introducing community work was proposed as an effective way to instill a sense of activism in them.

As noted above, the SPPG evaluation concluded that ALPI has effectively improved the leadership skills of youth who participate, with participants noting the activity goes beyond lectures, requiring them to work together between training modules with individuals from different parties and ethnic groups to cooperatively research and draft policy papers on topics of their choosing. ALPI alumni have won elections and have moved up within their parties, according to International Republican Institute (IRI) officials and the 2021 SPPG midterm performance evaluation.³⁹

Unlike many countries that show a gap between turnout among young people and older adults, BiH youth vote at the same rate as older adults. Nevertheless, key informants suggested a few approaches for any get-out-the-vote campaign that would target youth. They said youth are reached most effectively through social media, and campaigns should be designed so they can be read on a smartphone. Themes that use irony and humor are particularly effective with youth, key informants said.

³⁸ Amer Osmić et al., *Youth in the Statutes of Political Subjects in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: Academy for Women, July 2020), p. 13.

³⁹ Amer Osmić et al., *Youth in the Statutes of Political Subjects in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: Academy for Women, July 2020), p. 13.

OTHER DONOR PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In cooperation with the Czech NGO Agora and the AEO, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in BiH is currently supporting a project aimed at youth activism and participation in public life. The project is implemented under the transition promotion program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, which is dedicated to the promotion of human rights. It includes three dimensions and targets youth, teachers, and institutions.

The first dimension, targeting young people, focuses on first-time voters and encourages them to take part in elections. Youth activism is encouraged through small grants awarded to students to implement micro-projects in their communities, such as clean-up or environmental projects. These projects are intended to promote active youth participation in their communities, and they also help young people develop various skills, such as designing and implementing projects. The second dimension, targeting teachers, involves training of trainers. It includes the development of a teachers manual that lists possible activities and ideas on how to incorporate civic participation topics into classroom teaching. The third dimension, targeting institutions such as representatives of the ministries of education, aims to provide recommendations and thus promote the need to bring materials on democratic systems and processes into the curricula.

The Czech Embassy is also supporting another election-related media project, which is focused on creating informative podcasts and video interviews to inform broader audiences and address different election-related issues.

CONCLUSIONS

Because women and young adults vote at the same rate as men and older adults, there is no need for an activity aimed specifically at women and youth to increase their voter participation. However, women are underrepresented in elective office. While many challenges facing women are societal, programs that encourage women's leadership have proven effective in increasing political engagement and accomplishment. The two most effective approaches are (1) education for women on political leadership and civic activism and (2) support for political parties to promote, coach, mentor, and integrate women in leadership activities.

Political engagement by youth, broadly speaking, could be encouraged through civic education campaigns working through schools, universities, and social clubs. Hands-on activities, such as youth parliaments, can complement curricula. More targeted approaches could include work with political parties to help them recruit, mentor, and promote young members and training programs for young leaders. The USAID-funded ALPI program has demonstrated success in helping young leaders get elected and advance in their political parties, including its use of peer-to-peer training and mentoring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION 1: CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE CEC

USAID should consider continuing support to the CEC, with a particular focus on the CEC's ability to communicate with the public. Public outreach and voter education across a range of stakeholder groups and sectors are a vital part of the creation of checks and balances within the system, educating the public about their rights and the standards to which electoral officials should be held.

RECOMMENDATION 2: IMPROVE VOTER OUTREACH

USAID should consider working with the CEC, MECs, and/or the AEO to improve their outreach and voter education activities, with the overall aim of advancing public perception of their work and increasing the professionalism of their membership. Outreach and voter education should focus on the publication of electoral procedures and rules, informing the public of the standards they should be upholding.

RECOMMENDATION 3: PILOT INITIATIVES FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

USAID should consider providing funding for pilot initiatives to explore the use of technology to improve public trust in the local election process. Technology could be adopted in two ways: (1) through the use of closed-circuit television technology in polling stations, with due consideration to the preservation of the secrecy of the ballot, or (2) through the use of bodycams by PSC members. All recordings would be included in the sensitive materials for polling day and would be used should anomalies arise. Pilot programs relating to the use of paper ballot scanners and biometric voter data and identification scanners could also be considered to improve public trust in the local election process. The EU plans to pilot technological advancements, which were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, at an extraordinary local election or local community elections.

RECOMMENDATION 4: SUPPORT THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PSC STAFF

USAID should consider developing a policy with the CEC for the professionalization of PSC staff, to be deployed nationally. Staff should be appointed from an identified class of existing civil servants, such as teachers or local level officials and administrators, to be temporarily seconded to PSCs for the conduct of voting and counting. Seconded staff would be rostered and would be repeatedly deployed for successive elections, but they would revert to their normal employment outside of electoral events. A pilot program could test a number of implementation models, addressing secondment duration, cost, and compensation. USAID should establish a training program for seconded civil servants who would serve as PSC officials. Training could be provided in partnership with a national tertiary education facility, with progressive levels of certification provided for advanced study, increasing the level of professionalism within the sector.

USAID should consider developing a policy and pilot program to rotate PSC staff within regional areas for each electoral event, and encourage the appointment of multiethnic PSCs, where possible. Staff would only be allowed to serve in PSCs outside of their local area. The intention of the program is to disassociate PSC staff from local political dynamics, decrease the likelihood of political party capture, and increase favorable perception of PSC impartiality and professionalism.

