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ON SUSTAINING PEACE

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This Toolkit for Citizen Observers is composed of five guides covering respectively:

- **Guide for Civil Society on Sustaining Peace through Elections**
- **Guide for Civil Society on Election Observation Reporting**
- **Guide for Civil Society on Observing Elections from a Gender Perspective**
- **Guide for Civil Society on Electoral Reform**
- **Guide for Civil Society on Monitoring Social Media during Elections**

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF CSO INITIATIVES TO PREVENT ELECTORAL VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

1.1 About this guide

This guide aims to increase awareness of the range of ‘tools’ available for civil society organisations (CSOs) to prevent and/or mitigate electoral violence throughout the electoral cycle. The guide identifies 19 tools that CSOs can use to prevent and/or mitigate electoral violence. These tools were identified following an extensive review of recent civil society initiatives and interviews with practitioners from all regions of the world. They are divided into the four ‘phases’ of the electoral cycle:

- 1 The democratic strengthening phase (also known as the ‘inter-election period’), from six months after an election until 12 months prior to an election
- 2 The pre-election phase, from 12 months prior to an election until election day
- 3 The election day phase, covering the immediate election day processes
- 4 The post-election phase, from after election day until six months following an election.

While the division of the electoral cycle into these phases may appear somewhat arbitrary, especially as these concepts differ between countries and regions, it has been done to demonstrate how different types of initiatives can be useful at different points in the electoral cycle. This should be useful for CSOs and donors who are considering the sequencing of activities that would be relevant for a particular country. This structure is also meant to stress the need to address the issue of electoral violence throughout the electoral cycle, which will be further discussed below. At the same time, some tools that have been assigned to a specific part of the cycle can be useful for a longer period or even throughout the cycle, and this has been indicated in the guide.

For each tool, a ‘country example’ has been selected to illustrate how the tool has been used successfully by a CSO in a specific country context. For some tools, there are a wide variety of CSO initiatives that have been conducted, and those in the guide are only a small selection. For those who would like further information on a specific tool, ‘additional resources’ are also identified, where they are available.

Although there is considerable academic literature on the issue of electoral violence, less information is available on how CSOs and other stakeholders can develop initiatives to prevent or mitigate it.



For this reason, the European Commission United Nations Development Programme Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance (EC-UNDP JTF) plans to launch a searchable online resource manual that collects tools to assist all electoral stakeholders with developing effective initiatives for the prevention and/or mitigation of electoral violence. This guide, which has been commissioned by the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), is informing those aspects of the resource manual targeted at CSOs.

1.2 Understanding electoral violence

Elections are intended to act as a mechanism for peacefully resolving political conflict between stakeholders vying for power. However, while elections themselves do not cause conflict or violence, any flaws in an election process may act as triggers for more deep-seated and often long-standing tensions between groups that may result in acts of violence. Such underlying factors are known as 'root causes.'

Electoral violence is a form of political violence that is often aimed at influencing an electoral outcome, and therefore the distribution of power¹. It can take place at any point in an electoral cycle and can affect any stage of the process, including electoral law reform, voter registration, candidate registration, the campaign, election day or the results process. It can be perpetrated by any electoral stakeholder, including political party activists, state actors such as security forces, and non-state actors such as rebel or terrorist groups.

Policymakers tend to be, perhaps understandably, most concerned about preventing widespread, lethal electoral violence, such as occurred during the aftermath of the 2017 Kenya presidential elections. However, electoral violence more frequently occurs at a localised level and includes nonlethal forms of violence such as voter or candidate intimidation, harassment, or the destruction of infrastructure, ballots and information systems². Such acts of electoral violence are still significant as they act as significant barriers to participation and can undermine the credibility of the process, which also may contribute to more widespread violence.

Women and other vulnerable groups such as disabled persons and minorities are often disproportionately affected by electoral violence. Violence against women in elections has been increasingly recognised as a distinct issue to be addressed and strategies for its prevention have been discussed by practitioners over the past few years³.

¹ United Nations Department of Political Affairs, 'Policy Directive: Preventing and Mitigating Election-related Violence', Ref FP/01/2016, 1 June 2016, p.4.

² Claes, Jonas, p. 4.

³ See for example, UN WOMEN Preventing violence against women programming guide, IFES Violence against Women: A Framework for Assessment, Monitoring and Response and NDI's Votes without Violence: A Citizen Observer's Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections.



1.3 Approaches to prevention and mitigation of electoral violence

Why focus on electoral violence?

Over the past decade, there is growing awareness among CSOs and donors of the need to specifically target electoral violence, rather than addressing it either as part of an overall conflict prevention approach, or as part of electoral support. Especially in those contexts where electoral violence appears to be endemic, the security situation is precarious (including post-conflict elections) or where the risk of electoral violence is assessed as significant, the stakes are so high that they provide justification for such a focus - ideally with a multi-stakeholder and long-term approach. Not only can widespread electoral violence mar an election or ignite a civil conflict, it may also threaten to delegitimise democratic institutions and processes in general. Once the credibility of democratic institutions is undermined, it can be very difficult to rebuild.

In other contexts where the potential for electoral violence is present but not viewed as a primary issue, it is still necessary to include prevention and mitigation of electoral violence, or 'promoting peaceful and inclusive processes', in democracy support activities. All electoral programming should be conflict sensitive - to avoid having a negative impact and maximise the positive impact on any conflict dynamics.

Bringing peacebuilding and election support actors together

While awareness of the need for prevention and mitigation of electoral violence has grown in recent years, there remains a gap between the conflict prevention/peacebuilding community and the electoral support community - both at the policymaking and implementation levels. Both practitioner communities recognise the need for prevention and mitigation of electoral violence, however they tend to address the issue from their own perspective, with their own tools. In general, the peacebuilding community focuses on addressing electoral violence through mechanisms of dialogue, mediation, infrastructures for peace and peace messaging. At the same time, the election support community tends to focus on improving election integrity through election observation, electoral assistance and voter education.

Addressing electoral violence from both aspects is important for effectively addressing electoral violence. At the same time, it is necessary to have in-country coordination mechanisms in place both to prevent any overlap or counterproductive measures, as well as to maximise the benefits of a comprehensive approach to the issue of electoral violence. Also it is useful for these communities to exchange with each other more frequently at a policy level - so that both can better understand the specific tools available and how they can be used together for more impact. While it is unreasonable to expect conflict prevention organisations to develop in-depth election expertise, or for election support organisations to specialise in conflict prevention or peace-building, still both can start to bridge this gap in understanding.



Election support and conflict prevention/peacebuilding programming can work in a complementary way to prevent and mitigate electoral violence. Election support programming, including CSO efforts to observe each stage of the electoral process and advocate for electoral reform, seeks to improve the integrity of the electoral process, which can then lower the risks that flawed election processes trigger electoral violence. Such programming also increases transparency and promotes inclusion, which can increase confidence between electoral stakeholders and provide all parts of society with a voice. Civic and voter education efforts conducted by CSOs ensure that citizens understand their rights and responsibilities, and are empowered and informed on how to participate in elections, making them less vulnerable to various forms of intimidation and electoral violence.

