



TAF-Global



## Voter Registration & Elections Process (VREP) in Afghanistan

The Asia Foundation (TAF) and Global Risk Strategies (Global) are providing invaluable advice and assistance to the Joint Electoral Management Body Secretariat (JEMBS), a hybrid of Afghan professionals and UN advisors planning Voter Registration and Elections. The Asia Foundation's Elections Program is funded through assistance from the United States Agency for International Development

The Asia Foundation provides technical specialists to the JEMBS and consultants who contribute to the Voter Registration and Elections Process (VREP). Their work includes logistics, advising on the registration and election processes, public information, and civic education. TAF contracted Global Risk Strategies to provide field-based operations and logistical support to the JEMBS.

Global's professionals are largely field-based operational and logistical experts with work experience in developing countries, including Afghanistan. Global has over ninety persons in Afghanistan, consisting of staff working in Kabul, as well as two-person teams in each of Afghanistan's eight regions, and two-person teams in 32 of the country's 34 provinces.

Global's staff assists the JEMBS and the UN by identifying and assessing potential Voter Registration Sites (VRS) for Afghanistan's upcoming elections, and providing other critical operational and logistical support to the registration process. Global provides key assistance in the areas of communications and coordination, operational and logistics, and training and security advice and assistance.

As Global are not United Nations staff, they may travel more freely and they are able to reach many areas of the country that UN staff cannot. Therefore, in many provinces, Global is performing many functions on behalf of the JEMBS - hiring and training of staff and distributing civic education materials - in addition to their core activities of identifying and evaluating VRS.

### ***The Asia Foundation Mission***

Founded in 1954, The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, and open Asia-Pacific region. TAF supports programs that improve governance and law, economic reform and development, women's participation, and international relations.

The Asia Foundation began operating in Afghanistan in 1954, and supported programs in governance reform and economic development until 1980. From 1988 until the mid-1990s, the Foundation supported a range of Afghan civil society, education, and women's programs through its office in Peshawar, Pakistan. It re-opened its office in Kabul in 2002, and current programming focuses on law reform, education, women's participation, and elections and governance.

### ***Global Risk Strategies Mission***

Global is an international risk management organization whose aim is to support other organizations that operate in high-risk regions. Global offers clients security, logistics, management and contingency planning, and aims to assist in the development of sustainable operations in difficult environments.

### ***TAF-Global Joint Efforts in Afghanistan***

Global previously worked with TAF to provide logistical and operational support to Afghan organizations and the UN for the Emergency Loya Jirga in 2002 and the Constitutional Loya Jirga, which ended in January 2004.



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## Support for the Voter Registration and Elections Project



### **OPERATIONAL PLANNING / LOGISTICS**

TAF and Global are working closely with the Joint Electoral Management Body Secretariat (JEMBS) to assist with the planning, execution, and administration of operations, including field logistics and staffing issues.

TAF has provided two technical specialists to the JEMBS for planning and public information. Additionally, TAF has hired five international consultants to provide support to the Voter Registration and Elections Process (VREP) on civic education projects, surveys, and other programs. TAF maintains close coordination and consultation with Global staff.

Because of the security situation in many areas of the country, Global’s role is critical to the voter registration process. Global’s core activities focus on operations and field logistics, including

identifying and assessing thousands of Voter Registration Sites (VRS) and potential sites for JEMBS provincial offices. Site identification is a time-consuming process, which includes:

- Liaising with local leaders and police
- Taking pictures and determining each site’s longitude and latitude;
- Describing the site and the condition of the roads leading to it;
- Investigating entry and exit points;
- Listing facilities at the site;
- Listing advantages/disadvantages;
- Analyzing threat assessment levels; and
- Providing a recommendation on the suitability of the site as a VRS.

Global provides the JEMBS with up-to-date security and ground condition information in all areas, including the provinces where the JEMBS cannot travel due to security conditions.