RECOMMENDATION 5: FUND A SYSTEM FOR THE REGISTRY OFFICE TO SHARE ACCURATE DATA WITH THE CEC

USAID should consider funding a system that automatically shares accurate Registry Office data with the CEC in order to develop a system in which the voter registry accurately reflects population figures. The creation of an information sharing system would utilize updated databases, reducing costs and improving broader administrative systems.

RECOMMENDATION 6: TRAIN JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS ON ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

USAID should consider establishing a training program for prosecutors and judges that educates them in the technical specifics of election law, in order to develop their ability to recognize and investigate cases of fraud and successfully prosecute those crimes. The aim of this training would be to increase the prosecution rate of electoral offences, supporting the rule of law and protection of the integrity of electoral standards.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTICIPATION

RECOMMENDATION 7: SUPPORT TRAINING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTY ELECTION OBSERVERS

USAID should consider supporting training for political party and civil society election observers, particularly training of trainer programs, in order to promote the professional standards required from observation groups and to ensure that observers receive adequate training. Improved training could increase capacity to accurately report fraud and increase the integrity of the process.

RECOMMENDATION 8: SUPPORT PROJECTS AND LEGACY BODIES THAT PROMOTE WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT

USAID should consider providing support to existing donor projects, such as WFD's More Than a Quota program, and legacy bodies, such as the Women Forum for Development established by UNDP, that encourage women's political engagement and leadership. While women vote at a similar rate to men, there is a clear distinction in women's political participation. Support should be provided to political parties to support, coach, mentor, and integrate women in activities in leadership. USAID should continue to support the ALPI program, which is effective in promoting leadership by young women (and men). USAID should also support both grassroots women's organizations and other local women's associations that have the potential to promote women's engagement.

RECOMMENDATION 9: SUPPORT YOUTH PARTICIPATION THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION AND ALPI

USAID should consider support for civic education for youth through school-based programs, including initiatives such as instruction on political engagement and governance, conducting mock parliaments, developing of manifestos, and crafting statutes that declare a school's commitment to democracy. USAID should consider continuing to support ALPI, expanding its operations, promoting connections between youth politicians and CSO activists, and providing funding to an ALPI alumni group. USAID should also consider providing support to political parties for activities that promote, coach, mentor, and integrate youth into their leadership structures.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Scope of Work

Annex 2: Detailed Methodology

Annex 3: List of reviewed documentation

Annex 4: Data Collection Instruments

ANNEX I: SCOPE OF WORK

INTRODUCTION

USAID expects to start a new elections and political processes (EPP) activity by September 2023. The programming will contribute to the Country Development Cooperation Strategy through (1) Intermediate Result 1.1 Impact of inclusive citizen engagement improved and/or (2) Intermediate Result 2.1 Social cohesion strengthened. USAID seeks to influence voter behavior by addressing the election administration factors that prevent or enable civic participation and engagement. An informed, targeted intervention is necessary to accommodate a limited period of performance and estimated budget constraints. Public faith in elections is not high. Confidence in adequate representation and accurate vote count is low. Generally, the population sees elections as a means for political elites and political parties based on ethnicity to maintain power.

This assessment will explore EPP in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and inform design and implementation of the new activity. More specifically, the assessment will provide an analysis of how to best address voter apathy and distrust by improving the integrity of the BiH elections through targeted technical assistance at the local level.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The current BiH political system rewards extreme ethno-nationalist and divisive narratives, perpetuating the ruling position of the same political elites since the end of the war. Those political elites continue to exacerbate inter-ethnic relations by instilling fear and division and maintaining the status quo. To maintain their position of power, the ruling parties not only encourage and produce ethnic division, but also maintain control over the mainstream media. Furthermore, much of their control is achieved through influencing BiH elections. The 2018 general elections were characterized by democratic deficiencies ranging from fraudulent absentee voter registration schemes to a lack of confidence in the impartiality of all levels of the election administration, largely due to suspected commissioner political and ethnic biases.⁴⁰ After the general elections, BiH continued to struggle with the formation of a government, challenged at the Federation of BiH level by controversy over electoral reform and at the state level by conflict over potential North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession.

As highlighted in the report produced by the election-monitoring coalition *Pod Lupom* (Under the Magnifying Glass), the run-up to the 2020 local elections process was characterized by the abuse of by-mail voting (more than 5,000 citizens were victims of identity theft and had their votes cast by others); abuse of public resources for campaign purposes (including the engagement of civil servants in the campaign); and trading positions in local polling station committees, which is used to circumvent the regulations. Furthermore, a total of 24 local election commissions (municipal and city) documented violations of election deadlines, which did not result in any consequences.⁴¹

As BiH approaches new general elections in October 2022, political tensions are intensifying. Croat and Serb constituencies have threatened to boycott the elections if progress on long-overdue

⁴⁰ Freedom House 2020 Country Report for BiH, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2019>