At the same time, peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts can focus on addressing long-standing grievances between groups and other root causes of electoral violence during the inter-election period. Ongoing dialogue programming can promote trust among stakeholders between elections who are then less likely to commit violent acts during the election period. Infrastructures for peace can be used to resolve community disputes both outside of and during an election period. Existing early warning systems that engage grassroots civil society actors in monitoring conflict risk factors can incorporate election-related factors to provide information specifically on the risk of electoral violence.

Why civil society?

Experience has demonstrated that together with other electoral stakeholders, civil society has a key role to play in the prevention and mitigation of electoral violence. In polarised political contexts, civil society can act as a counterbalance to two (or more) contentious political parties. Peacebuilding actors in particular may be in a position to initiate dialogue between opposing political forces to move processes forward and break deadlock. Civil society has the ability also to work countrywide at the grassroots level, which is crucial for many aspects of prevention and mitigation of electoral violence, including for early warning, dialogue forums, civic and voter education, election observation and violence monitoring. Infrastructures for peace can act as a natural foundation for such initiatives. Civil society also forms networks and coalitions that represent a diverse range of groups – bridging divides and representing all sectors of society. When civil society builds inclusive networks, it provides them a strong platform from which to represent citizen interests in decision-making and dialogue processes – at the local, regional and national levels.



CHAPTER 2: **CSO INITIATIVES IN THE DEMOCRACY** **STRENGTHENING PHASE**

The 'democracy strengthening phase' is a crucial part of the electoral cycle. Encompassing the period between elections, this time period allows civil society organisations to build foundations that will promote peacebuilding and improved elections. For the purpose of this study, this phase is defined as the period from 6 months after elections until one year prior to the following elections. Many civil society actors maintain that for initiatives to prevent electoral violence to be successful, they have to be part of a long-term approach to address underlying causes of electoral violence. The following tools can be used during this crucial period.



2.1 Electoral reform advocacy

In the period between elections, CSOs can carry out activities to advocate for electoral reform in order to improve electoral integrity. Citizen observer groups and others often use the recommendations of election observers (national and international) as a basis for such advocacy efforts. Depending on the political context, such initiatives may include awareness-raising campaigns, to raise public awareness of changes necessary to the electoral framework and build public support for electoral reform. CSOs also may engage directly with decision-makers through targeted meetings and stakeholder roundtables. Once electoral reform is on the political agenda, CSOs can influence the debate by carrying out legal reviews and taking part in electoral reform committees.

Such electoral reform efforts can contribute to preventing electoral violence in several ways. Enhancing electoral integrity through measures such as improving frameworks for electoral dispute resolution and promoting the transparency of results reduces the risk of flaws in the process acting as a trigger for electoral violence. At the same time, measures that increase the inclusiveness of the process, for example by removing obstacles to candidacy or facilitating voter registration, may encourage public confidence and address grievances of particular communities.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In Ukraine, the CSO 'Group of Influence' is carrying out a countrywide advocacy campaign called 'Every vote has impact' to raise public awareness about the 1.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are currently unable to vote in single-mandate parliamentary and local government elections. The Group of Influence conducts public events in regions around the country and has held advocacy training for active IDPs. The activists are finding innovative ways to pressure the parliament to pass a draft law #6240 on IDP voting rights, so that citizens displaced during the conflict in the Donbass region and Crimea can take part in elections in the communities where they currently are located. The active electoral participation of IDPs in the communities where they live will allow them to better integrate and contribute to improved community relations. This reform is especially urgent following the recent decentralisation that has taken place in the country.

Additional resources:

Guide for Citizen Observers on Electoral Reform, European Union/Supporting Democracy, 2018.



2.2 Addressing electoral crimes

In many countries, citizens have little trust that those who commit electoral crimes will be held accountable. This can be due to several reasons, including inadequate legal frameworks defining electoral crimes and sanctions, lack of political will to enforce the rules and/or a weak judiciary. Failure to hold perpetrators accountable can damage public confidence in the electoral process and contribute to an atmosphere of impunity, where potential violators of electoral law feel that they can do so without any consequences. Impunity for electoral crimes has also been shown to be an underlying cause of electoral violence.

CSOs can promote electoral justice in a number of ways in the post-election and inter-election periods. CSOs can track electoral violations reported by election observers during the pre-election and election period to check whether they are investigated by authorities. They can monitor any cases that go to trial after elections and report on the quality of the process. They can also report quantitative data about the number of electoral crimes investigated, and how many result in prosecutions between elections. By reporting such data, CSOs can raise public awareness and promote debate about the adequacy of regulatory frameworks and effectiveness of electoral justice overall.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Following the 2015 local elections in **Ukraine**, the citizen observer group OPORA carried out extensive monitoring of the investigation of electoral crimes, including tracking of cases brought to court and their outcomes. It accessed quantitative data on the court cases through the Register of Court Decisions, and also made information requests to the Office of the Prosecutor and the State Court Administration. In its 2016 digest, OPORA found that 478 pre-trial investigations of electoral violations were initiated, resulting in 68 indictments. In 2017, OPORA reported on the penalties that had been imposed, and publicised the key findings using infographics on social media⁴. Through these findings, OPORA raised public awareness about liability for electoral crimes and promoted further discussion on the need for more thorough investigation and stricter penalties. OPORA is preparing an online database for tracking the investigation and prosecution of electoral crimes, which will make this information accessible to the public on an ongoing basis. It has also submitted a draft bill to the government, registered by the parliament in April 2018, which would improve the procedural aspects of investigations into electoral crimes. The police have requested that OPORA train their personnel prior to the 2019 elections.

⁴ See www.oporaua.org for more details



2.3 Civic education

CSOs conduct civic education on a long-term basis to educate citizens about key principles of democracy as well as their civic and political rights. Such an approach provides citizens with an understanding of why they should actively participate in elections and in their democracy more generally, as well as how to hold their representatives accountable. Civic education can be provided in primary and secondary schools, or can be disseminated in public discussion forums held in communities. While face-to-face sessions may be the most effective form of civic education, such activities are resource intensive and it may be more efficient to carry out or supplement civic education through media, such as community radio programmes or social media.

Civic education is often targeted to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including women, minorities, youth and persons with disabilities. Citizens in rural and remote areas may also have specific needs that can be addressed through civic education initiatives. Literacy rates and the use of minority languages should be taken into consideration when developing civic education initiatives.

