

IMIE ASSESSMENT OF OUT-OF-COUNTRY VOTING (OCV)  
IRAQ COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTIONS, DECEMBER 13–15, 2005  
APRIL 2006

**Executive Summary**

The Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) Program for the December 2005 Council of Representatives elections was implemented by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), as mandated by the Elections Law of Iraq. The International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) deployed 16 country coordinators and 365 short-term monitors to monitor the pre-election period, registration, polling and counting phases of the election, and in most countries, it fielded at least one monitor for every two polling stations. All IMIE monitors completed quantitative and qualitative assessment forms for the registration, polling and counting components of OCV. This report is based on their findings.

The IMIE finds that the OCV Program was administered effectively and successfully at all stages despite the shortage of experienced management staff, the absence of host country agreements and the limited time frame for implementation. While there were cases of fraud and abuse of the voter registration system, these were the exception rather than the rule. Only in Istanbul, Turkey, was significant voter fraud reported, and in that case, the IECI conducted an investigation and ultimately cancelled the results in 16 out of 18 polling stations.

The IECI successfully enfranchised more than 298,300 Iraqis in 15 countries. The IECI was able to build upon the experience gained during the first Iraq OCV in January 2005 (OCV I), especially in middle management and general operational planning. Field operations were aided by the large pool of experienced registration and polling staff and the use of international advisors.

The positive experience and level of service offered to voters during OCV I created high expectations for OCV II. While these expectations were met on the three days of voting, they were not met for the public information and counting phases. An opportunity was missed to build upon the voter register created for OCV I. Regrettably, there were also unnecessary limitations on observer access to voter registration lists, counting and results tallies.

The electoral system of Iraq allowed votes cast in-country to count towards *both* the 230 governorate seats as well as the 45 compensatory and national seats, while votes cast out-of-country were counted *only* toward the distribution of the 44 national seats (only one seat was awarded as compensatory).

*Key Recommendations*

The following ten key recommendations to the IECI and Iraqi legislature are made with the assumption that Iraqis living abroad will continue to have an opportunity to vote out-of-country. These key recommendations are considered necessary for further improvement of Iraq OCV events. There are also additional recommendations throughout the text of the report that would enhance the quality of future OCV events, but are not critical to its success. The political and financial sustainability of OCV programs, voter eligibility requirements and possible methods of providing Iraqis abroad the vote are not discussed in this report.

1. Clarify the voting rights and obligations of Iraqis living abroad as well as the level of service provided to voters in any future OCV .
2. Recruit staff giving due consideration to a balanced representation of gender, ethnicity, experience and language abilities.

3. Make greater efforts to establish written agreements with the host governments, covering issues related to security, customs and duties, banking, public information, facilities, guarantees of protection of voters and language of operation.
4. Make all public information available in Arabic, Kurdish and the host country language.
5. Develop a simple and clear procedures/training manual with graphics detailing the steps of registration and polling, station set-up, forms and documentation.
6. Collect voter information in such a manner that it can be reused for future elections.
7. Ensure there is adequate time allowed for public display of provisional voter lists.
8. Consider using voter ink in combination with other anti-fraud mechanisms, such as voter lists.
9. Provide access to results at the level of polling station, polling centre and country to accredited agents or observers who request it.
10. Increase the capacity of the IECI to investigate OCV complaints in a timely manner.

## **Introduction**

The Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) Program for the December 2005 Council of Representatives Elections was implemented by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), as mandated by the Elections Law of Iraq. The second such program conducted for Iraqi voters, "OCV II" built upon the experiences of an earlier OCV I conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). For OCV II, the IECI established 560 polling stations and 94 polling centres in 48 cities and 15 countries.

The International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) was the only international agency registered by the IECI to observe all aspects of the preparation and implementation of OCV. The IMIE was established in December 2004 as a result of the Iraq Election Monitoring Forum (Ottawa, December 18–20, 2004). Composed of independent electoral management bodies from 10 nations around the world, as well as the League of Arab States as an observer, the IMIE is mandated to provide expert assessment of the electoral process in Iraq, as well as the registration and voting process outside Iraq. The secretariat for the mission is currently based in Amman, Jordan, with an office in Baghdad, Iraq.