Global teams assist the JEMBS in interviewing and hiring local staff in many provinces, and assume a larger role in the provinces within which JEMBS international staff cannot travel.

### **SECURITY ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE**

With 93 trained personnel spread across all of Afghanistan’s eight regions and in 32 provinces, Global has real-time access to people and conditions on the ground, including security incidents, weather conditions, local attitudes, and the presence of military forces or elements opposed to the registration and elections process.

Global teams are collecting and information on security and the overall environment at the district, provincial and regional levels. This information is sent daily to headquarters in Kabul, where it is then disseminated to the JEMBS and other key actors in the registration and elections process.

Global professionals offer security advice at three levels:

- Office: They provide security assessments of potential sites for JEMBS offices in the provinces;
- Province and District: They provide provincial and district-level security assessments and advice;
- Site: They assess the security of potential voter registration/election sites.

Global Headquarters personnel, who manage the operation from JEMBS offices in Kabul, are compiling this information into a “Country Study Database.” Global teams in the field are coordinating with security forces, local leaders and electoral staff to ensure that registration and voting sites are properly secured.

### ***COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS***

Because of Global’s flexibility and ability to travel to insecure regions off limits to UN staff, Global supplements JEMBS staff by establishing inter-agency meetings, conducting meetings with Shuras (local-level committees of village elders with enormous influence in an area), distributing civic education materials, and conducting training.

### ***TRAINING***

Global staff offers training on an ad-hoc basis in the field. In the Northeast, Global teams offered first-aid training for drivers and Voter Registration Teams. In the North, Global teams taught a helicopter safety course, including how to safely enter and exit, load casualties, and direct a helicopter. In the South, Global teams taught basic and advanced driving skills to newly-hired JEMBS drivers.

### ***OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED...***

Preparing for elections in Afghanistan, a country wracked by 25 years of civil war and invasion, is a dangerous and complicated task.

Vast areas of the country are inaccessible due to devastated infrastructure, mountainous terrain, and extreme winters. Many areas in the south and southeast are considered so insecure that UN

personnel are not able to travel there, and groups openly hostile to the elections process itself remain in Afghanistan. In addition to a number of attacks against international organizations and NGOs, Global staff and offices have been the target at times.

### ***...AND OVERCOME***

Despite these difficulties, Global teams are getting the job done: by the first week of May they managed to evaluate over 2000 Voter Registration Sites. If areas are impassable by car, the Global staff travels on donkey or horseback. And, when the donkey and horses cannot go any further, Global staff will travel for days on foot.

- In Nuristan, an inaccessible province in the northeast, the Global team traveled 45 kilometers to Kantiwa Ulya, on foot, in a single day. They identified two voter registration sites and distributed civic education materials about the elections, as well as JEMBS job applications, as they went.
- In Chagcharan, deep in the Central Highlands, the JEMBS tasked Global to identify 22 Voter Registration sites in ten days.
- In the Jowzjan District of Baghdis Province, which the United Nations declared inaccessible, Global teams, on horseback and on foot, identified 35 Voter Registration sites in one week.



## Elections 2004

Officials plan to hold both Presidential and National Assembly elections, in September, 2004.

Registration was held in the eight major regional centers: Kabul, Bamiyan, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz, Herat, Jalalabad and Gardez from December 2003 to March 2004. In May 2004, voter registration entered its second phase, with operations commencing at provincial sites outside the regional centers. By the end of the first week of phase two, registration was underway in 29 of the 34 electoral provinces. About 2 million, or 20 percent of the country's approximately 10 million eligible voters, were registered to vote as of the first week of May.



The JEMBS plans to complete the registration process in most sites at the end of June.

July and August are intended to be used for elections planning, leading up to Presidential and National Assembly elections in mid-September. As throughout the entire registration process, TAF and Global will be integrally involved, providing operational advice, assistance with Polling Site preparations, and other logistical support to the JEMBS.

*For more information on TAF-Global's activities on Registration and Elections, please contact:*

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