

ELECTORAL RISKS

Guide on Internal Risk Factors

Third edition



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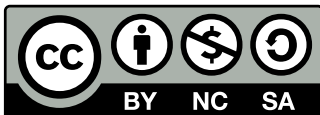
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NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The [first edition](#) of this Guide (Alihodžić 2013) was published as the support documentation for the Electoral Risk Management Tool. In 2018 it underwent a redesign (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). The [document](#) was re-formatted and allocated an ISBN and a digital object identifier (DOI).

This version of the Guide, published in 2024, includes a modified list of factors reflecting the new challenges to electoral processes. Empirical cases present in earlier versions have been removed because these are now systematically collected and updated through International IDEA's Global Electoral Monitor, among others (see: International IDEA n.d.). Instead, data collection questionnaires are added. The Guide is a living document and will be continually updated. International IDEA welcomes feedback and user experiences. For more information, please contact the International IDEA Electoral Processes team.

Abbreviations

CSO	Civil society organization
EDR	Electoral dispute resolution
EMB	Electoral management body
ERMTool	Electoral Risk Management Tool
ICT	Information and communication technology
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual
SSA	Security sector agency
SVA	Special voting arrangement

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This Guide outlines key *process-related (endogenous or internal)* risk factors that undermine electoral integrity, either as a cause or contributing cause.

The organization of elections is a complex undertaking for any society. It requires the broadest social mobilization and implementation of various electoral activities, while complying with strict procedures and deadlines. Therefore, many things can—and often do—go wrong due to deficient laws, logistical hurdles, technical and human errors, or unethical actions taken by key electoral actors, to mention a few. When risks materialize, they can generate stresses, shocks or crises that can undermine the integrity of the electoral process.

Combined with the partner Guide on external risk factors (Third Edition Alihodžić et al. 2024), which covers context-related risks, this Guide provides a more complete overview of electoral integrity risks.

USERS OF THIS GUIDE

The Guide has been developed as a resource for electoral management bodies (EMBs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and other state and non-state actors who have mandates and interests in protecting the integrity of elections. The Guide can be used as resource material for workshops, trainings and assessment and analysis efforts.

DEFINITIONS

Elections with integrity are defined as ‘any election that is based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in international standards and agreements, and is professional, impartial, and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle’ (Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012).

Electoral risk is the likelihood of negative occurrence in elections that may be caused by external or internal factors.

Internal risk factors (endogenous factors) are process-related conditions that may lead to increased electoral risks.

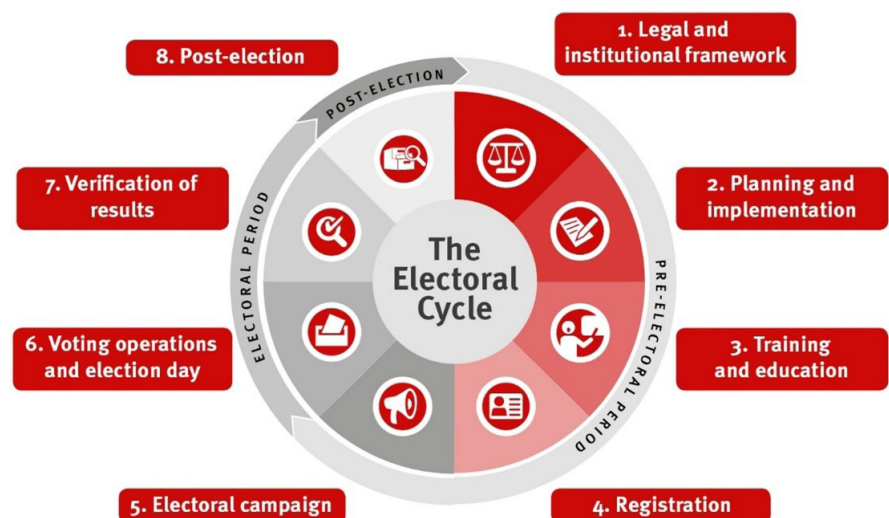
External risk factors (exogenous factors) are context-related conditions that may lead to increased electoral risk.

One simple way to distinguish between internal and external risk factors is that the former are election-specific and do not exist outside the electoral context, while the latter are characteristics of the context regardless of elections.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE FACTORS

This Guide indicates 26 internal risk factors which may present at different periods and phases of the electoral cycle (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The electoral cycle



Source: Based on Figure 2 in Catt, H., Ellis, A., Maley, M., Wall, A. and Wolf, P., *Electoral Management Design, Revised Edition* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2014), p. 16, <<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-management-design-revised-edition>>, accessed 22 April 2024.