For OCV II, the IMIE recruited and trained 365 short-term and 16 long-term monitors (country coordinators) to monitor, observe and report on the three days of registration, polling and counting of the votes as well as to monitor IECI management in each country (see Annex 1).

This report reviews the background to OCV in order to provide a context for the challenges faced. The roles of the international community and host governments are briefly discussed. Finally, the management, structure, procedures and practices observed by IMIE monitors are assessed. Information for the report was drawn from the long-term monitors (IMIE country coordinators), UN and IECI sources, relevant IECI regulations and procedures, and IECI OCV materials.

## **Background**

On behalf of the IECI, the IOM organized and conducted an OCV Program for the January 2005 Transitional National Assembly election (OCV I). Over a 67-day period, the IOM conducted registration and polling in 36 cities and 14 countries<sup>1</sup>, registering 280,303 expatriate Iraqis, of whom 265,000 voted.<sup>2</sup> Voters registered and voted on separate days, and after the election, all voter registration information was data entered in Amman, Jordan, to create a voter list for future

---

<sup>1</sup>Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Jordan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup>IECI estimates of the numbers of Iraq voters out-of-country were as high as 4 million. IOM's estimate was a more conservative 1.3 million. To date, there are no accurate data on the Iraqi diaspora.

OCV efforts. The IMIE monitored the registration and voting processes in 13 of the 14 countries where OCV I was carried out. Its report is available on the IMIE Web site at [www.imie.ca](http://www.imie.ca).

### *Decision to Conduct OCV II*

The success of OCV I created high expectations among voters and the government of Iraq that the IECI would conduct an OCV II for the December 2005 Council of Representatives elections. Iraqis living abroad were enfranchised by the Elections Law of Iraq, approved by the Transitional National Assembly on September 12, 2005.

In late October 2005, the IECI decided to conduct an Iraqi-led operation with minimal international assistance. The program for OCV II was to be loosely based on the operational plans for the previous OCV and included the following key features:

- Two new countries were added (Lebanon and Austria), and one was omitted (France – due to very low turnout in OCV I).<sup>3</sup>
- Three days of “in-person,” same-day registration and voting<sup>4</sup> using the national ballot.
- The voter list created during OCV I in January 2005 would not be used.
- Voters were free to vote at any polling centre or station.
- Voters were required to produce documents to establish identity, age and Iraqi citizenship (this could be achieved with a single document such as a passport).
- Arrangements specific to each country (memoranda of understanding, or MoUs – for example, concerning security and visas) would be negotiated by the Iraqi embassy and the IECI.

### *International Assistance*

On November 28, the first international advisor arrived in Amman to begin working directly with the IECI OCV headquarters (HQ) team. Over the next 10 days, an additional 26 international advisors were recruited and deployed to work with the IECI in HQ and each country office. Most of the international advisors had previous OCV experience and were able to contribute to the success of the program, despite their late recruitment. Advisors assisted in logistical preparations, arranged appropriate levels of security, dealt with host government or electoral authorities, defined operational plans, coordinated the public information campaign and reviewed (and sometimes revised) procedures.

### **Legal Framework for OCV**

The legal framework for the elections included:

- **Constitution of Iraq** – Approved by referendum in October 2005, the constitution guaranteed democratic rights to all Iraqis, defined as “any person born to an Iraqi father or mother.”
- **Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) orders** – These orders included:
  - CPA Order 92 – The establishment of the IECI as the exclusive electoral authority in Iraq
  - CPA Order 97 – The Political Parties and Entities Law
- **Elections Law of Iraq** – Passed by the Transitional National Assembly specifically for the National Assembly election. The Elections Law is silent on the details of OCV and the rules of eligibility, other than Article 19, which states that Iraqis outside of Iraq shall vote

---

<sup>3</sup>Despite IECI estimates of 20,000 voters in both Lebanon and Austria, the two new countries registered 3,423 and 1,527 voters respectively.