The delivery and content of civic education programmes vary depending on the context. In conflict-affected or post-conflict environments civic education may have a particular focus on the need for peace-building and reconciliation. With the rapid introduction of digital technology in many parts of the world, social media literacy is much needed and can be integrated into civic education programming. This can raise awareness about the potential risks of social networks, including that misinformation and hate speech can be easily shared.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In Fiji, the Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF) has promoted the constitutional rights of citizens for more than 20 years, against the backdrop of a series of coup d'états and military repression, which have left citizens unaware about their rights as citizens and reluctant to engage in public participation. Since 1991, CCF has provided civic education on human rights, good governance, democracy and multiculturalism. In addition, CCF has been at the forefront of Fiji's electoral reforms and constitutional reforms, through submissions from citizens and organising public forums.

The general elections held in 2014 restored Fiji to a democracy after the 2006 coup. Since the elections, CCF has worked at community level to educate citizens about their rights and encourage understanding between ethnic groups in an effort to strengthen the foundations of the democratic system. With elections due to be held in 2018, CCF has been working with other CSO partners to educate citizens about their rights both during and after elections. CCF is also conducting public forums and dialogues at local level, to encourage citizens to bring their concerns to government and hold their elected representatives accountable for their actions.



2.4 Inter-party dialogue

Dialogue between political parties can be crucial for preventing and mitigating electoral violence, as the rivalries between parties and their activists can be key drivers of electoral violence. At the same time, responsible behaviour by party leadership during elections is often the most effective way to mitigate or prevent electoral violence.

Initiating inter-party dialogue in the ‘democracy strengthening phase’, outside of the tensions and divisiveness of the electoral period, can provide a window of opportunity for strengthening relationships and increasing understanding between parties. Such dialogue can be an informal or formal process to reach consensus around a shared issue of concern or interest. For example, political parties may wish to agree certain issues prior to an electoral process, or to develop a code of conduct. Party youth or women’s wings may also wish to establish dialogue with their counterparts in other parties on issues of shared interest.

In conflict-affected or fragile state contexts, distrust between parties, weak state structures and high stake contests may make such dialogue particularly challenging. In some cases, CSOs have played an important role as a trusted neutral intermediary in bridging these gaps, providing a safe space for bringing parties together for dialogue – whether at the national, regional or local level. To serve such a role, the CSO, including its leadership and the facilitator, have to be trusted by all parties and viewed as strictly non-partisan. The CSO should have a deep understanding of the political context and exercise political sensitivity throughout the process.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In Burundi, the Conflict Alert and Prevention Centre (CENAP), in partnership with Interpeace, established inter-party dialogue groups between political party youth wing leaders in seven locations during the years prior to the 2015 elections, because of concern that they could act as drivers of electoral violence. CENAP brought the youth leaders together to understand each other at a human level, rather than as representatives of parties. While it was very tense at the beginning of the process, over time the youth leaders established relationships and began exchanging phone numbers. Gradually the youth leaders recognised how they were instrumentalised by parties without gaining any real benefits and also committed themselves to joint activities to positively engage in the community, including by starting clean-up campaigns and football matches. When the political crisis occurred in 2015, after the incumbent President insisted on running for a third term despite widespread public protests, lower levels of tension were reported in areas where the dialogue groups had taken place.

Additional resources:

Political Party Dialogue: A Facilitator’s Guide, International IDEA, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, 2013

Working with political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2015



CHAPTER 3:

PRE-ELECTION PHASE

For the purpose of this guide, the pre-election phase includes the 12 months prior to elections. Of course some aspects of the pre-election process may start earlier than 12 months prior to elections, and many of these initiatives would ideally begin sooner as well. This is a critical period, as many key stages of the electoral process take place during the pre-election period and can have as much impact on the integrity of the process as election day itself. Any problems during these pre-election stages can also act as triggers for electoral violence.





3.1 Voter list verification

Voter list verification (or ‘voter list surveys’) can be conducted by citizen observer groups and other CSOs to provide the public with an independent indication of the credibility of a voter register prior to an election. Political parties and other electoral actors sometimes cast doubt on the credibility of a voter register, in some cases to provide a pretext for post-election complaints, should they lose the election. In a conflict-affected context, grievances about certain communities being disenfranchised or accusations of electoral fraud committed through manipulation of the voter register may be a source of tensions and even a potential trigger for electoral violence. By demonstrating the integrity of the voter register, or by identifying problems that can be remedied by electoral authorities prior to elections, CSOs can increase public confidence in the electoral process as a whole and contribute to peaceful and credible elections.

First of all, CSOs require access to the voter register to conduct a voter list verification. They then use a sampling and survey methodology to determine the credibility of the list. If the CSO is concerned about the accuracy of the list - that people are on the voter list who should not be (including deceased voters, for example) - it can conduct a ‘list to people’ survey to randomly select voters’ names and go to their address to verify if the information listed is correct. If instead a CSO is concerned that a voter list is not inclusive, it can use survey techniques to randomly select voters in a community and verify if they are on the voter list. Based on this survey data, the CSO can make a determination of the rate of accuracy and inclusiveness of the voter list, and make this information available to citizens.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In Côte d’Ivoire, the Civil Society Platform for Observing Elections in Côte d’Ivoire (Plateforme de la société civile pour l’Observation des Élections en Côte d’Ivoire – POECI) conducted a verification of the voters list prior to the 2016 legislative elections. Following the electoral crisis in 2010-2011 and subsequent violence, the voter list had been a source of political tension as the public lacked confidence in its integrity. The analysis affirmed the overall credibility of the voters list in terms of its accuracy. However, it also identified challenges related to inclusivity, as only 11.4% of the estimated population between 18 and 24 years old were enrolled to vote. As a result, civil society, the election commission and the international community are focusing more efforts on youth outreach and engagement ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

Additional resources:

Building confidence in the voter registration process: An NDI guide for political parties and civic organizations, National Democratic Institute, 2001



3.2 Pre-election observation

Citizen election observer groups can conduct pre-election observation, or long-term election observation, to provide oversight and enhance the transparency of each stage of the pre-election process, which can have as much impact on the integrity of elections as election day itself. Through scrutiny of pre-election processes such as candidate registration, the formation of election management bodies, selection of polling stations, conduct of the campaign, campaign finance and complaints and appeals, citizen observer groups provide impartial assessments of aspects of the process that could potentially act as triggers for electoral violence. Through their reports, citizen observers can raise public confidence in the elections, where warranted, and bring any identified problems to the attention of the public and authorities for remedial action.

Citizen observer groups typically conduct pre-election observation beginning 3-6 months prior to an election, with long-term observers deployed across the country. Long-term observers are typically required to fill a weekly or bi-weekly observation report form, detailing their findings on various aspects of the process. Brief incident or 'flash' reports are also sent when there is an incident that needs to be reported urgently. Long-term observers access information through direct observation of the phases of elections as well as through interviews with key electoral stakeholders.