In addition to a short introduction for each phase of the electoral cycle, the Guide provides a detailed description of each factor, including:

- 1. Key terms and concepts.** The box points to key topics and issues interrelated with a specific factor that need consideration beyond the description provided.
- 2. Introduction.** This section provides a general definition of a given risk factor, and the situations in which risks can materialize with negative consequences for electoral credibility and integrity.
- 3. Observable indicators.** This section points to the observable properties of the different factors that can help assess the state of a specific risk.
- 4. Data collection and analysis methodologies.** This section suggests data sources, collection techniques and analysis methods.
- 5. Questionnaires.** These can assist with the data collection. Editable questionnaires are shared in the Electoral Risk Management Tool's (ERMTool) software.¹

To avoid repetition (also between this document and the *Guide on External Risk Factors*) the authors take the following approach:

- Issues that cross-cut the electoral cycle may be introduced as stand-alone risk factors in the early phases and then highlighted in the *key terms and concepts box* and the *observable indicators* sections under various other risk factors. That is the case for political party financing.
- Some issues are not elaborated as a stand-alone risk factor but rather highlighted under several different risk factors. For example, different information and communication technology (ICT)-related issues can contribute to various risks across the electoral cycle. Inadequate or faulty ICTs may undermine the credibility of voter registration and the transmission of results, cybersecurity can undermine an EMB's capacity, etc. Such issues are revisited under various risk factors in the *key terms and concepts* and the *observable indicators* sections.
- Finally, some issues that cross-cut many internal risk factors are consistently referred to in this Guide but elaborated on as stand-alone risk factors in the *Guide on External Risk Factors*. These include gender-based discrimination and violence, and problematic online content/conduct.

¹ Available on International IDEA's website: <<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/electoral-risk-management-tool>>.

CUSTOMIZATION

The list of risk factors presented in this Guide is not exhaustive. Also, how risk factors are named or described may not fit local terminologies and specific contexts. Users may reasonably decide to merge some of the factors described, or generate several risk factors that refer to issues now elaborated under a single factor. Users should consider customizing vocabulary once critical risks are identified in a given country and electoral context.

THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Electoral legislation is the collection of legal structural elements defining or influencing an electoral process. As detailed in International IDEA's Handbook on *Electoral Management Design* (Catt et al. 2014: 34–44), the full legal framework for elections can be based on a variety of sources, including:

- **International documents**, for example article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (UN 1966).
- **Regional documents**, for example the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.
- **The constitution.**
- **National laws**, which may take the form of one comprehensive electoral code.
- **Provincial or state laws**, which in federal countries may govern the processes for provincial or state and local electoral events (as in Australia) or for national electoral events (as in the United States).
- **Ordinances and regulations** made by national or lower-level authorities.
- **Regulations, proclamations and directives issued by an EMB**, if it has the power to do so.
- **Customary laws and conventions** that may be integrated into electoral law, or EMB regulations or policies dealing with issues such as separate voter registration and voting arrangements for women and men.
- **Administrative policies made by an EMB or other bodies.**
- **Codes of conduct** (voluntary or otherwise) that may have a direct or indirect impact on the electoral process, for example, for EMBs, election participants, observers and election reporting by the media.

The legal electoral framework can also incorporate—rather than merely draw on—international standards. For example, articles 7 and 8 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) require that all appropriate measures are taken to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and to ensure that women, on equal terms with men and without any

discrimination, have the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations (UN 1979). Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in clauses 1 and 3 that 'Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives' and 'The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures' (UN 1948). Another important convention, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in its article 7.2 calls for signatories to 'enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties' (UN 2003).

Regardless of the wider institutional framework in a given country, there will always be a body or bodies responsible for electoral management. In emerging democracies, it is common that electoral legal frameworks promote electoral integrity by making EMBs responsible for control over the entire process. However, some functions—such as boundary delimitation, voter registration, the registration and funding of political parties, electoral dispute resolution, the certification and announcement of election results, and voter education and information—may also be contracted out by an EMB, or supported by other institutions or CSOs. If electoral functions are assigned to more than one institution, the legal and policy framework needs to be very clear on each institution's functional responsibilities, and on the hierarchy of authority and coordination mechanisms between them (Catt et al. 2014: 75–78).