<sup>4</sup>This was a major departure from OCV I, which, to allow a display period and thereby reduce the opportunities for voter fraud, had separate periods for registration and polling.

in polling centers designated by the IECI and the votes shall be counted on the national level.

- **IECI Regulation 14-2005** – Passed on November 20, 2005, governs OCV, including OCV offices, registration and OCV, eligibility to vote and counting.
- **Procedures endorsed by the IECI Board of Commissioners** – Including procedures for registration, polling and counting.

#### *Seat Allocation*

The electoral system used for this election consisted of two proportional systems:

- Proportional distribution of 230 seats in the 18 governorates.
- Proportional distribution of 45 “compensatory and national seats” at the national level.

Most of the 45 compensatory and national seats were intended for political entities that did not get a seat at the governorate level but gained enough votes overall to reach the quota of at least one seat (i.e. “compensatory”); any remaining seats were divided proportionally among entities that had already won seats at the governorate level, based on the number of votes gained nationally.

The Elections Law directed that OCV votes would “be counted on the National level.” Thus, votes cast out-of-country (298,300, or approximately 1.9 percent of the total votes cast) counted only toward the 45 seats that were allocated at the national level, while votes cast within Iraq counted in both national and governorate distributions.

The eligibility requirements and the level of service offered to Iraqis living abroad (i.e. in-person voting in 15 countries and 48 cities) were quite accommodating. With two OCV programs in less than a year, expectations for future OCV programs were very high.

#### *Recommendation to the Iraqi Legislature*

1. Clarify the voting rights and obligations of Iraqis living abroad as well as the level of service provided to voters in any future OCV.

#### **OCV Administration**

At the beginning of November 2005, the IECI nominated one of the members of the Board of Commissioners to head up the IECI OCV program. A secretariat was established in Amman by November 5, and it quickly reached its peak of 60 core staff.

#### *Establishment of Country Offices*

The establishment of the 15 country offices and 48 district election offices ran in parallel with the buildup of staff in the IECI OCV secretariat, and initially a country manager and chief of finance were deployed to each country from the IECI in Baghdad. To differing degrees, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working through the Iraqi embassy in each country, negotiated with host governments and recruited staff for the operation.

#### *Relations with Host Governments*

In contrast to the IOM’s experience during OCV I, the IECI appeared to have few problems securing permission, albeit verbal, from host governments for OCV II. In 12 out of the 15 host countries, the IECI operated without written agreements.<sup>5</sup> In many cases, the IECI operated without insurance for staff or voters.

---

<sup>5</sup>Only Germany, Syria and the UAE required written MoUs with the IECI.

Host governments also provided considerable and varied support to the IECI, although in some cases, there was interference in the OCV process. For example, in Amman, police were regularly checking ID documents of voters; at least 20 Iraqis were arrested for not having legal documents, and 34 Iraqis were arrested for attempting to vote twice.

#### *Recruitment and Hiring of Staff*

The IECI OCV secretariat and all the IECI country offices were fully staffed by early December, with a total core staff of 370. The late staff buildup resulted in a lack of transparency in the recruitment process in some countries. The majority of short- and long-term staff were initially hired without written contracts, terms of reference or insurance. Eventually, written contracts were put in place for all staff, although the conditions of employment were often inconsistent with the legal norms of the host country, and many country offices could not insure their staff. While it was commendable that so many Iraqi expatriates were motivated to work on OCV, such ad hoc hiring practices should be avoided in future.

In addition to core staff, 4,500 polling station staff and 1,130 polling centre staff were recruited from the pool of experienced staff, with 50 to 75 percent having previous OCV experience. IMIE monitors consistently pointed out that the use of experienced staff contributed to the success of OCV II. Much of the confusion over procedures and staff roles in the first-time OCV countries of Lebanon and Austria appeared to be due to this lack of experience. On the other hand, many of the country managers (all deployed from Baghdad) did not have first-hand election field experience or the necessary managerial skills to effectively head up such a complex operation. In addition, some country managers were unfamiliar with the host country and unable to speak the host language.