⁴¹ Lokalni izbori u BiH, Finalni izvještaj o građanskom nestranačkom posmatranju lokalnih izbora. mart 2021. available at: <https://podlupom.org/biblioteka/izvjestaji-o-posmatranju-izbora/lokalni-izbori-2020-finalni-izvjestaj-o-gradjanskom-nestranačkom-posmatranju-lokalnih-izbora/>

electoral reforms stalled. The United States and European Union (EU) are working with BiH officials to resolve the political crisis and draft necessary but disputed electoral reforms to tackle corruption and discrimination prior to the elections. Difficulties associated with the tripartite presidential structure and with Republika Srpska efforts to seize state-level authorities have distracted from electoral, economic, and judicial reforms needed to advance EU accession efforts. Political tensions that highlight the vulnerabilities of the BiH joint governance structure present a particular threat in the current context, characterized by regional and global crises of democracy, growing nationalism and authoritarianism. Furthermore, pervasive corruption deeply intertwined with the ruling political parties' structures remains the main hindrance to social, economic, and political development and progress towards EU accession. Moreover, endemic corruption manifests itself in different forms in BiH, ranging from undue political influence and interference, clientelism and patronage, bribery, to abuse of public office⁴². In 2021, BiH ranked 110th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.⁴³ 2020 and 2021 USAID/BiH-supported national surveys identify corruption as one of the main drivers of emigration from BiH.

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE, QUESTIONS, DESIGN, AND LIMITATIONS

The main purpose of this assessment is to investigate EPP in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in order to inform design and implementation of a new activity. More specifically, USAID requested an analysis of how to best address voter apathy and distrust by improving the integrity of the 2024 and 2026 BiH elections through targeted technical assistance at the local level.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

The assessment team will address the following questions:

Q1. What gaps or obstacles exist for transparent and accountable election administration at the local level?

Q2. What types of improvements to the technical conduct of elections at the local level could influence public trust and voter behavior?

Q2A. What technical improvements to election administration at the local level may counter intimidation and control by political parties, and/or have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions?

Q2B. What approaches would encourage voter participation and collective engagement by women and youth?

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The assessment team will employ a mixed-method approach and triangulate data to conduct the Assessment of Elections and Political Processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Technical Conduct of Elections and Voter Behavior Change, utilizing the following data sources:

- I. **Secondary documentation relevant to effectiveness of current practices and new developments in terms of electoral practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the broader**

⁴² Lee-Jones, K., Chêne, Korajlic, I. (2018). Bosnia and Herzegovina: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption. U4 Helpdesk Answer, available at: <https://beta.u4.no/publications/bosnia-and-herzegovina-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf>

⁴³ Transparency international. 2021. CPI 2021: Eastern Europe & Central Asia, available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/bih>

region; viable electoral reforms to support democratic processes; international electoral standards; strengthening public confidence in elections; women and youth engagement and participation; theory and research on social and behavioral change in general and in the context of elections; research reports and other documents developed by relevant government institutions, international organizations, or CSOs

2. **Secondary survey data** will include data from the MEASURE II National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions (NSCP), National Youth Survey (NYS), and other relevant available survey data.
3. **Key informant interviews (KIIs)** with representatives of government institutions/bodies involved in and responsible for regulating and supervising the election process such as Central Election Commission (CEC) BiH; relevant international organizations involved in electoral reforms or election monitoring; donor organizations; CSO focusing on elections; journalists; and electoral experts. The full list of key informants (without identifying information) and draft KII guides will be presented in the assessment work plan and subject to USAID/BiH comments.
4. **Focus groups (FGs)** with BiH citizens (potential voters), local councilors, local election board members (polling station committee members and municipal elections commissions), SPPG beneficiaries (ALPI members and other trainees) and CSO representatives. The full list of FGs and the draft FG guide(s) will be presented in the assessment work plan and subject to USAID/BiH comments.

Exhibit I presents the assessment matrix outlining the methodology to be employed to address each assessment question. The assessment team will start the assessment by conducting a desk review. This study will investigate current donor practices, new EPP developments in BiH and the broader region, viable improvements to the technical conduct of elections at the local level, and methods for influencing voter confidence. The team will then conduct KIIs with representatives of government institutions involved in the conduct of elections in BiH (both at the national and local levels), electoral experts, international organizations, and donors and implementers working on electoral reforms to obtain in-depth knowledge learned through implementation. The team will also conduct FGs with CSOs, polling station committees, municipal election commissions, SPPG beneficiaries (ALPI members and other trainees), while it will hire an external agency to conduct FGs with BiH citizens. In addition, it will code KII and FG transcripts and meeting notes and compare data from all sources to further explore areas of convergence and divergence in order to ensure that the assessment findings, conclusions, and recommendations are high-quality, valid, credible, and reliable.