Citizen observer groups may also wish to observe specific stages of a pre-election process, including prior to the pre-election period, such as constituency boundary delimitation or voter registration. In some contexts, perceived manipulation of these processes could act as a trigger for electoral violence or tension.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Elections in **Zimbabwe** have been characterised by a high degree of mistrust among citizens and have frequently been affected by violence. For the July 2018 elections, the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) deployed long-term observers (LTOs) to observe pre-election processes including voter registration, political party primaries, candidate nomination hearings and the campaign in all 210 parliamentary constituencies. LTOs completed online checklists for each process, and sent them to the headquarters where they were analysed. They also completed bi-weekly, then weekly, report checklists where they could comment on election preparations, political tensions, the overall campaign environment and any interference or misuse of administrative resources by the local authorities. In all of these efforts data on violence against women and women's participation as a whole was collected through the checklists. LTOs also sent specific incident reports on anything serious that occurred in their constituency. ZESN leadership regularly issued pre-election reports based on the data collected, and went on to observe the election day and post-election processes.

ZESN's long-term approach to observation highlighted the fact that while processes were generally well administered, the integrity of the election was undermined by high levels of intimidation, coercion and an unlevel playing field.

Additional resources:

Handbook for European Union Election Observation (3rd edition), European Union/Election Observation Democracy Support, 2016

Handbook for Long-Term Election Observers, Organization for Security and Cooperation Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2007



3.3 Early warning and response

Generally, early warning systems are platforms that receive and analyse data to assess it for impending signs or increasing possibility of violence. Early warning systems or platforms established to prevent and mitigate election-related violence bring together a number of electoral stakeholders, including potentially the electoral authorities, security agencies and CSOs. While early warning systems for electoral violence should ideally operate on a continuous basis to benefit from a longer-term perspective, they are often set up approximately 12 months prior to an electoral process.

The role of CSOs within such platforms is often to collect qualitative and quantitative data on a range of observable indicators at the grassroots level that is fed back to the central level. In contexts where a peace infrastructure is already in place, it can be leveraged to provide data related to risks of electoral violence⁵. In such cases, peace-building CSOs can apply their existing skillsets to an electoral context.

Once information is collected at the central level, it is usually analysed and coded using geo-referencing or colour shading on maps. The analysis informs the development of early warning alerts that provide qualitative and visual information on the specific risks that have been identified. Early warning alerts are then provided to those stakeholders that can act to prevent or mitigate violence.

While CSOs may lead their own 'early warning' efforts, the effectiveness of such efforts will largely depend on the degree to which they are able to collaborate with official actors who are mandated to act against violence. In some countries where state authorities are not willing to cooperate with civil society, CSOs will be limited in their ability to initiate action, but may still be able to make an impact through the documentation of cases and perpetrators of electoral violence.

Increasingly, generic early warning systems are including indicators designed to identify risks of violence against women in elections (VAW-E) and are developing appropriate responses. Women's organisations are well-placed to ensure that such a gender perspective is included in early warning systems, and may also act as an additional data source.

⁵ For more information, see Alihodžić, Sead, 'Electoral Violence Early Warning and Infrastructures for Peace', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 2012, 7:3, 54-69.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is a regional peacebuilding organisation that has established networks of over 500 member organisations throughout West Africa. Since 2002, WANEP has partnered with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the implementation of a regional early warning and response system called ECOWARN. In recognition of the fact that elections have sometimes sparked violence, WANEP has recently strengthened early warning systems around elections in several target countries (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia), working with community organisations to identify potential electoral violence risks and by developing and monitoring a number of customised indicators. If its analysis points to a heightened risk of electoral violence at any point in the election cycle, WANEP develops recommendations for prevention activities, which it transmits to stakeholders.

Additional resources:

The Guide on Factors of Election-related Violence External to Electoral Processes, International IDEA, 2013

The Guide on Factors of Election-related Violence Internal to Electoral Processes, International IDEA, 2013



3.4 Monitoring of security agencies

Security agencies have an important role to play in ensuring the security of each stage of the electoral process. At the same time, they have a particular responsibility to respect the civil and political rights of voters and other electoral stakeholders, and to facilitate their ability to exercise these rights during elections. On election day, the security agencies are responsible for maintaining a peaceful environment at polling stations that ensures an orderly process and allows voters to cast their ballot free of any interference or intimidation. Unfortunately in some contexts, the state security agencies act as key perpetrators of electoral violence, in which case there is a need for accountability.

CSOs can play a key role in monitoring the performance that security agencies play on election day through the deployment of specially trained observers to observe the conduct of security personnel on election duty at polling stations. Given the nature of this work, it is generally most appropriate for CSOs with security sector expertise to take on this type of specialised monitoring. CSO monitors complete and submit checklists to report on the adequacy of the security provided, as well as incident reports to communicate urgent security issues more rapidly to the headquarters. Findings should be analysed and reported to the public and electoral stakeholders in a press conference, with recommendations for how the provision of security can be improved in the future.

The scope of the monitoring should be based on the specific context of the country – using conflict analysis or early warning data on the specific risks to the electoral process. In some countries, election day may be the most important period to monitor, while in others the actions of security agencies during the pre-election or post-election period may merit more attention. In some contexts it may be most important to focus on regional 'hot spots', while in others it may be more important to monitor across the country. In some cases CSOs have also conducted perception surveys and interviews to gauge public expectations on the role of the security agencies during elections.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

As part of its work on election security management in **Nigeria**, the CLEEN Foundation undertakes specialised monitoring of the conduct of security officials on election duty. The monitoring aims to enhance the overall security of the election, ensure a safe space for voters to cast their ballots and provide real-time information to the Independent National Electoral Commission, the Nigeria Police Force and other critical stakeholders involved in managing and securing the elections. CLEEN partners with the Police Service Commission to ensure that police officers on election duty remain professional and that reports of misconduct are addressed in line with its mandate and in the interest of safe and credible elections in Nigeria. The CLEEN Foundation is monitoring the conduct of security agencies for the 2018 off-cycle elections of Ekiti and Osun States and the 2019 general elections⁶. For the 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State, CLEEN deployed 43 election observers in the 16 local government areas of the State to assess the conduct of security agencies during the election. The observation effort was informed by the findings of the CLEEN Foundation regional Security Threat Assessment, which included Ekiti State. On election day, specially trained observers were deployed to polling stations and completed checklists focused on the deployment and conduct of security personnel. A call centre was also established to receive reports from citizens on any logistical, security or technical challenges during the elections. CLEEN published a post-election statement assessing the role of security personnel in the process, which included a number of recommendations on improving election security in Nigeria.

Additional resources:

Guidelines for Public Security Providers in Elections, OSCE Office for Democratic Elections and Human Rights, 2018

⁶ See <https://cleen.org/2018/07/16/post-election-statement-by-cleen-foundation-on-the-14-july-2018-governorship-election-in-ekiti-state/>. Project funded under component 5 of the EU Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN).



3.5 Voter education

Voter education is crucial to ensure the meaningful participation of the electorate. While the electoral authorities have the main responsibility for providing voter education, CSOs are also well-placed to conduct voter education and can complement official efforts with their own initiatives, ideally coordinated with the electoral authorities to ensure accuracy of information.