The mechanism for recruiting registration and polling staff varied from country to country. In Germany and Austria, the embassy nominated staff, while the local OCV offices chose their respective staff from this pool. Most other IECI country offices hired their staff directly. IMIE monitors reported that generally, a reasonable ethnic and gender balance was maintained in the hiring of registration and polling staff, reflecting the diversity of their respective Iraqi populations. However, it would appear that inadequate efforts were made to recruit from Kurdish minorities in Turkey and Syria.

There were also complaints in some countries that staff were recruited from a very narrow political spectrum of friends, family and supporters of different political entities. While these accusations could not be substantiated, there was clearly a lack of transparency and perhaps a lack of balance in the recruitment policies. It should be noted that this was also a problem in OCV I.

#### *Security*

There were no serious security incidents in any of the 15 countries; the only incidents reported were scuffles among voters in a number of countries, an attack in Turkey on Kurdish voters arriving from Bulgaria, a Molotov cocktail thrown through a polling centre window in Stockholm after hours and three bomb threats in Iran.

For the most part, the IECI depended on the security provided by the host countries, supplemented by private security contracts and security advisors. No standard security arrangements were established for polling centres (although in many places, voters were searched or passed through metal detectors) or for the transfer and secure storage of sensitive materials.

#### *Communication with Country Offices*

The communication bottleneck that resulted from country managers controlling access to information, combined with the limited field support provided from IECI OCV HQ in Amman,

accounted for many of the operational disparities among countries. The communication between IECI OCV HQ and the respective country teams was so weak in the final days prior to the election that country managers often made decisions unilaterally. For example, in different countries, it was decided locally whether or not to extend polling hours, allow access of observers to voter registers, when to release security personnel from their duties, when to count the ballots, when and how to conduct intake of sensitive materials and what to say to the local media. Procedural updates and operational guidelines could not be effectively distributed to the different country operations. Individually, most of these decisions did not have a significant impact on the overall conduct of OCV II, but collectively, they resulted in differing levels of service being made available to Iraqi voters in different countries.

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Ensure that security arrangements for all IECI buildings, staff and materials meet minimum standards, according to professional security recommendations.
2. Recruit staff giving due consideration to a balanced representation of gender, ethnicity, experience and language abilities.
3. Ensure that staff are properly contracted according to local labour laws, with clear terms of reference and code of conduct.
4. Recruit core staff at HQ whose specific role is to coordinate operations in country offices, and ensure that country managers have the appropriate skills and experience.
5. Make greater efforts to establish written agreements with host governments covering issues related to security, customs and duties, banking, public information, facilities, guarantees of protection for voters and languages of operation.

#### **Public Information Campaign**

The public information campaign was much less extensive than for OCV I, possibly due to the short time frame. The campaign relied on a handful of public service announcements (PSAs) being given a lot of airplay on major news networks, such as CNN, BBC and a number of Arabic language networks, as well as on centrally developed flyers and posters.

Some countries did not receive the centrally printed materials in time and produced their own. There were also reliable reports of biased outreach limited to one ethnic group in Turkey, exclusion of Kurdish materials in Syria and Turkey, and requirements for governmental approval (often denied) of materials in Iran.

PSAs aired on international news networks focused on appeals to “get out the vote” rather than providing specific information on the location of polling centres or the required documents.

A call centre was also established with toll-free numbers for voters around the world, and this functioned well. In addition, the [www.ieci-ocv.org](http://www.ieci-ocv.org) Web site had links to country Web sites, although these were not all functional until late in the process. Irrespective of the centralized campaign and the lack of public information given to voters at the country level, the electorate appears to have been reasonably well informed.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Develop appropriate, locally produced public information for voters.
2. Make all public information available in Arabic, Kurdish and the host country language.

#### **Media**

---

<sup>6</sup>One notable exception was in Denmark, where 200 Iraqis from Malmö, Sweden, were not allowed to vote due to a lack of documentation.