1. AN UNFIT ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Key terms and concepts

inclusion in and exclusion from electoral processes—including representation of women and different social groups; electoral formula; boundary delimitation

As described in the International IDEA Handbook on Electoral System Design, at the most basic level, the electoral system translates votes cast into seats won by political parties and candidates (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2005).

Different electoral systems can aggravate or defuse tensions and conflict in society. Some systems can work well to ensure meaningful representation and participation of women and other typically marginalized segments of the population. Others will encourage the formation of strong single-party government. If an electoral system is not considered inclusive and fair, and political parties are not generally perceived to have a chance of winning next time around, losers may feel compelled to work outside the system using non-democratic, confrontational or even violent tactics (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2005: 6).

A study published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2009) indicates four variables of an electoral system that may trigger conflicts: (a) the formula for determining how votes are translated into seats; (b) district magnitude; (c) the votes-to-seat-ratio; and (d) boundary delimitation.

Observable indicators

1. Degree of inclusiveness and fair representation guaranteed by the electoral system.
2. Degree of accountability ensured by the electoral system.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct expert analysis of the effects of (a) the electoral formula; (b) district magnitude; (c) the votes-to-seat-ratio; and (d) boundary delimitation—on the representation of all significant groups in political institutions.
- Conduct surveys among political and non-political actors to obtain their perceptions about the appropriateness of the electoral system.
- Analyse geographical and gender dimensions of electoral system issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 1. Unfit electoral system

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
Electoral system is not inclusive and does not guarantee fair representation.						
Electoral system does not promote accountability.						
Boundary delimitation is manipulated.						
Electoral system discriminates and unduly excludes particular groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities and internally displaced persons.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

2. UNFIT ELECTORAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Key terms and concepts

international electoral standards and obligations; electoral reform; collision between legal acts; availability of special voting arrangements (SVAs)

As described in the International IDEA Handbook on *Electoral System Design*, electoral law is made up of one or more pieces of legislation governing all aspects of the process for electing the political institutions defined in a country's constitution or institutional framework (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2005: 176).

When electoral law is not robust enough to effectively regulate all aspects of electoral processes, risks to credibility exist. For example, if it does not cater for the effective inclusion of all eligible individuals and groups in ensuring their rights to vote or to compete in elections, the credibility of electoral processes may be exposed. Electoral law can also be designed to favour one party over another. Those who feel that they are being denied an opportunity to participate in electoral processes or that they will be competing on an uneven playing field may resort to different means, such as boycotts or violence, or may reject electoral results.

Failure to conduct periodic reviews to ensure an optimal legal framework for the conduct of elections, synchronized as necessary with other legal acts, will expose elections to increasing risks. For example, pandemics, floods or other crisis circumstances may dictate that special voting arrangements (SVAs)—such as postal voting, early voting, proxy voting, out-of-country voting—are introduced or expanded. If the legal framework is not flexible to accommodate such demands, the credibility of the process may be undermined. Reforms, if they happen, should take place before elections go into the implementation phase.

Observable indicators

1. Degree to which electoral law is compliant with regional and international electoral standards and obligations.
2. Existence of clearly communicated timelines and deadlines for introducing changes or new legal provisions.
3. Extent to which electoral law is adequate and comprehensive in regulating all aspects of the electoral processes.
4. Extent to which mechanisms are in place for the sensitization of stakeholders on electoral reform, in particular, political parties and civil society.
5. Level of confidence in electoral law.
6. Record of contestation against existing electoral law—number of official (administrative or judicial) and unofficial statements.
7. Degree of harmonization between election law and other national legal acts.
8. Existence of various voting modalities to facilitate all eligible groups that may experience special needs or circumstances.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct a specialist overview and analysis of electoral law and its impact on all groups of people. Analyse potential negative impacts in different regions and among different social groups, especially vulnerable groups, and political actors.
- Conduct periodic surveys among political actors and the general public targeting both men and women in an inclusive manner, ensuring that all vulnerable and historically marginalized groups are properly represented, to understand their levels of satisfaction with electoral law. Ensure that all survey data gathered can be disaggregated by age, sex, language, political orientation, ethnicity and religion, location, and any other relevant demographic dimensions.
- Collect information on official complaints filed and resolved at the administrative or judicial level that relate to electoral law. Distinguish between the groups who submit complaints and disaggregate the complaints (as above).
- Assess the inclusiveness and transparency of the legislative processes.
- Assess the existence and flexibility of provisions relating to special voting arrangements.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of electoral framework issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 2. Unfit electoral legal framework