Voter education can serve several purposes:

- Firstly, it should convey basic information to voters on how to vote, including the timing of elections, opening hours of polling stations, voter eligibility and how to check the voter list, required ID documents, how to fill out a ballot paper and special measures in place for disabled persons.
- It should also provide impartial information about the political choices available to the voter – including political parties or specific candidates, depending on the electoral system in use.
- It can motivate voters that it is important for them to participate in the election process, and remind them of their rights, including to a secret ballot.
- And, finally, it can pass important messages on how to promote electoral integrity, including by discouraging vote-buying, election manipulation and acts of violence, including intimidation.

Specific vulnerable groups such as women, minorities, disabled persons, illiterate persons and those in rural areas often have specific needs in terms of voter information and education, and special efforts should be made to reach such communities by identifying target groups for a voter education campaign. Target groups may require their own voter education messages that meet their specific needs, as well as considerations for ensuring the accessibility of voter education materials and activities – for example, using pictures or face-to-face presentations for illiterate people, braille and audio versions of materials for the disabled, and minority language versions of materials.

In a conflict-affected or fragile environment, voter education campaigns can be particularly important to promote the integrity of the electoral process through better informed voters and by raising public confidence in the process and citizens' ability to effectively participate.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In **Lebanon**, after years of discussion, the parliament approved a new electoral law adopting the proportional representation system for the first time in its history⁷. However the new system was adopted less than one year prior to the May 2018 parliamentary elections, providing very little time for voters and other stakeholders to understand the implications. In response, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) launched a comprehensive voter education campaign to communicate the procedural changes in the new electoral law to the public, and to explain its main features to all stakeholders. One of LADE's values is to increase the level of awareness and highlight the importance of citizens' participation and mobilisation around their civic and political rights.

In the 12 months prior to parliamentary elections, LADE mobilised its experts to study the new electoral law 44/2017 with regard to the voting mechanism, vote counting, and seat allocation. A comparative analysis between the current and the previous electoral law 25/2008 was also made. The findings were reflected in a PowerPoint presentation, instructional handouts, and an information video. These materials were used in town hall meetings, interactive forums, and informative sessions, which LADE organised with the aim of raising the awareness of citizens about the new electoral law. In total, LADE organised 122 town hall meetings across the 15 electoral districts, 7 interactive forums, four university forums targeting first time voters, and 135 training sessions for 1380 LADE observers.

⁷ See Assessment of the Lebanese electoral framework, Democracy Reporting International and LADE, December 2017.



3.6 Violence monitoring

In conflict-affected or fragile contexts, it can be useful for CSOs to conduct electoral violence monitoring in the pre-election, election day and post-election periods. Monitoring and reporting on incidents of electoral violence, including cases of harassment, intimidation and gender-based violence, can help to hold perpetrators to account and counter the impunity that often allows such violence to spread. Providing verified information on electoral violence helps to counter rumours which can spread rapidly with the use of social media, and which can be dangerous in the highly charged atmosphere of an election. Such monitoring efforts can also be credible sources of information for election authorities, political parties and security agencies, which should take action to prevent or mitigate violence from occurring.

Electoral violence monitoring can be combined with citizen election observation efforts, or can be done separately, depending on the context. CSOs engage volunteer observers across the country to document and verify any incidents of electoral violence using a standard checklist. Violence monitors liaise regularly with local electoral stakeholders, including the police, and complete checklists with details of a particular incident, including the type of incident, its severity, the victim, the perpetrator, and any actions by authorities to investigate. Checklists are sent regularly to the headquarters and the CSO provides regular public reporting based on its analysis of the data received. Reports can also be transmitted for further action to those authorities and stakeholders who can take action to prevent or mitigate electoral violence.

There is increasing awareness of the disproportionate impact that electoral violence has on women. Violence against women in elections acts as a significant barrier to women's participation, including as voters, candidates, party activists and election officials. CSOs that conduct electoral violence monitoring can take steps to understand what role gender-based violence has in elections, and how their monitoring efforts can take this into consideration. It can be useful for CSOs to engage early on with women's groups and other stakeholders to understand what potential risks women face at each stage of the electoral process and how the monitoring can assess these aspects. Data collection on violence against women in elections can be particularly challenging, as acts of violence often happen in private spaces where monitors have no access.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Founded in 1997, the Centre for Monitoring Electoral Violence (CMEV) in **Sri Lanka** was one of the first civil society efforts to conduct focused monitoring of incidents of electoral violence. Over the past 20 years CMEV has developed a comprehensive methodology for monitoring electoral violence during the pre-election, election day and post-election periods, as well as a reputation for credible and impartial reporting. CMEV aims to decrease electoral violence by reducing the potential political gains available to candidates and others who use violence. It does this by 'naming and shaming' perpetrators of verified incidents, and discouraging voters from voting for violent actors. For the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections, CMEV used social media networks in a strategic way to increase the reach and impact of its reporting, including through Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and podcasts, reaching an unprecedented number of citizens and demonstrating the potential for digital technologies in a relatively closed media environment.

Additional resources:

Brothers, Julia and Michael McNulty, Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence through Citizen Election Observation, National Democratic Institute, 2014

Hubbard, Caroline and Claire DeSoi, Votes without Violence: A Citizen Observer's Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections, National Democratic Institute, 2016



3.7 Crowdsourcing platforms and incident mapping

Crowdsourcing platforms have been used by CSOs during elections to encourage citizens to participate in the gathering of information on any problems, irregularities or incidents of violence. Usually crowdsourcing platforms are hosted online, and can receive information through a hotline using several channels, including SMS text messages, phone calls and online data forms. Often platforms allow photos and videos to be uploaded. Information is generally received by volunteers in a central data centre, where it is analysed and sent for verification. Verified data on incidents is often shared with the public using visual mapping software.

Crowdsourcing platforms that report verified information on electoral violence can provide citizens with reliable information and help to dispel rumours during the pre-election, election day and post-election periods. Such platforms also provide a way for citizens to engage in the process and contribute to the mitigation of electoral violence. In contexts where the state controls information, crowdsourcing can be a source of independent information on the evolving election security environment across the country. In some cases citizen observer groups and electoral violence monitors use crowdsourcing to augment the reports of their own monitors, and then use their own network to verify the reports. Some crowdsourcing platforms also include 'feedback loops' to quickly transmit information to relevant election stakeholders who can respond to any incidents.

Crowdsourcing also has limitations that should be taken into account. Citizen reporters are not trained and do not follow any kind of methodology for data collection and reporting, which can lead to inconsistencies. Reports generally include negative information, and may be biased towards areas where people are better informed about the platform, such as urban areas⁸. Finally, it is possible for bad actors to report false information in an effort to mislead citizens regarding the actual situation on the ground. However, some platforms are able to mitigate this risk by working closely with trusted partners on the ground, who can check reports for their accuracy.