Two functions – external relations with the media and public outreach to voters – were combined in the IECI. This dual role of media and outreach confused and blurred lines of responsibility among staff and media alike. There were few media guidelines issued by IECI OCV HQ. Without a media centre, media strategy or even a regular schedule of contact with the media, the IECI OCV Media Office was primarily reactive in its media relations, rather than working with the media and being proactive in organizing press conferences, press statements, etc. The Media Office acted proactively only when it wanted to use the media for dissemination of voter education messages – work normally conducted by a public outreach department.

Most country managers conducted news conferences in the first week of December; they were well attended and provided much-needed information to the media. Although insufficient as a public relations strategy, this limited contact with the media at the country office level seemed to sustain media interest for the event, and coverage was on the whole positive, responsible and accurate.

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Earlier or more press conferences should be conducted to better inform the media.
2. Media and public outreach functions should be clearly separated within management.

### **Procedures and Training**

#### *Drafting Procedures*

A procedures manual was drafted in Arabic by the IECI with assistance from the International Electoral Assistance Team (IEAT) in Amman and Baghdad. The procedures were loosely based on in-country procedures and the January 2005 OCV procedures. While sufficiently detailed, the manual had a number of omissions and conflicting instructions. The roles of polling station and polling centre staff often overlapped, and the procedures for counting and packing were unclear. Finally, due to the short time for drafting and printing, there were no summaries, graphics, checklists, samples of forms or other aids to assist in the comprehension and training of procedures.

#### *Training of Staff*

The training of trainers was adequate and conducted by trainers who had worked on the January 2005 OCV. However, draft procedures were not ready at that time, nor were any electoral materials or sample ballots used during the training. The main focus of the training was on registration and polling, with little attention paid to the role of observers, the counting process or packing of material.

Although adequate, the procedures manual was used by few polling staff (probably because of its late preparation), who instead preferred to ask a trainer or a core staff person what the appropriate procedure was. In any future operation, it will be important to develop the procedures manual in time for training and ensure that all staff are familiar with it.

While staff generally appeared to have been adequately trained in registration and polling procedures, there sometimes appeared to be a lack of understanding of some procedures. For example:

- Family voting remained a common problem in all countries.
- The marked ballot page was often removed from the unmarked three pages in a way that revealed how the voter had voted.
- Political entity agents sometimes assisted illiterate voters in voting.

- The role of observers was poorly understood, with some staff believing that they could not operate without observers present or that they were to be consulted on procedures.
- The poor set-up of some polling stations, combined with the small voting screens, reduced the privacy voters needed to mark their ballots in secret.

Trainers were authorized to give procedural instruction to all polling staff. This independence was very important during the count, when many staff were unsure how to proceed. Overall, the role of trainers, while critical to the success of OCV, was somewhat unorthodox, as they basically had executive decision-making power during the three to four days of registration, polling and counting.

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Ensure that trainers are more accountable to country and field office managers, who in turn should be fully informed about procedures.
2. Develop a simple and clear procedures and training manual with graphics detailing the steps of registration and polling, station set-up, forms and documentation.
3. Ensure that all polling station and polling centre staff are fully trained in all procedures.

#### **Voter Registration**

Unlike OCV I, voter registration was combined with polling so that voters could register and cast a ballot in one trip instead of two. After OCV I, the IOM was commissioned by the IECI to consolidate all voter data that had been collected into an OCV voter register, which was subsequently cleaned and checked for errors such as duplicate entries. This voter registry was completed in March 2005. Instead of using this voter register, however, it was decided that a new voter registration should be conducted, even though eligibility criteria had not changed. To be eligible to vote in the OCV program, a registrant needed to:

1. Be considered an Iraqi citizen according to the Iraqi constitution.
2. Have been born on or before December 31, 1987.
3. Present appropriate documents to prove his or her identity.

Although the IECI OCV Web site gave a list of documents acceptable for registration, in practice, each country program used considerable discretion when determining which documents were acceptable proof of identity.<sup>7</sup> The fact that registration occurred immediately prior to voting also made it impossible for voters to provide additional documentation if necessary. This lack of uniformity among countries jeopardized the integrity of the OCV voter register.