EXHIBIT I. ASSESSMENT MATRIX

ASSESSMENT QUESTION (AQ)	DATA SOURCES/DATA COLLECTION METHODS	RESEARCH DESIGN
<p>Q1. What gaps or obstacles exist for transparent and accountable election administration at the local level?</p>	<p>Secondary documentation, including from BiH government institutions/bodies, international organizations and international electoral standards, electoral legislation, and civil society documents and reports, other documents developed by relevant government institutions, international organizations, or CSOs.</p> <p>Secondary survey data such as MEASURE II National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions (NSCP), National Youth Survey (NYS), OSCE's survey on integrity of elections (if available) and other available relevant survey data</p> <p>Online and in-person KIIs with representatives of BiH government institutions/bodies, electoral experts, experts in BiH politics, civil society, international organizations, donors, implementers</p> <p>FGDs with CSOs, media, polling station committees and municipal election commission, SPPG beneficiaries (The Advanced Leadership in Politics Institute (ALPI) members and other trainees), and citizens</p>	Mixed methods
<p>Q2. What types of improvements to the technical conduct of elections at the local level could influence public trust and voter behavior?</p> <p>Q2A. What technical improvements to election administration at the local level may counter intimidation and control by political parties, and/or have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions?</p> <p>Q2B. What approaches would encourage voter participation and collective engagement by women and youth?</p>	<p>Secondary documentation, including from BiH government institutions/bodies, international organizations, civil society documents and reports, theory and research on social and behavioral change in general and in the context of election, research and theory on public trust in elections, research on collective engagement of women and youth, electoral legislation, and research on political parties' politics based on employment of ethnic divisiveness</p> <p>Secondary survey data such as MEASURE II National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions (NSCP), National Youth Survey (NYS), and other available relevant survey data</p> <p>Online and in-person KIIs with electoral experts, experts in BiH politics, civil society representatives, international organizations representatives, and representatives of BiH government institutions/bodies</p> <p>FGDs with citizens, CSOs and media, polling station committees and municipal election commissions, and SPPG beneficiaries (ALPI members and women)</p>	Mixed methods

ASSESSMENT LIMITATIONS

- Potential limitations of this assessment arise from the short timeline and consequential limitation in the number and variability of stakeholders to be consulted during this assessment. Therefore, the results may reflect the priorities as perceived by a limited number of stakeholders. The assessment team will address this challenge by triangulating the findings obtained through primary data sources with desk review findings and expert's opinion.
- **Selection bias:** The assessment will attempt to understand public attitudes toward elections in BiH and possible improvements in election systems that could increase public confidence and voter participation. In order to understand challenges to public confidence and participation, it is necessary to speak with individuals who do not vote. However, disaffected citizens are less likely to participate in interviews, focus groups or surveys than individuals who value democratic systems and are interested in providing their views in order to improve those systems.

- **Response bias:** Some stakeholders can overstate or understate certain topics and information relevant for the assessment. To mitigate the response bias, the assessment team, whenever possible, will compare the primary data to the secondary data and existing documents to verify the credibility of findings. Before the start of KIs and FGDs, the assessment team will make sure that respondents understand that their true opinions are the most appreciated. The assessment team will also ensure that respondents are aware of confidentiality of any information they provide
- **Interviewer/FG Moderator bias:** Interviewers' conduct and actions may lead KIs or FGD participants to respond in a certain way. To prevent it, the interviewers and FGD moderators will be trained to ask questions in a non-leading way, and to restrain from giving body language signals or making face expressions. In addition, the interviewers and FGD moderators will be instructed to ask all questions provided in the data collection instruments, and to the extent possible, to ask questions in the stated order.

ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION

DELIVERABLES AND SCHEDULE

All deliverables will be submitted electronically and in English. The deliverables will include:

1. **Detailed assessment work plan and data collection instrument(s)**
The assessment work plan will include: (1) a detailed assessment design matrix (including the key questions, methods, and data sources used to address each question and the data analysis plan for each question); (2) draft data collection instruments (interview guides and focus group discussion guides) (3) the list of potential interviewees (without personal information); (4) known limitations to the assessment design; (5) the anticipated schedule and logistical arrangements; and (6) a list of the members of the assessment team, delineated by roles and responsibilities.
2. **Briefing on preliminary findings for the Mission**
A briefing on preliminary findings to USAID/BiH including a summary of initial recommendations to USAID/BiH.
3. **Draft assessment report**
The draft assessment report will be consistent with the [USAID Evaluation Report Requirements](#), [USAID's evaluation policy](#), and take into account criteria to ensure the quality of the evaluation report specified in [ADS REFERENCE 201MAA](#).
4. **Final assessment report**
Once USAID's comments on the initial draft are provided to the assessment team, the team will address comments and submit a revised final report within five calendar days. The final report will be up to 25 pages long, excluding annexes.

The overview of the tentative assessment timeline is provided in Exhibit 2.

EXHIBIT 2. TENTATIVE ASSESSMENT TIMELINE

TENTATIVE DATES	TASKS AND DELIVERABLES
July 13, 2022	Draft Work Plan (with data collection instruments)
July 6-July 25, 2022	Desk review, logistical preparation, scheduling KII interviews and FGs
July 6-August 12, 2022	Testing data collection instruments Data collection through KIIs, and FGs KII and FG meeting notes transcription and coding Analysis of secondary data/documentation Preparing the briefing on preliminary findings
August 12, 2022	Briefing USAID/BiH on the preliminary findings and recommendations
August 1-August 31, 2022	Finalizing transcription of KII and FG meeting notes Finalizing data analysis Report drafting Draft report submitted for the HO review
September 2, 2022	Address the HO comments on the draft report and submit the report to the Mission
TBD, September 2022	USAID to send comments on draft report
Up to 5 days upon receiving USAID comments	Submit the final assessment report to USAID/BiH

TEAM COMPOSITION

The assessment team is expected to include five members. All tasks will be coordinated by the Project Manager and Technical Experts. The tentative key staff and their qualifications are shown in Exhibit 3. Additional MEASURE II staff research analysts will also support this assessment as team members.