⁸ Brothers, Julia and Michael McNulty, Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation, National Democratic Institute, 2014, p. 39.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

The Ushahidi platform was developed to report on the post-election violence that followed the disputed 2007 presidential elections in **Kenya**. The online platform, named after the word for 'testimony' in Swahili, collected thousands of citizen reports of electoral violence by SMS text and online incident forms that were checked by volunteers and then posted on the website and visualised using a mapping software. The platform provided much needed information to citizens during the post-election crisis, as the state had banned live news coverage in an effort to control the situation, and there were few independent information sources to counter the many rumours that were driving the violence. For the 2013 elections, Ushahidi created the Uchaguzi crowdsourcing platform to again track and map citizen reports providing a picture of the election process, as well as establishing a feedback loop, so that information could be quickly transmitted to relevant stakeholders for response. Meanwhile, Ushahidi has developed open source software that has been used by various types of crowdsourcing efforts, for elections as well as in a number of other contexts⁹.

Additional resources:

Brothers, Julia and Michael McNulty, Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence through Citizen Election Observation, National Democratic Institute, 2014

Okolloh, Ory, 'Ushahidi or 'testimony': Web 2.0 tools for crowdsourcing crisis information', in Participatory Learning and Action, 59, pp. 65-70

⁹ For more information, see www.ushahidi.com





3.8 Pre-election dialogue forums

Dialogue initiatives aim to open lines of communication between conflicting actors on contentious issues in order to promote peace. While CSOs conduct dialogue initiatives at all levels, they often work at the grassroots level to address issues of local concern to citizens. Such local level efforts can build a foundation for peace-building initiatives at the regional or national levels.

In an election context, CSOs target local areas where electoral violence has taken place or where significant tensions have been identified. In these areas, CSOs identify perceived conflict actors and issues of contention that may spark violence during elections. Political parties and politicians often use such contentious issues during the run-up to elections to sow division and galvanise their supporters. Dialogue can help specific communities to counter these narratives and become peace actors, rather than drivers of conflict.

To be effective, such dialogue should be initiated significantly prior to the elections – at least 12 months prior and ideally even earlier. Such a timeframe is necessary to build trustful relationships between communities that can resist conflict dynamics. In situations where dialogue forums already exist, that infrastructure can be adapted for use during an election period. Similarly, dialogue forums that form during elections can be used in the inter-election periods to build trust and address ongoing issues of contention, including issues that act as underlying causes for electoral violence.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

As part of the 'Building Effective Responses for Peaceful Elections in Kenya' project implemented by Saferworld prior to the 2017 elections, dialogue was promoted at the grassroots level to establish positive relationships between communities considered to be adversaries. For example, in Trans-Nzoia county, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission brought together bodaboda drivers, who were seen to fuel electoral violence, together with representatives of security agencies, to discuss how they could share information to jointly promote peace and security during the election period. Through a series of dialogue sessions at the grassroots level, the bodaboda drivers recognised their role in promoting peaceful elections and the security agencies began to see bodaboda drivers as a source of useful information to prevent conflict. Despite challenges, the communities established relationships and lines of communication between each other, which were useful during the election period, including after the annulment of results, to mitigate electoral violence.

Additional resources:

Dialogue and Mediation: A practitioner's guide, West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), 2012



3.9 Media monitoring

Media monitoring can be conducted by CSOs to provide information to the public on the coverage of the campaign provided by media outlets, including the amount of access provided to political contestants and the balance of that coverage. Because the campaign period is critical for political actors to get their message out to voters and this period is typically the most regulated by the authorities to ensure a level playing field, media monitors often focus their work on this phase. However, it can be useful for CSOs to conduct media monitoring also during the pre-campaign period, when there may be much less scrutiny of coverage, or even on a longer-term basis. Media monitoring efforts communicate their findings to the public and electoral stakeholders through periodic reports, usually weekly or bi-weekly during the campaign period.

In contexts vulnerable to electoral violence, media outlets have a particular responsibility to report the news in an accurate and impartial manner, so as to avoid inciting tensions or violence. Media monitoring efforts monitor for incidents of harmful speech, as well as for disinformation, which can act as a trigger for electoral violence. In some countries where community radio plays an important role in providing information in local languages on elections to the public, media monitors may choose to focus on these outlets, as they speak to one community and may pose a risk for incitement if journalists are not professional.

The widespread use of social media worldwide has made the monitoring of social media for dangerous speech and disinformation during elections a particular priority for CSOs. The impact of social media on elections is increasing quickly, as this becomes a key source of information about politics and elections, especially for youth. Unfortunately social media also increases the speed with which harmful speech can be spread in an electoral context, making it a key driver for electoral violence.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In **Colombia**, the citizen observer group Electoral Observation Mission (MOE) assessed the impact of social networks on the country's 2018 presidential election process. The election followed the historic peace agreement that ended the 50-year conflict between the government and guerilla forces. MOE monitored 44,871,873 election-related messages on social networks, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and blogs for a six-month period. MOE analysed the message from three perspectives: aggressive or intolerant speech, 'fake news' and information on incidents of electoral violations (which could be misleading). It found that almost 10 per cent of messages (4,311,347) about the elections were aggressive or intolerant. During its monitoring effort, MOE consistently made recommendations to electoral stakeholders on how to remedy the situation. For example, while the initial period of monitoring saw a high number of intolerant messages that originated with candidates, following MOE suggestions and a code of conduct between political parties, there were very few such messages in the period immediately prior to the first and second rounds of the presidential election.

Additional resources:

Media monitoring to promote democratic elections: an NDI handbook for citizen organizations, National Democratic Institute, 2002

Election reporting: A practical guide to media monitoring, Article 19, 1998

Handbook on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2012



CHAPTER 4: ELECTION PHASE

While it is important for CSOs and other stakeholders to work throughout the electoral cycle to prevent electoral violence, the election itself remains a crucial stage and various tools can be employed together to promote a peaceful environment on and after election day. While election day is often peaceful, any flaws in the process due either to weak administration or manipulation, perceived or real, may act later as a trigger for electoral violence. At the same time, the increased use of new election technologies, including for voter identification in polling stations, electronic voting systems and results transmission systems, have introduced new vulnerabilities. Any malfunctioning or failure of such systems may trigger widespread electoral violence.





4.1 Situation room

In a number of recent elections, CSOs have created 'Situation Rooms' to coordinate communication related to incidents of electoral violence, including violence against women, and other violations during the immediate election period. Situation rooms are typically set up by a coalition of CSOs that focus on collecting, verifying, analysing and communicating instances of electoral violence and other violations, in order to prevent further escalation of tensions. While situation rooms typically have strong ties with citizen election observer groups, which provide them with updated information, some also track incidents in the media and receive crowd-sourced reports from citizens through hotlines, which it then attempts to verify.