Only a voter's name and date of birth were recorded during registration; procedures indicating that the voter's "other information" should also be recorded were generally not followed. This inadequate data collection precluded the possibility of any kind of auditing of voter lists, or of using the voter lists to keep track of voters who voted more than once.<sup>8</sup>

The use of same-day registration and voting also meant that there was no possibility of displaying provisional voter lists for public scrutiny. While the IMIE recognizes the considerable time, energy and cost required for voters to make two separate trips to register and vote, public scrutiny of voter lists remains important to maintaining the integrity of the voter register.

---

<sup>7</sup>Iraqi passports were accepted but also passports and driver's licences from the host countries. Even German train passes were accepted as proof of identity.

<sup>8</sup>Organized multiple voting in Istanbul was documented by IMIE monitors. Subsequent to a special report submitted by the IMIE, 16 out of the 18 polling stations in Istanbul were cancelled by the IECI on January 4, 2006.

The existing voter register was not used because of concerns that omissions would cause delays in identifying voters on the polling days, and a simple mechanism was needed to add new voters or make changes at the time of polling. Technical challenges aside, this election was a missed opportunity to improve the existing OCV voter register and move toward building a permanent OCV voter register. Because this could not be done and full details of voters were not recorded, future OCV programs will again require that voters are registered.

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Record reference numbers and documents used by voters to establish their eligibility to vote.
2. Collect voter information in such a manner that it can be reused for future elections.
3. Ensure that adequate time is allowed for public display of provisional voter lists.
4. Issue a standard list of acceptable documents that will be used to establish Iraqi citizenship.

#### **Polling**

Voters were registered and cast their ballots in “polling” stations – typically a small room or a roped-off section of a larger space, such as an auditorium. The steps of ballot issuing, ballot marking, voter inking and ballot casting were well executed and understood by both polling staff and voters. However, some technical problems related to inking of voters and the handling of the complex ballot created difficulties and allowed opportunities for abuse by voters and polling staff.

#### *Inking and Multiple Voting*

Indelible ink was used to mark voters’ right index fingers after they marked their ballots and prior to casting them. Since there was no voter list, ink was the sole means of preventing multiple voting. The application of the ink was inconsistent, and there were various reports of small numbers of voters removing the ink from their fingers using various chemical solvents, then trying to vote a second time. In most cases, polling staff were vigilant in preventing such abuse, and it is unlikely that more than a handful of voters succeeded in voting more than once. The notable exception to this vigilance was in Istanbul, Turkey, where polling staff repeatedly failed to ink voters or check for traces of ink on voters’ fingers. Any future OCV program will have to reconsider the use of voter ink as the sole means of preventing multiple voting.

#### *Ballot Paper*

The ballot paper consisted of four A3 pages clipped together. The large, multi-page ballot was difficult to handle for both voters and polling staff. The fact that the tick box for the entities was on the left-hand side and the number for each entity was on the right-hand side in an identical box confused some voters – particularly those not used to reading Arabic.

The complexity of the ballot meant that voters often required additional explanation. This sometimes led to polling staff or, occasionally, political entity agents moving behind the voting screen to “assist” a voter, thus compromising the secrecy of the vote. There were also frequent observations of family voting, with husbands marking the ballots of their wives, and cases of more than one voter behind a screen.

Only the page with the mark on it was to be put in the ballot box; the other three pages were to be removed and destroyed by the ballot issuer prior to the voter casting his or her ballot. This unusual extra step occasionally resulted in the wrong page, or more than one page, going into the ballot box. The voter’s choice was sometimes revealed during the removal of the marked ballot, and, more frequently, the three unused pages were shown, indicating which political entities were not supported. There were also cases of voters getting ink onto the ballot (and potentially spoiling their ballot) during the step of inking prior to casting a ballot.

### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Consider using voter ink in combination with other anti-fraud mechanisms, such as voter lists.
2. Design a simpler ballot, which does not need to be torn.
3. Train ballot paper issuers to explain clearly how to mark the ballot, to help in particular those voters whose first language is not Arabic.

### **Counting**

In most countries, counting was the most problematic procedure, marring an otherwise well-conducted election. Counting was conducted in polling stations by the polling staff. The decision whether to count on the evening of the last day of voting or the next day was taken by the country manager, with guidance from IECI OCV HQ.