EXHIBIT 3. KEY TEAM MEMBERS AND THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

POSITION	KEY QUALIFICATIONS
MEASURE II Staff Member: Project Manager and Technical Expert/Assessment Co-Lead	Project management skills; expertise in assessment methodologies and USAID's assessment requirements, experienced in various social research including political parties and corruption
MEASURE II Staff Member: Technical Expert/Assessment member	Expertise in assessment methodologies and USAID's assessment requirements, experienced in various social research including behavior change
Local Consultant, EPP expert/Technical Expert, Assessment Co-Lead	Expertise in assessment methodologies; monitoring of electoral campaigns; youth and gender participation and campaigning; integrity of electoral process; civil society and media; report writing skills.
International Consultant, EPP expert/Technical Expert/Assessment Team Member	Expertise in elections and political processes; experience in Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) assessments, assessment methodologies, report writing skills.

EXHIBIT 3. KEY TEAM MEMBERS AND THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

POSITION	KEY QUALIFICATIONS
MEASURE II Research Analyst	Data collection coordination experience; qualitative data collection experience including note taking; quantitative and qualitative data analysis skills; and report writing.

Support for the assessment team will include:

- Home Office (HO) and Field Office (FO) support in reviewing the assessment deliverables, conducting general oversight of the assessment process, and providing assistance in defining the assessment recommendations;
- HO CLA experts who will contribute to application of CLA principles throughout the assessment process;
- Transcribers experienced in transcribing audio recordings from KIIs and FGs;
- Office Manager who will provide logistical support to contracting, payments, and field work.

The team composition and level of effort will be finalized in the assessment work plan.

ANNEX 2: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The assessment team (AT) conducted this assessment from June 28 to September 22, 2022. The period comprised approximately two weeks for a desk review of relevant documents and drafting the Workplan and assessment methodology, including the development of data collection protocols and other planning for fieldwork. The assessment period also accounted for one week of fieldwork logistical preparation, five weeks of data collection, one week of data analysis, and three weeks of report drafting. Following USAID review and comments on the draft report, the AT will have five days to revise the report.

PHASE ONE: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

This independent assessment began in late June 2022, when the assessment team commenced document review and began preparing this Workplan, which was to be submitted to USAID/BiH on July 15. During the planning phase, the AT reviewed and discussed the assessment Statement of Work (SOW), clarified team members' roles and responsibilities, reviewed relevant documents, prepared the Workplan, and formulated the assessment design.

PHASE TWO: DATA COLLECTION

The AT used a qualitative assessment design consisting of document review, 39 key informant interviews (KIs) and 15 focus group discussions (FGDs including both state, entity, and municipal level insight when possible). MEASURE II staff and local consultants carried out interviews in BCS and English languages.

The data collection protocols to guide fieldwork are in Annex 3. The purpose of the protocols was to (1) ensure the AT addresses all key issues during data collection; (2) elicit rich, sometimes unanticipated, information from respondents; and (3) help organize information in a form that the team can efficiently analyze.

The protocols consist of questions that address the scope of work and derive from team's document review, its initial discussions with USAID, and its assessment design knowledge.

Data Collection Methods

Document Review

The team conducted a review of available documents to better understand elections and political processes in BiH, extract relevant findings, and inform data collection protocol development so that instruments appropriately supplement or cross-check information in the background documents.

Key Informant Interviews

KIs were conducted through internet-based communications software. FGDs were conducted either in person or via Zoom, Google Meets, or other meeting platforms. Interviews were conducted in English or in the local language, based on the preference of the interviewee.

AT members shared typed transcripts and translated interview notes with the U.S.-based team members in a timely fashion during fieldwork. The team conducted KIs with key stakeholder groups, including relevant international organizations, political party representatives, parliamentary candidates, women and youth candidates, local councilors, and election-related CSOs.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The AT organized 15 FGDs either in person or utilizing a web-based meeting platform. The FGD participants included members of youth groups supported by the Supporting Political Pluralism and Good Governance Processes Activity (SPPG); women and youth candidates/officials/politicians; officials from election committees and commissions; members of parliamentary issue-based caucuses; and outside stakeholders like civil society and journalists. In addition, a local firm was contracted to conduct FGDs with BiH citizens both voters and nonvoters in 12 BiH municipalities. The objective of these discussions was to gather background information on voter apathy and distrust as well as to identify gaps and obstacles to transparent and accountable election administration.

Draft data collection instruments used for the KIIs and FGDs are in Annex 3. The team revised all data collection instruments after having them tested during the first week of data collection. The team obtained informed consent from all collocutors participating in this assessment. The team used information obtained from participants only for the learning purposes within this assessment. Participants' names or other private information was not shared with any third parties or published in the assessment report. Based on the past difficulties in data collection related to often encountered unavailability of key informants in July and August, the AT anticipated possible delays in data collection, which the team mitigated by extending the fieldwork period.

PHASE THREE: DATA ANALYSIS

The team co-leads oversaw and managed the systematic analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The team's data analysis approach utilized data triangulation to cross-check results, and it applied several analysis methods to provide evidence for the assessment's findings and conclusions.

Exhibit 4 presents the assessment matrix, which details the mixed methods methodological approach used to answer each assessment question.