Situation rooms can provide a forum for a coordinated rapid civil society response to unfounded rumours and other concerns during the elections, which may act as a trigger for violence. While it can be useful in some circumstances to make public statements on incidents, in other cases situation rooms may contact relevant stakeholders discretely to resolve an issue. Situation rooms rely on their relationships with election stakeholders including political parties, election authorities, government institutions, media, civil society, police and other security agencies in order to verify information as well as to address concerns.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

During the 2015 general elections, the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room played an important role as a coordination mechanism for gathering high-level civil society leaders around one table, which could provide leverage for mediation where needed. The Situation Room liaised regularly with the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), and was able to help it to pass messages that required public trust, such as the postponement of elections due to the security situation in some parts of the country. Convened by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), the Situation Room now comprises over 70 CSOs and is active during national, state-level and by-elections, as well as on an ongoing basis to promote an active, coordinated civil society approach.



4.2 Women's Situation Room

The Women's Situation Room (WSR) is a peace-building mechanism that has been replicated in seven African countries to mobilise women to actively participate in ensuring peaceful elections and to address any threats and incidents of violence during elections. The WSR engages and lobbies key stakeholders to actively commit to promoting peaceful elections. Through the reporting and monitoring of any incidents on an ongoing basis, the WSR seeks to resolve conflicts, reduce tensions and mediate disputes before they escalate. The WSR is active during the pre-election period, but increases its activities on the sensitive polling day and post-election period.

The WSR includes a group of Eminent Women Mediators comprising Eminent National Women who are trained as mediators and who engage key stakeholders during the pre-election period to secure their active support for peaceful elections, as well as Eminent African Women who come in-country to support the National Women Mediators in their interventions a few days before polling day.

A week prior to the polls, the WSR country secretariat establishes a physical 'Situation Room' as a focal point for all activities and it includes a call centre staffed by youth call operators, intervention desks staffed by the police, the elections commission and youth leaders, and a team of analysts who support the eminent women mediators with daily briefings to inform their intervention and mediation efforts during such a sensitive period. On polling day, all female observers trained by the WSR are deployed around the country and regularly report any threats or incidents of violence to the call centre. The call operators then record the details and send them to the Eminent Women Mediators, who are tasked with deciding how to resolve the issues that are reported, including contacting the electoral authorities, security agencies and/or political actors, with whom they will have established strong coordination mechanisms. They may also conduct quiet diplomacy in collaboration with international actors such as election observer missions and diplomatic missions, and act as arbitrators between rival political parties. The WSR is dynamic and flexible and is always replicated according to the country's specific political and conflict context.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In reaction to mounting tensions in the run-up to the 2017 presidential and legislative elections in **Liberia**, seven women's organisations came together to implement the Women's Situation Room (WSR-Liberia). The WSR had first been initiated in Liberia prior to the 2011 elections by the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) and has been replicated in six African countries since then. For the 2017 elections, the WSR-Liberia established a National Secretariat and five Regional Coordinating Hubs, run by women and youth coordinators who sensitised rural women and youth about the WSR and the need for peaceful elections. The WSR also established an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Mechanism, through which District Peace Monitors sent security alerts to the National Secretariat, which were resolved by the Eminent Liberian Women Mediators. The systems, structures and activities of the WSR contributed to ensuring peaceful elections, despite allegations by political actors of election irregularities. The Eminent Liberian Women Mediators in particular played a key role in convincing political parties to submit their post-election complaints to the Supreme Court rather than instigating acts of violence. They also explained the legal ruling by the Supreme Court that postponed the second round of elections to the public through radio broadcasts and an innovative tool called the 'Talking Bus,' where female lawyers, media representatives and the communications team of the WSR-Liberia traversed the counties interacting with communities.

Additional resources:

Report on the Women's Situation Room in Liberia 2017, WSR-International, 2017



4.3 Citizen election observation

It has become a regular practice worldwide for non-partisan citizen observer groups to conduct election observation. Such groups may consist of single CSOs, or may be coalitions or umbrella organisations that include a wide range of CSOs. On election day, citizen observers typically remain in one polling station to assess the opening, voting, closing and counting processes. When the counting is completed, observers follow the delivery and communication of results, as well as the tabulation from the local to the central level electoral authorities. Individual observers record their findings on a checklist, either manually or using a digital device, and then submit their findings to the secretariat of the observer group.

While citizen observers initially focused on election day, most organisations have broadened their efforts to include pre-election and post-election observation (see above, 'pre-election monitoring', and below, 'post-election monitoring'). In countries where there is a specific threat of electoral violence, some CSOs may choose to specifically monitor incidents of electoral violence (see above, 'electoral violence monitoring').

Citizen observer groups seek to enhance the integrity of elections through impartial monitoring and reporting on the electoral process. The presence of citizen observers may reduce the likelihood of electoral irregularities and raise public confidence in the election process, where warranted. At the same time, citizen election observation may also contribute to the prevention and mitigation of electoral violence. Where citizen observers enhance the integrity of the process, they are able to decrease the chances of flaws in the process acting as triggers for potential violence. By providing impartial reporting, they also may be able to dampen unfounded rumours that could also fuel violence around election day.

Citizen observer groups often include an emphasis on the participation of disadvantaged groups, including women, minorities and disabled persons. In some cases, citizen observer groups may choose to focus their observation efforts on these aspects, for example by conducting an observation of women's participation. By drawing attention to issues faced by specific vulnerable groups, citizen observers may help to prevent or mitigate the possibility for electoral violence committed against these citizens.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) is a coalition of 60 Pakistani civil society organisations based in all parts of **Pakistan**. For the 25 July general elections, FAFEN deployed 19,683 citizen observers to observe the process at 72,089 polling stations. FAFEN had observed the pre-election period, which had been marked by several terrorist attacks.

For the election day observation, FAFEN used a mobile application that enabled observers to report their findings throughout the day. However, the restriction on mobile devices in polling stations meant that observers could only report their findings following their day's observation. The use of the mobile app allowed FAFEN to quickly analyse observer data and release a comprehensive preliminary statement two days after election day¹⁰. FAFEN observers generally found the voting process to be well-administered, but noted this was overshadowed by a deterioration during the count and a breakdown in the newly introduced Results Transmission System. FAFEN also reported a more inclusive process overall for women, disabled persons and transgender people, although it noted several locations where women were barred from voting by agreement among community leaders and/or candidates.

Additional resources:

Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Electoral Observation Missions, Organization for American States, 2013

NDI Handbook on How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide, National Democratic Institute, 1995

¹⁰ FAFEN Preliminary Election Observation Report, 27 July 2018
<http://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/FAFEN-Preliminary-Report-General-Election-2018.pdf?x53217>.



4.4 Parallel vote tabulation

A parallel vote tabulation (PVT) is a projection of election results based on a random statistical sample of polling station results transmitted by election observers. PVTs have been used around the world by citizen observer groups to verify the accuracy of the results tabulation process.

The accuracy of a PVT depends on the reliability of the data provided by specially trained observers who must return results from their assigned polling station (data point) in a timely and accurate manner. Because PVTs relate to the results process, they are very sensitive and the communications strategy around a PVT – how and when to publicly release data – requires careful consideration.