The main problems reported during the count included:

- Inadequate planning for the space and tables required for such a large ballot made accurate counting difficult and reliable observation impossible.
- The difference between a valid and invalid ballot was often not understood by staff.
- Counting staff were poorly trained in some countries, resulting in confusion and delays.

As with the in-country vote, there was no provision or capacity to provide political entity agents or observers with a copy of the results sheets, although in most cases, results were posted and could be copied by hand. Despite these problems, the counting was assessed by IMIE monitors to be reasonably transparent and free of fraud. The average levels of blank ballots (0.37 percent) and invalid ballots (0.64 percent) were quite low by international standards and indicated a well-informed electorate and a liberal valid/invalid ballot determination process.

### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Provide training of staff in counting procedures separately from polling training.
2. Ensure that adequate space is provided for the counting of ballots.
3. Ensure that results are displayed for each polling station.

### **Tabulation and Transmission of Results**

There were concerns over how results were tabulated and transmitted to the IECI in Baghdad. Procedures were not followed consistently, and therefore, it was difficult to monitor this stage of the electoral process. In some cases, results (Form 133) were faxed to Baghdad, while in others, they were hand-delivered by the country manager (e.g. Lebanon). Sensitive materials were not properly stored and secured, with the exception of the German operation.

IECI OCV HQ checked that results sheets were correctly identified and labelled before transmitting them to the IECI in Baghdad for data inputting – although there was no audit per se.

Official results released by the IECI on January 20, 2006, indicate that 298,383 votes were cast. Where the IMIE could independently verify results, the numbers of voters were very close or identical to IECI figures. Unfortunately, figures could not be independently verified in all countries, and there were cases of unexplained discrepancies between IMIE and IECI figures.

### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Provide training for country managers in results tabulation and transmission.
2. Provide access to results at the level of polling station, polling centre and country to accredited agents or observers who request it.

3. Properly archive all sensitive materials (including ballots) until results are certified.

### **Observation Process (Political Entity Agents, Media, International Observers)**

The IECI accredited domestic observers, political entity agents, media agents and international monitors (IMIE) to observe OCV II. Political entity agents were present in all polling stations, and IMIE monitors were able to visit every polling station at least once per day.

Despite their heavy workload, the IECI OCV HQ management team was accessible, helpful and accommodating to IMIE monitors. Nevertheless, at the polling station level, IMIE monitors and other observers were not always given full access to the registration, voting and counting processes. The initial policy of preventing observer access to voter lists and turnout figures (later reversed) had the unintended effect of reducing the transparency of the election and creating tension between observers and polling station staff. This lack of transparency did not reflect any fraudulent behavior, with the exception of Istanbul.

The observation conducted by accredited political entity agents and the handful of domestic observation organizations was of a highly variable quality. In most cases, political entity agents did not receive training on procedures, nor did they sign the agent's code of conduct. They often interfered directly in the process, sometimes even directing polling staff on how to conduct their duties.

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Ensure that accredited observers are provided appropriate access to all stages of the registration, voting and counting processes.
2. Encourage political entities and observer groups to provide procedural training to their agents and observers.
3. Ensure that all observers and political entity agents sign and abide by the code of conduct.

### **Complaints Process**

Written complaints procedures for OCV were put in place immediately prior to the start of polling. The IECI Board of Commissioners in Baghdad was responsible for receiving and adjudicating complaints for OCV.

Political entity agents often reported that they did not feel that complaints against the IECI could be fairly adjudicated, especially given the requirement that official complaints must be signed by an IECI official. Informal complaints, expressed verbally to IMIE monitors, commonly focused on alleged bias in staff recruitment, the possibility that non-Iraqis were being allowed to vote and the removal of voter ink by voters.

#### *Recommendations to the IECI*

1. Increase the capacity of the IECI to investigate OCV complaints in a timely manner.
2. Revise the complaints form available in polling stations so that it no longer requires the signature of polling officials.