EXHIBIT 4. ASSESSMENT MATRIX

ASSESSMENT QUESTION (AQ)	DATA SOURCES/DATA COLLECTION METHODS	RESEARCH DESIGN
Q1. What gaps or obstacles exist for transparent and accountable election administration at the local level?	<p>Secondary documentation, including from BiH government institutions/bodies, international organizations and international electoral standards, electoral legislation, and civil society documents and reports, other documents developed by relevant government institutions, international organizations, or CSOs.</p> <p>Secondary survey data such as MEASURE II National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions (NSCP), National Youth Survey (NYS), OSCE's survey on integrity of elections (if available) and other available relevant survey data</p> <p>Online and in-person KIIs with representatives of BiH government institutions/bodies, electoral experts, experts in BiH politics, civil society, international organizations. donors, implementers</p> <p>FGDs with CSOs, media, polling station committees and municipal election commission, SPPG beneficiaries (The Advanced Leadership in Politics Institute (ALPI) members and other trainees), and citizens</p>	Mixed methods

EXHIBIT 4. ASSESSMENT MATRIX

ASSESSMENT QUESTION (AQ)	DATA SOURCES/DATA COLLECTION METHODS	RESEARCH DESIGN
<p>Q2. What types of improvements to the technical conduct of elections at the local level could influence public trust and voter behavior?</p> <p>Q2A. What technical improvements to election administration at the local level may counter intimidation and control by political parties, and/or have a constructive impact on ethnic tensions?</p> <p>Q2B. What approaches would encourage voter participation and collective engagement by women and youth?</p>	<p>Secondary documentation, including from BiH government institutions/bodies, international organizations, civil society documents and reports, theory and research on social and behavioral change in general and in the context of election, research and theory on public trust in elections, research on collective engagement of women and youth, electoral legislation, and research on political parties' politics based on employment of ethnic divisiveness</p> <p>Secondary survey data such as MEASURE II National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions (NSCP), National Youth Survey (NYS), and other available relevant survey data</p> <p>Online and in-person KIIs with electoral experts, experts in BiH politics, civil society representatives, international organizations representatives, and representatives of BiH government institutions/bodies</p> <p>FGDs with citizens, CSOs and media, polling station committees and municipal election commissions, and SPPG beneficiaries (ALPI members and women)</p>	Mixed methods

Data Analysis Processes

Team members took detailed notes of KIIs and FGDs, cleaning and sharing electronic summaries on a rolling basis throughout fieldwork. Team members conducted internal debriefs during fieldwork to discuss progress and any adjustments that may be needed in the assessment schedule. The team also identified emerging patterns and themes that were helpful in developing the analysis coding scheme. KII and FGD notes were taken in English.

The team captured preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations (FCR) in an Excel-based matrix. The matrix tallied themes that rose from the interviews and included metadata, such as respondent type or interview type (KII or FGD). This enabled the team to look for trends within and across sub-groups. The matrix ensures that the team prepares systematic and thorough findings, verifies that preliminary analysis accounts for gender and social dimensions, identifies any gaps where the team may need additional clarification or analysis, and serves as the basis for developing the assessment report.

Data Analysis Methods

The AT employed several data analysis methods to identify key findings from the collected data, as well as to draw conclusions and make recommendations to USAID/BiH for the planned activity. The type of analyses depended on the specific data being assessed (e.g., content analysis for qualitative KII and FGD data). Analysis methods included:

1. Content Analysis
2. Gap Analysis
3. Comparative Analysis

Data Triangulation

The team employed analytical triangulation approaches to developing the findings and conclusions. Triangulation enabled the team to cross-verify and cross-validate the findings that emerge from using

the above data collection methods and data sources to validate responses and identify correlations among findings.

The team designed data collection protocols with the same or similar questions across its KIs (for various stakeholder groups) and FGDs. This facilitated data triangulation because each method/stakeholder group addressed subsets of the same questions, and their testimony validated or refuted that of the other techniques/stakeholders. This approach also enabled the team to strengthen the potential linkages and accuracy of its data if the results obtained through one method or from one stakeholder group were less conclusive than those obtained through another method or stakeholder group.

PHASE FOUR: DISSEMINATION AND UTILIZATION

Following fieldwork and data analysis, the team presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations during a remote out-briefing to USAID tentatively on September 8, 2022.

MEASURE II submitted a draft assessment report answering all of the AQs on September 22. The AT will revise the draft report to address USAID comments. MEASURE II will submit the final assessment report within five business days of receiving feedback from reviewers. Upon final approval, MEASURE II will upload the report to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC).

LIMITATIONS

Potential limitations of this assessment included:

- Potential limitations of this assessment arise from the short timeline and consequential limitation in the number and variability of stakeholders to be consulted during this assessment. Therefore, the results may reflect the priorities as perceived by a limited number of stakeholders. The assessment team addressed this challenge by triangulating the findings obtained through primary data sources with desk review findings and expert's opinion and extending the fieldwork period.
- **Selection bias:** The assessment attempted to understand public attitudes toward elections in BiH and possible improvements in election systems that could increase public confidence and voter participation. In order to understand challenges to public confidence and participation, it was necessary to speak with individuals who do not vote. However, disaffected citizens were less likely to participate in interviews, focus groups or surveys than individuals who value democratic systems and were interested in providing their views in order to improve those systems.
- **Interviewer/FG Moderator bias:** Interviewers' conduct and actions may lead KIs or FGD participants to respond in a certain way. To prevent it, the interviewers and FGD moderators were trained to ask questions in a non-leading way, and to restrain from giving body language signals or making face expressions. In addition, the interviewers and FGD moderators were instructed to ask all questions provided in the data collection instruments, and to the extent possible, to ask questions in the stated order.