The results tabulation process can frequently be a trigger for electoral violence in a closely contested election. Any delays in the results process can be a cause for suspicion and can raise tensions. When conducted with a credible methodology, PVTs can act as a powerful independent check on the results transmission process, preventing the manipulation of results and pushing the electoral authorities to announce results in a timely manner. The publication of PVT results can also help citizens and political parties to have confidence in the election results and be able to accept the outcome in a peaceful manner.

While parallel vote tabulations focus on quantitative data, sample-based observation methods are also used by citizen observer groups to accurately assess qualitative aspects on election day, such as whether election officials follow proper procedures, or whether the secrecy of the vote is protected.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In **Georgia** in 2017, there was a very contentious mayoral election in Ozurgeti between a candidate of the ruling party and an independent candidate, marked by widespread cases of intimidation and harassment both in the pre-election process and prior to the run-off election. Concerned about the closeness of the race and high level of tensions, the citizen observer group International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) decided to conduct a PVT and deploy observers to all polling stations for the run-off elections. On election night, the results were very close and came down to each individual precinct result. In one precinct, there was an attempt to provoke instability and question the result of the precinct, which would have affected the overall election outcome. However, ISFED observers had witnessed the counting process and could attest that it had been conducted properly, with the results communicated to the ISFED PVT centre. As tensions rose, ISFED remained in close contact with both the electoral authorities and the ruling party at central level. In the end, the ISFED PVT demonstrated that the independent candidate had won the election, which forced the ruling party to give up its attempts to annul the process, which could have caused violent protests and clashes in Ozurgeti.

Additional resources:

The Quick Count and Election Observation: An NDI Guide for Civic Organizations and Political Parties, National Democratic Institute, 2002



CHAPTER 5:

POST-ELECTION PHASE

While electoral violence can occur at any point in the electoral cycle, the post-election period is particularly sensitive. The results process, since it determines the outcome, can often act as a trigger for electoral violence – in particular if there is a sense that the announcement of results is intentionally delayed or concerns that there has been interference in the tabulation. Post-election complaints and appeals can also provoke tensions if court decisions alter or overturn results, especially if the decisions are widely viewed as politicised or unfounded. Post-election protests and demonstrations by political parties or wider civic reactions to the results can also lead to violence – either perpetrated by demonstrators who dispute the results, or by the security agencies, who can react to demonstrators in a heavy-handed manner.





5.1 Post-election monitoring

Depending on the political context of an election, the post-election period can become a lengthy, complex process that may be marked by violence if the outcome is contested. As with the pre-election period and election day, the post-election period can be monitored by non-partisan citizen observer groups. In particular, it may be necessary for long-term observers deployed across the country to continue their monitoring, especially if tabulation in certain parts of the country is a protracted process, or if there are recounts taking place at the regional or district level. Complaints and appeals may also be a decentralised process that should be monitored by observers. Post-election demonstrations and protests may also need to be observed, although citizen observer groups should advise their observers to take any safety precautions in case such events become violent. In certain situations, there may be widespread acts of political retribution against individuals and communities that should be monitored and reported.

Post-election monitoring follows a similar methodology as pre-election monitoring -observers should continue to communicate their findings using weekly or incident reporting forms, and the citizen observer group should maintain its public profile by issuing regular public reports at appropriate intervals. At the same time, observation during the post-election period may be less predictable in terms of the timetable and the key issues to follow. Citizen observer groups therefore need to be flexible in their approach, considering possible scenarios in their initial project planning and allocating necessary resources for adequate coverage of the post-election period. As international observers often depart in the weeks immediately following election day, post-election observation conducted by citizen observer groups can prove crucial.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

While the pre-election period running up to the February 2016 elections in Uganda was largely peaceful, election day was marked by tensions and allegations of irregularities and there were widespread concerns about violence in the post-election period. The CEON-U citizen observer coalition launched a post-election observation exercise to follow developments during this phase with a comprehensive observation effort. It deployed its 223 LTOs to constituencies in each of the 112 districts of the country. LTOs reported on a weekly basis through the end of March. The post-election observation and reporting focused on the results tabulation process, including recounts, complaints against the results and tracked incidents of electoral violence, including violence perpetrated by security agents, violence incited by candidates and public demonstrations.



5.2 Mediation

Mediation is generally defined as a structured process where an impartial third party assists the conflicting parties to negotiate a mutually acceptable outcome to a dispute¹¹. When elections end in dispute between the contestants, typically over the results, mediation can be necessary in cases where the judiciary is unable to resolve the dispute or where its impartiality is challenged. Election mediation efforts are often led by regional or international intergovernmental organisations, such as the United Nations or the African Union (sometimes called 'track 1 diplomacy'). However in certain situations, it has been local civil society actors that take on this role of mediation ('track 2 diplomacy'). This can be effective, for example, in contexts where international or regional actors are viewed as somehow involved or partial, or where the dispute is protracted and international actors are no longer engaged in the process. Civil society actors are typically more aware of local realities and more likely to be able to reflect the views of local communities in the process.

For civil society actors to successfully mediate an electoral dispute, they must be viewed as completely impartial and must gain the trust of all conflicting parties. Processes should be inclusive of all involved parties and decision-makers should be either in the room or kept abreast of developments, so to avoid an agreement being rejected at the final stage. Confidentiality of the entire process is also crucial for such processes. In some countries, electoral disputes have been mediated by religious leaders, while in others mediation is conducted by CSOs that are engaged in peace-building on an ongoing basis. In this way, existing peace structures can be leveraged and ongoing dialogue efforts can continue after an agreement to address underlying causes and long-term issues. CSOs involved in electoral disputes may also be in a position to help launch electoral reform efforts, which can also address triggers for violence in the electoral process as well as potentially lowering the 'winner takes all' stakes of an election.

¹¹ Kane, Sean and Nicholas Haysom, *Electoral Crisis Mediation: Responding to a rare but recurring challenge*, International IDEA, 2016, p.17.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

The 2007 elections in **Lesotho** ended in a political crisis between the two main parties fuelled by a dispute over the allocation of seats. While the dispute was initially mediated by regional and international actors, this effort collapsed in 2009, but was revived by civil society, led by the Lesotho Council of Non-governmental Organisations (LCN) and the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL). This civil society effort provided a platform for continued dialogue between conflicting parties, and shifted the dialogue focus from seat allocation to the reform of electoral legislation for future elections¹³. The local civil society mediators developed the structure of the dialogue and recorded the deliberations.

Additional resources:

Fomunyoh, Chris, 'Mediating election-related conflicts', Background paper, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2009

Kane, Sean and Nicholas Haysom, Electoral Crisis Mediation: Responding to a rare but recurring challenge, International IDEA, 2016

Shale, Victor and Robert Gerenge, 'Electoral mediation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho and Kenya', Conflict Trends, ACCORD, 2016

¹³ Shale, Victor and Robert Gerenge, 'Electoral mediation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho and Kenya', in Conflict trends 2016/4, ACCORD, 16 Feb 2016.







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