### **Conclusions**

Despite time and resource constraints, the IECI successfully conducted the Out-of-Country Voting Program in 14 out of 15 countries according to acceptable international standards. The positive achievements of the OCV program were many and included:

- The same-day registration and voting allowed approximately 298,300 voters to vote with minimal inconvenience (a 12.6 percent increase in voter turnout over OCV I).
- There were no significant security incidents.
- The process appears to have been implemented according to international democratic standards with minimal fraud.
- Costs were significantly reduced from OCV I by using proven staff and systems.
- International expertise gained during OCV I was used effectively for OCV II.
- There was a high level of support from host governments.
- Local incidents of fraud, when detected, were dealt with firmly and appropriately by the IECI.

It must be noted that throughout the OCV operation, the IECI was receptive to criticism and suggestions for improved implementation. IMIE monitors were for the most part welcomed by IECI staff (access to voter lists and results forms notwithstanding). At no time was there serious concern about the integrity of the IECI or of the OCV program.

It is fully acknowledged by the IMIE that the IECI faced enormous challenges in achieving the OCV Program – effectively implemented in six weeks. It is commendable that the OCV Program was as effective and successful as it was – due in large part to the dedicated work of IECI staff, international advisors and the goodwill of the voters. However, it should also be acknowledged that this program was unnecessarily rushed, and this undermined implementation and limited the application of lessons learned from the previous program. It should also be acknowledged that the success of OCV was due in large part to the continued co-operation and support of the respective host governments.

The IMIE finds that the IECI has prepared and conducted an OCV program that generally met recognized standards of election law, planning and preparations. The December 2005 OCV built upon the experience gained in the previous OCV, and it offers many areas for further improvement of electoral administration and strengthening of associated democratic institutions. The recommendations in this report are made with a view to strengthening the capacity of the IECI and assisting it as it prepares for the next electoral event in Iraq.

Annex 1: Polling Locations and IMIE Monitors for Iraq OCV II

Country	Office/City	Polling Centres	Polling Stations	IMIE Monitors
Iran	Tehran	3	17	9
Iran	Ahvaz	2	10	4
Iran	Esfahan	2	10	3
Iran	Ilam	2	10	3
Iran	Kermanshah	1	6	2
Iran	Qom	2	10	6
Iran	Mashhad	2	10	4
Iran	Orumiyeh	2	8	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>33</b>
USA	Washington	1	4	3
USA	Chicago	1	6	2
USA	Detroit	2	20	5
USA	San Diego	1	7	3
USA	Nashville	1	5	1
USA	Los Angeles	1	4	3
USA	San Francisco	1	4	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>19</b>
Germany	Berlin	1	8	6
Germany	Cologne	1	12	6
Germany	Mannheim	1	9	5
Germany	Munich	1	11	5
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22</b>
UK	London	2	18	19
UK	Birmingham	1	16	19
UK	Manchester	1	16	13
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>
Netherlands	Utrecht	1	24	7
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>
Australia	Sydney	3	17	13
Australia	Melbourne	2	7	6
Australia	Perth	1	4	3
Australia	Adelaide	1	1	3
Australia	Brisbane	1	1	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>
Sweden	Stockholm	6	28	16
Sweden	Gothenburg	3	12	8
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>
Turkey	Istanbul	3	18	7
Turkey	Ankara	1	6	3
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>
Jordan	Amman	10	65	37
Jordan	Irbid	1	6	3
Jordan	Zarqa	1	6	3
Jordan	Muwaqar	1	3	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>45</b>
Syria	Damascus	10	40	82
Syria	Aleppo	1	2	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>84</b>
Lebanon	Beirut	4	16	11
Lebanon	Sidon	1	4	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>
Denmark	Copenhagen	3	18	8
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>
Austria	Vienna	2	8	5
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
Canada	Ottawa	1	4	2
Canada	Calgary	1	4	2
Canada	Montreal	1	5	2
Canada	Toronto	1	15	10
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>
UAE	Dubai	1	18	7
UAE	Abu Dhabi	1	7	10
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>48 Deputy Chief Electoral Officer</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>381</b>