ANNEX 3: INFORMATION SOURCES

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ANNEX 4: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

QUESTIONS FOR USG/DONORS/IMPLEMENTERS

1. What are the problems with local election administration?
2. What recommendations have been made to improve local election administration, in particular those relating to the technical conduct of elections?
3. What interventions have been attempted to improve local election administration?
4. Are they ongoing?
5. Have they worked?
6. What are the biggest gaps; i.e., top recommendations yet to be implemented?
7. What issues were addressed pertaining to the integrity of the electoral process during the electoral reform negotiations?
8. What are the biggest factors for a lack of public trust in elections?
9. How can public trust in elections be improved?
10. What are reasons BiH citizens do not vote? Is the lack of trust the only reason why they are not more involved, or there are other reasons?
11. How can local election administration be improved to ameliorate ethnic tensions?
12. How can local election administration be improved to reduce parties' ability to intimidate and control voters?
13. How can USAID build on SPPG and preceding CEPPS programs? (What worked best in previous USAID elections support? What, if anything, would you change? How so?)
14. What other donor programs are/were there in EPP?
15. Is donor coordination at the desired level?
16. How could USAID build on those programs?
17. EAF: Are women and youth (formally or informally) excluded from meaningful political participation and influence? If yes, how so and what are the challenges they face?
18. How to improve women's participation and engagement?
19. How to improve youth participation and engagement?
20. Are voters in general informed about issue based-platforms and polling data?
21. How do data like issue-based platforms and polling data inform voters and affect voting habits?
22. How do data like issue-based platforms and polling data inform and affect candidates?

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES/PARTY REPRESENTATIVES

1. What are the problems with local election administration?
2. What are the biggest factors for a lack of public trust in elections?
3. How can public trust in elections be improved?
4. EAF: To what extent citizen (short-term or long-term) election observation contributes to public trust in elections? How can it be improved?
5. What are reasons BiH citizens do not vote? Is the lack of trust the only reason why they are not more involved, or there are other reasons?
6. EAF: Is voter education at satisfactory level in BiH?
7. How can local election administration be improved to ameliorate ethnic tensions?
8. What other donor programs are/were there in EPP?
9. EAF: Are women and youth (formally or informally) excluded from meaningful political participation and influence? If yes, how so and what are the challenges they face?
10. How to improve women's participation and engagement?
11. How to improve youth participation and engagement?
12. How do data like issue-based platforms and polling data inform voters and affect voting habits?
13. How do data like issue-based platforms and polling data inform and affect candidates?

QUESTIONS FOR CEC

1. What are the problems with local election administration?
2. What recommendations have been made to improve local election administration?
3. What interventions have been attempted to improve local election administration?
4. Are they ongoing?
5. Have they worked?
6. What are the biggest gaps; i.e., top recommendations yet to be implemented?
7. What are the biggest factors for a lack of public trust in elections?
8. How can public trust in elections be improved?
9. EAF: To what extent citizen (short-term or long-term) election observation contributes to public trust in elections? How can it be improved?

10. What are reasons BiH citizens do not vote? Is the lack of trust the only reason why they are not more involved, or there are other reasons?
11. EAF: Is voter education at satisfactory level in BiH?
12. How can local election administration be improved to ameliorate ethnic tensions?
13. How can local election administration be improved to reduce parties' ability to intimidate and control voters?
14. How can USAID build on SPPG and preceding CEPPS programs?
15. What other donor programs are/were there in EPP?
16. How could USAID build on those programs?
17. EAF: Are women and youth (formally or informally) excluded from meaningful political participation and influence? If yes, how so and what are the challenges they face?
18. How to improve women's participation and engagement?
19. How to improve youth participation and engagement?
20. Do voters choose based on personalities or what are they campaigning for?
21. How do data like issue-based platforms and polling data inform voters and affect voting habits?
22. What other information before the election might help better engage voters?

QUESTIONS FOR CSOS AND MEDIA

1. What are the problems with local election administration?
2. What recommendations have been made to improve local election administration?
3. What interventions have been attempted to improve local election administration?
4. Are they ongoing?
5. Have they worked?
6. What are the biggest gaps; i.e., top recommendations yet to be implemented?
7. What are the biggest factors for a lack of public trust in elections?
8. How can public trust in elections be improved?
9. EAF: Is voter education at satisfactory level in BiH?
10. EAF: To what extent citizen (short-term or long-term) election observation contributes to public trust in elections? How can it be improved?

11. What are reasons BiH citizens do not vote? Is the lack of trust the only reason why they are not more involved, or there are other reasons?
12. How can local election administration be improved to ameliorate ethnic tensions?
13. How can local election administration be improved to reduce parties' ability to intimidate and control voters?
14. What international donors' programs support civil society in BiH?
15. EAF: Are women and youth (formally or informally) excluded from meaningful political participation and influence? If yes, how so and what are the challenges they face?
16. What are some ideas for encouraging voter participation by women and getting women to work together?
17. What are some ideas for encouraging voter participation by youth and getting youth to work together?
18. Do voters choose based on personalities or what are they campaigning for?
19. How do data like issue-based platforms and polling data inform voters and affect voting habits?
20. What other information before the election might help better engage voters?

