

## PERP PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Project Title : Preparation of Electoral Roll with Photographs and Facilitating the Issuance of National Identity (ID) Card
2. a) Sponsoring Ministry/Division : Election Commission Secretariat  
b) Executing Agency : Election Commission Secretariat
3. Objectives of the Project (please specify) : The main objectives of the project are:  
a) to prepare an Electoral Roll with photographs to facilitate the holding of national (*9th Parliamentary Election*) and local elections;  
b) to establish ICT infrastructure at the Central, District, Upazila and field data collection team levels to facilitate the data collection, verification and ongoing data management processes;  
c) to create public awareness of the requirements for voter registration including attendance at the registration centers;  
d) to facilitate the process of issuance and management of National ID card by appropriate authorities;  
e) to facilitate the advancement of e-governance within Bangladesh through generation of skills and sharing/distribution of ICT equipment following the completion of data collection for electoral roll; and,  
f) to strengthen BEC in terms of accommodation and other necessary infrastructure support services.

5. (a) Estimated Cost of the Project (in Lac Taka) :

Total	GoB	PA
54698.36	20243.23	34455.13

6. Name of Development partners : EC, DFID, Netherlands, UNDP, Switzerland, South Korea, Sweden, Norway & Denmark.

7 **Background:** The Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) is a constitutional body responsible primarily for the task of conducting elections for the Parliament and the local bodies. An important element in discharging this responsibility is the preparation, maintenance and periodic updating of an electoral roll on the principle of universal adult franchise. However, recently the BEC faced significant difficulties in discharging its responsibilities due largely to the process adopted in preparing the electoral roll. The 9th Parliamentary Election was scheduled on 22 January 2007 following the dissolution of Parliament in October 2006. However, in the days leading to the elections violence became widespread with deterioration in overall law and order situation of the country. Eventually, the elections could not be held. A new caretaker government assumed charge and vowed to the nation its intention of holding a free, fair and credible election.

One of the main reasons for the deferment of the January 2007 election was a faulty and

grossly inaccurate electoral roll that was not acceptable to the opposition parties. Several civil society groups, local and foreign NGOs and prominent citizens of the country also pointed to innumerable anomalies relating to the process of updating the electoral roll and its final outcome. There were very strong demands for reconstitution of the BEC; amendment of the laws, rules and regulations relating to holding of elections in order to create a level-playing field for all contesting political parties and preparation of a new electoral roll with photograph. In fulfillment of these popular demands, the new Caretaker Government reconstituted the BEC with the appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other two Commissioners. Changes have also been made in the top-level management of the Secretariat (i.e. Election Commission Secretariat) to the BEC to bring about more transparency and accountability in its operations. The Commission identified the needed legal and institutional reforms and amendment proposals have already been discussed with different stakeholders. To start the process of completing the cycle, BEC took steps for preparing a credible electoral roll.

Given the level of mistrust and lack of confidence in the authenticity of the 2006 electoral roll, revising this electoral roll in the existing mode was not an option. The minimum that seemed acceptable was an electoral roll with photograph. An improved system could be achieved by developing a system whereby the computerized database be generated and maintained through annual update using a process of addition, deletion and transfer. This exercise involves the capture of photographs and the integration of these photographs with data in the computers. The skill mix of the teams will be quite different under this system from what has been in practice so far. The proposed electoral roll with photograph will be merged into a central database by incorporating the fields necessary for voter registration.

In order to undertake the task, the Commission looked at the knowledge available in the country as well as those available elsewhere. A committee constituted by the government, headed by the Vice Chancellor of BRAC University, examined the issue of preparation of Voter ID Card. After assessing the available technologies the Committee opined that this could be done within a reasonable timeframe. The Committee also assessed that necessary human resources is available in the country to perform the task. However, to perform the task, huge equipment including portable computers and peripherals will be required which would have to be procured from abroad involving large amount of foreign currency. As the amount is huge and also as technological solution called for technical assistance it was decided by the BEC to carry out the activities under a project.

Development Partners (DPs) have appreciated the need of electoral reforms in Bangladesh in order to stabilise the future of democracy in the country and expressed their willingness to assist the Election Commission in executing its various reform programs including preparation of an electoral roll with photographs on an urgent basis. In this regard, UNDP has come forward as a partner of on-going technical support to the BEC and committed a '*pool funding*' with other development partners to carry out required activities to prepare the voter list with photograph under the proposed project. As a matter of fact, UNDP would explore its specific requirements to support the project and coordinate with other DPs through preparing a Project Document (Prodoc) specifying detailed activities to be funded by the donor community.

**Rationale** : The Fresh Enumeration approach has been followed to prepare the Electoral Roll for each parliamentary election with the exception of the June 1996 election and the deferred January 2007 election. Required institutional mechanisms and systems were not in place to successfully update an existing Electoral Roll without creating duplicate enrolments. This process resulted in an unacceptable Electoral Roll for the scheduled 9th

Parliament Election on 22 January 2007.

Many stakeholders including political parties agreed on the requirement for improved voter identification through either voter ID cards or a voter list incorporating photographs. Options were considered and evaluated including national ID card, voter ID card, and Electoral Roll with photograph, and finally it was decided to prepare an Electoral Roll with photograph as the initial step towards a future national ID card system.

This project has been designed through the review of international practices in voter registration with photograph. The experiences of other nations are reflected in the specification of equipment and outline of methodologies for this project with appropriate modifications as required for the local context.

The voter registration process will assist in providing data for other national priorities such as national ID card and birth & death registration processes. Following the completion of this project required information could be made available in electronic format to facilitate other processes and therefore saving the need for additional nation wide data collection programs.

The ICT equipment procured under the project will be utilized to boost the institutional capacity of the BEC at the central and field levels, facilitate further e-governance initiatives throughout Bangladesh, and contribute to meet the educational and other needs.

Once data collection is completed for the next Parliamentary Election, the BEC will be able to provide electoral and other services through an ICT infrastructure to the Upazila and other levels. The ICT equipment utilized during the preparation of Electoral Roll may also be used to support ongoing e-governance and educational requirements as and when necessary.

**Targets/Outputs/Outcomes** : The proposed project is expected to have following outputs/outcomes:

- i) Voters attend the registration centers with appropriate documents (with some exception) and complete registration including photograph, fingerprint and identified disabilities;
- ii) A database established for Electoral Roll with photographs to facilitate the holding of national (9th parliamentary election) and all local elections;
- iii) Electoral Roll stored electronically at the Upazila, District, and Central election offices allowing voters to review and update their registration details;
- iv) Established a database for Electoral Roll with additional national ID related data & information that would be transferred to the appropriate authorities to be created by the government to facilitate the process of issuance and management of National ID card;
- v) Electoral Roll database transferred to different Local Government Institutions (LGIs) through the Local Government Division (LGD) to facilitate Birth & Death Registration process;
- vi) Inter-ministerial discussions held with plans for field-level cooperation and utilization of ICT equipment to facilitate the advancement of e-governance within Bangladesh; and,

**8. Current Position of voter registration :**

Number of voter registered till **16 Feb 2008**

No. of registration completed : **36697540**

No of national ID cards complete : . . . . .

No of National ID cards handover : . . . . .