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Electoral law is not harmonized with the constitution.						
Electoral law is publicly contested by the relevant actors (e.g. political parties, citizens and international actors).						
Electoral law is contested in court.						
Electoral law discriminates against particular groups, including women.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

3. INADEQUATE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING AND CAMPAIGNS

Key terms and concepts

finance disclosure; election campaigning; accountability; integrity; digital platforms

Regulations on political finance—the funding of political parties and election campaigns—are a critical way to promote integrity, transparency and accountability in any democracy. The need to regulate uncontrolled, undisclosed and opaque political finance is a major challenge to the integrity of elections in emerging and mature democracies alike. If it is not effectively regulated, political party financing can undermine the integrity of political processes and institutions and jeopardize the quality of democracy. Poorly regulated political finance can diminish political equality, provide opportunities for organized crime to purchase political influence, and undermine public confidence in elections (Hamada and Agrawal 2020; Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012).

Observable indicators

1. Existence of regulations, bans and limits on private donations/income—who can contribute to political parties and candidates and in what amounts.
2. Existence of regulations for public funding—the provision of direct and indirect public funding to political parties and candidates.
3. Existence of regulations on spending: rules for how much money political parties and candidates can spend, and on what. Consider any financial regulation of online campaigning, financial implications of campaign codes of conduct, etc.

4. Existence of financial reporting requirements, oversight, and sanctions available for breaches of regulations.
5. Level of support and guidance provided by the EMB to political parties in order to support their compliance with existing regulations.
6. Existence of a publicly accessible political finance disclosure site.
7. Timely and proportionate application of sanctions.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct an expert overview of the legal framework for political party financing and campaigning. Analyse the extent to which it establishes a level playing field for all political actors. Indicate stakeholders advantaged and/or disadvantaged by the framework.
- Review EMB materials and website, and conduct surveys with stakeholders to assess the quality of guidance provided by EMBs to political parties on political party financing.
- Establish the existence of reporting requirements and levels of compliance.
- Collect information about oversight capacity and practices, complaints and sanctions relating to political party campaigning.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of political finance issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 3. Inadequate regulatory framework for political party financing and campaigns

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
A regulatory framework for political party financing and campaigns does not exist.						
A regulatory framework for political party financing and campaigns does not establish a level playing field for all political stakeholders.						
EMB does not provide adequate guidance on political party financing and campaigning.						
Political stakeholders do not comply with rules for political party financing and campaigning.						
Political stakeholders who do not comply with political party financing and campaigning rules are not sanctioned.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

4. UNFIT LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK TO DEAL WITH EMERGING CHALLENGES

Key terms and concepts

information environment; epidemic; natural hazards; technology; cybersecurity

In recent years, most EMBs have had to deal with a range of new and fast-moving issues and challenges. For example, the use of social media exposes voters to an information environment where facts, disinformation, misinformation and political messaging become increasingly difficult to distinguish (Bicu n.d.). Further, political stakeholders are increasingly adopting the tactic of questioning the integrity of electoral results. Natural and human-made hazards (including cyber-enabled attacks) can impact negatively on several electoral activities, including voter participation, and therefore require that SVAs, among other measures, are extended or put in place (Asplund 2022; James, Clark and Asplund 2023).

Rigid, outdated or overly prescriptive legal and institutional frameworks can make it difficult or impossible to adjust electoral processes accordingly. At the same time, too much leeway for interpreting and implementing the legal framework can equally lead to controversial legal or administrative decisions and a loss of credibility with key electoral stakeholders.

For example, heavy-handed regulation of the online space can threaten democracy and credible elections, but a complete lack of regulation can unfairly benefit some actors over others, preventing meaningful political competition.