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

1. What are the problems with local election administration?
2. What are the biggest factors for a lack of public trust in elections?
3. How can public trust in elections be improved?
4. EAF: To what extent citizen (short-term or long-term) election observation contributes to public trust in elections? How can it be improved?
5. What are reasons BiH citizens do not vote? Is the lack of trust the only reason why they are not more involved, or there are other reasons?
6. EAF: Is voter education at satisfactory level in BiH?
7. How can local election administration be improved to ameliorate ethnic tensions?
8. How can local election administration be improved to reduce parties' ability to intimidate and control voters?
9. Do voters choose based on personalities or what are they campaigning for?
10. If there were an online platform that listed the platforms and campaign promises of the various candidates and parties, would you use it?

- I1. Would you be more likely to vote if you knew more about candidates' and parties' platforms and campaign promises?
- I2. What other information before the election might help better engage voters?
- I3. EAF: Are women and youth (formally or informally) excluded from meaningful political participation and influence? If yes, how so and what are the challenges they face?
- I4. What are some ideas for encouraging voter participation by women and getting women to work together?
- I5. What are some ideas for encouraging voter participation by youth and getting youth to work together?

FGS – CITIZENS FROM 12 MUNICIPALITIES (VOTERS + NONVOTERS)

Goal: To learn about the factors influencing citizens' mistrust in elections and shaping their voting decisions.

CONFIDENCE IN ELECTIONS

1. Do you usually go to vote?
2. If yes, what motivates you to?
3. If not, why not?
4. Will you vote at elections in October 2022?
5. If not, why not?
6. Do you think BiH citizens are sufficiently informed about the voting process?
7. What do you think are the main reasons some BiH citizens decide not to vote?
8. Do you think the elections are fair? Why do you think so? Why do citizens do not trust the election process?
9. Have you ever witnessed or heard of any irregularities in the electoral process?
10. What kind of irregularities/electoral fraud have you heard about?
- I1. Does witnessing these irregularities affect whether or for whom you will vote? If yes, how? If not, how come?
- I2. Does hearing about such irregularities from somebody else affect whether or for whom you will vote? If yes, how? If not, how come?
- I3. Are there any differences between the following groups in their confidence in the election processes:
- I4. Ethnic groups?
- I5. Men and women?

16. Youth and adults?
17. In your opinion, what would improve yours and your fellow citizens' confidence in the election process?
18. EAF: To what extent citizen (short-term or long-term) election observation contributes to public trust in elections? How can it be improved?

VOTING DECISIONS

1. How do you decide for whom to vote? What is the most important factor influencing your decision? *Discuss how different factors influence their decision. Probe:*
2. Party vs. candidate
3. In general, do you have a preferred party or a preferred candidate?
4. Candidate's ethnic/religious affiliation
5. To what extent are candidates' ethnic and religious affiliation important to you?
6. Candidate's appearance, sex, age
7. Do you vote for male or female candidates, for young or adult candidates? Why?
8. Party'/Candidate's program/platform
9. How do you learn about candidates' programs/platforms? Where do you get this information? Do you have sufficient information? Is it easy or hard to find?
10. Candidate's expertise
11. What does expertise mean to you? How do you decide whether the candidate is an expert?
12. Candidate's past performance
13. Perceived fraud or manipulation with ballots
14. Would you vote for a party or candidate for which you know or believe they were involved in fraud?
15. Other
16. Are there any differences between with regard to the factors discussed previously:
17. Different ethnic groups?
18. Men and women?
19. Youth and adults?
20. Are you or people in your community afraid that parties/politicians could find out who you/they voted for? Is this possible? How? Does this affect your/their voting decision, and how?

OTHER TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

1. In addition to voting, there are various other types of citizen political participation. Would you engage in any of these, and why?
2. Promoting party's content on social media
3. Attending political campaign events
4. Volunteering for the party
5. Becoming a party member
6. Working for the party
7. Running for office
8. Are there any differences between the following groups in terms of their willingness to engage in such activities:
 9. Men and women?
 10. Youth and adults?
11. If more information was available about candidates, their expertise, past performance, parties' platforms and campaign promises, would you be interested in such information? If there was an online platform with such information, would you use it? Would you use this information to form your voting decision? Do you think most people in your community would use it, or most of them already know who they will vote for?
12. Would it help you if you had information on how most citizens in your community make their voting decisions and for whom they intend to vote? Would that help you make your decision? Would such information be useful to most citizens in your community?
13. In general, what can be done to encourage citizens to vote and get more involved in politics?
14. What are the biggest obstacles to women's political participation? How can they be encouraged to become more involved?
15. What about youth?
16. EAF: Are women and youth (formally or informally) excluded from meaningful political participation and influence? If yes, how so and what are the challenges they face?
17. Do you think that there are technical improvements to election administration at the local level that can be made to ease ethnic tensions and improve inter-community trust

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION
SUPPORT ACTIVITY (MEASURE II)**

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