Emerging challenges make it increasingly necessary that state agencies beyond the EMB assume a critical role in providing the required capacity and expertise for the electoral process. In the absence of properly defined mandates and inter-agency relationships, the state may not be able to provide

adequate support on issues related to security (including cyber and traditional security), natural hazards, anti-corruption, problematic content and conduct in the information environment (online and offline), and health, among others.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of legislation that refers to emerging challenges and how to respond.
2. Existence of mandates among state agencies for providing needed support and expertise to the EMB for dealing with emerging challenges.
3. Existence of frameworks that require or promote inter-agency collaboration in dealing with emerging challenges.
4. Level of guidance and support that electoral stakeholders receive from the EMB in dealing with emerging challenges.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct an expert review of electoral law and other relevant legal frameworks to establish the extent to which regulation is comprehensive and allows for responding to emerging electoral challenges.
- Examine mandates, rules and procedures of the EMB and other agencies with election-related responsibilities in terms of dealing with emerging electoral challenges.
- Assess the procedures for, and quality of, collaboration between state agencies on election-related matters.
- Assess the extent to which the EMB and other state agencies provide information and guidance to electoral stakeholders on emerging electoral challenges.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of emerging electoral challenges/capacity and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 4. Unfit legal and institutional framework to deal with emerging challenges

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

Very low
Enter
number 1
below

Low
Enter
number 2
below

Medium
Enter
number 3
below

High
Enter
number 4
below

Very high
Enter
number 5
below

Not applicable
Enter NA
below

Provisions on responses to emerging electoral challenges do not exist in the legal framework.						
EMB and other state institutions do not have clear mandates and internal rules and procedures for dealing with emerging challenges.						
EMB and other state agencies do not collaborate on responding to emerging challenges.						
EMB and other state agencies do not inform and guide electoral stakeholders in relation to emerging challenges.						
Emerging challenges are not effectively dealt with.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

5. INADEQUATE EMB DESIGN AND COMPOSITION

Key terms and concepts

functional independence; impartiality; professionalism; transparency; trust

As defined in International IDEA's Handbook on *Electoral Management Design*, an EMB is an organization or body that has the sole purpose of, and is legally responsible for, managing some or all of the elements² that are essential for the conduct of elections and direct democracy instruments—such as referendums, citizens' initiatives and recall votes—if those are part of the legal framework. These essential (or core) elements include: (a) determining who is eligible to vote; (b) receiving and validating the nominations of electoral participants (for elections, political parties and/or candidates); (c) conducting polling; (d) counting the votes; and (e) tabulating the votes (Catt et al. 2014: 5).

There are three broad electoral management models—independent, governmental and mixed. However, no matter which model is used, it is of the utmost importance that the EMB can ensure the credibility of the electoral process and the legitimacy of the election results. EMBs are expected to follow principles of independence, impartiality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, professionalism and service-mindedness (Wall et al. 2006: 22–25).

If any of these constitutive principles are lacking, the EMB's work may be distrusted by key actors which—in contexts of sharp social polarization—can lead to the credibility of elections being undermined.

² In this discussion, 'EMB' is to be understood in the singular and plural (i.e. where there is more than one competent election management body in a given jurisdiction).

Observable indicators

1. Levels of trust and confidence enjoyed by the EMB across the country.
2. EMB's levels of independence and inclusive composition, including from a gender perspective.
3. EMB's level of impartiality.
4. Level of transparency demonstrated by the EMB in its work.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct an expert overview and analysis of the legal framework which regulates the establishment and the work of the EMB. Examine the extent to which a legal framework is gender- and conflict-sensitive; for example, does it ensure the representation of different groups (minority as well as majority groups)?
- Survey and interview political actors and different social groups in order to measure perceptions of the EMB's work and trust in it. Conduct surveys on a regular basis, targeting both women and men.
- Analyse the EMB's working practices relating to inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. Interview political actors and civil society groups on this particular issue (or include this in the above survey).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of EMB design/composition issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 5. Inadequate EMB design and composition

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

Very low
Enter
number 1
below

Low
Enter
number 2
below

Medium
Enter
number 3
below

High
Enter
number 4
below

Very high
Enter
number 5
below

Not applicable
Enter NA
below

EMB lacks independence (not able to work free of political dictates or influence).						
EMB lacks impartiality (favours specific political options and exhibits gender bias).						
EMB lacks professionalism (technical implementation of the electoral process is poor).						
EMB lacks transparency (interested parties are not able to get desired information from an EMB).						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements).						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

6. INADEQUATE MECHANISMS FOR THE RESOLUTION OF ELECTORAL DISPUTES

Key terms and concepts

functional independence; impartiality; professionalism; transparency; trust; alternative dispute resolution mechanisms

As explained in the International IDEA *Electoral Justice Handbook*, electoral dispute resolution (EDR) mechanisms provide a formalized structure for appeals through which electoral actions or procedures can be legally challenged. In addition, many societies benefit from alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that are mobilized to mediate electoral disputes. Disputes may arise at any stage of the electoral process (Orozco-Henríquez, Ayoub and Ellis 2010: 37–38); if effective and trusted EDR mechanisms are not in place from the outset, electoral actors may decide to resort to resolving disputed issues through protests, boycotts or violence. Such instances will undermine the credibility of elections.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of EDR bodies.
2. Degree of EDR bodies' accessibility.
3. Degree of EDR bodies' effectiveness.
4. Degree of EDR bodies' independence.
5. Degree of EDR bodies' impartiality.
6. Degree of EDR bodies' transparency.
7. Level of trust in the EDR bodies.
8. Extent to which EDR bodies respect relevant deadlines.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct surveys and interviews with political actors and different social groups to measure the degree of trust in the work of EDR bodies.
- Obtain figures on the number of election-related complaints received, resolved and pending a ruling from the relevant EDR bodies and disaggregate the complaints on the basis of sex, political orientation, ethnicity and religion, location, and any other relevant demographic dimensions.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of EDR issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 6. Inadequate mechanisms for the resolution of electoral disputes

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
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The election dispute resolution (EDR) system does not have sufficient structure/capacity.						
The EDR is not accessible to all parties.						
The EDR is not efficient in resolving electoral disputes.						
The level of trust in the EDR is low.						
EDR decisions are not respected.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

Once the electoral legal and institutional framework is finalized, planning and preparation for implementing electoral activities commence. Concrete steps may include the development of by-laws, such as rules and regulations, to operationalize specific legal provisions. The development of an election calendar will ensure that timelines are sufficient and comply with legal provisions. In some instances, periodic revision of the strategic plan may be needed. Furthermore, an EMB needs to consider revising or adopting processes that will improve the management of internal and external communication, management of ICTs, development of crisis management plans and implementation of risk management frameworks.

In all instances, developing operational plans is necessary for implementing the different phases of the current electoral cycle, such as voter information; registration of voters, political parties, candidates and observers; political party campaigning; polling and counting; and result management. Operational plans will contain activities to be implemented, timelines, geographical scope, human resources and training needed, budget and so on. Closely related to the development of an operational plan is the budgeting process. Some aspects of electoral operations, such as the procurement of ICTs and related training, may require long timelines to prepare.

It is important that electoral planning is holistic and conflict-sensitive and that it considers both the process and context-related risk factors by using adequate risk management tools. Electoral planning should consider the extent to which electoral stakeholders are able to withstand stresses and shocks caused by risks that materialize. Critically, EMBs and other stakeholders should have contingency plans for dealing with electoral crises. In many aspects, effective planning and preparations will require collaboration between EMBs and other state and non-state actors. Operational weaknesses, controversy or inability to prevent or mitigate risks in one electoral phase can compromise the integrity of subsequent phases or the whole electoral process.

7. INADEQUATE ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES, RULES AND REGULATIONS

Key terms and concepts

electoral policies; electoral rules and regulations; by-laws; instructions

The electoral legal framework extends to numerous administrative rules such as ordinances and regulations made by national or lower-level authorities; regulations, proclamations and directives issued by the EMB; customary laws, conventions and codes of conduct. These rules are important as they set a clear and detailed normative framework which can be effectively operationalized. A lack of legislative clarity may negatively impact the credibility and integrity of the electoral processes and increase the risk of arbitrary manipulation, potentially leading to undemocratic outcomes and conflicts.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of clear timelines for introducing changes to electoral administrative policies, rules and regulations.
2. Extent to which legislative acts are made operational through specific rules and regulations (instructions, by-laws).
3. Extent to which rules and regulations are harmonized.
4. Extent to which electoral officials, political actors and citizens—including both men and women, people with disabilities and youth—are acquainted with and understand the electoral processes.
5. Electoral actors' confidence level and satisfaction with the various administrative rules and procedures.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Use surveys to measure how far electoral actors endorse the existing electoral regulations. Distinguish between different political actors by asking for survey respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, including location and minority/marginalized group membership.
- Identify political actors who do not endorse particular legal provisions, such as codes of conduct for political parties.
- Through the same surveys, assess levels of acquaintance with, and understanding of, relevant electoral regulations among electoral officials, political actors and different social groups, including women and youth.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of electoral administration issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 7. Inadequate electoral administrative policies, rules and regulations

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
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Electoral administrative rules do not provide a comprehensive framework for the organization of elections.						
Electoral administrative rules are not fully operationalized.						
Electoral administrative rules are not fully understood by the relevant actors.						
Electoral administrative rules are disputed by relevant actors.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

8. INADEQUATE ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Key terms and concepts

strategic plan; operational plan; communication plan; external relations strategy; risk management process; crisis management plans; contingency plans; ICT strategy

Electoral management bodies are mandated to direct some of the most complex operations undertaken by democratic societies—the administration of elections. Regardless of the maturity of democratic traditions in the country and the strength of its political institutions, this is always a challenging mission paved with risks.

Electoral management is both an art and a science. With many moving parts, the potential for something to go wrong is high. Therefore, a strong mandate for the EMB and the expertise of its staff need to be coupled with advanced management processes and methods including strategic and operational planning; communication and ICT strategies; risk and crisis management; evaluation and monitoring, to mention a few that are critical. Lack of a methodical approach in management—one that is backed by adequate resources and tools—may lead to sub-optimal decisions. These will not only be less cost-effective but may also render electoral institutions and processes vulnerable to stresses, shocks and crises. These outcomes may in turn undermine trust in electoral administration and the credibility of elections.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of guidelines for strategic and operational electoral planning among relevant stakeholders.
2. Existence of strategic and operational plans at the responsible bodies.
3. Level of coherence of the strategic and operational plans.
4. Level of consultation among responsible stakeholders during the planning period and the capacity to implement operational plans.
5. Existence of an internal communications plan and external communications strategy.
6. Existence of risk management processes.
7. Existence of crisis management plans.
8. Existence of monitoring and evaluation procedures and mechanisms.
9. Extent to which an EMB has sufficient resources—qualified staff, tools and funds—to ensure adequate management.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Obtain strategic and planning documents from the EMB. Analyse their quality, sufficiency and feasibility, including resource availability (staff, tools and funds) and timelines envisaged.
- Cross-check harmonization between the strategic and operational planning documents produced, and between the EMB and other stakeholders with electoral mandates.
- Evaluate the extent to which the EMB implements key management processes, such as risk management, crisis management, monitoring and evaluation.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of electoral management issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 8. Inadequate electoral management process

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
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EMB does not have a strategic plan.						
EMB does not have an operation plan for the whole electoral cycle.						
EMB does not have an internal communications plan.						
EMB does not have an external communications strategy.						
EMB does not have a formal risk management system in place.						
EMB does not have a crisis-management plan.						
EMB does not have monitoring and evaluation processes in place.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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9. INADEQUATE FUNDING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES FOR ELECTIONS

Key terms and concepts

budgetary allocation; budgetary process; inter-agency collaboration; procurement; contingency funding

Electoral costs can be categorized in different ways. For example, a distinction can be made between personnel, capital and operational costs borne by an EMB or ancillary electoral institution. These costs must be viewed as either fixed cost (related to the functioning of institutions) or variable cost (related to the conduct of actual electoral events). Electoral costs can be further broken down into direct costs—those associated with EMB work—and diffuse costs, which are the contributions made by other state agencies ('ancillary' electoral institutions). The latter support specific aspects of elections and include statistics offices, postal services, security or health agencies, for example. Diffuse (or 'indirect') electoral costs relate to electoral services that cannot be disentangled from the general budgets of the ancillary agencies involved.

Another distinction is that between core costs, those considered minimum provisions for carrying out elections, and those associated with efforts to protect electoral integrity. 'Integrity costs' include voter education, enhancing security practices beyond the legal or regulatory requirements, etc. (ACE n.d.).

Inadequate and untimely resources may force EMBs to make compromises which can impact on the integrity of electoral processes (International IDEA 2017; Asplund 2020). It is important to note that EMB resources are an expenditure of the state approved by the legislature (or treasury) for a defined time period. Therefore, they may be subject to political processes. Core cost deficiencies may affect the technical integrity of the electoral process; lack of diffuse funds will limit the engagement of supporting agencies, such as those tasked to provide security or health and safety measures (Asplund 2020); while a lack of integrity funds may harm the legitimacy of the process.

Observable indicators

1. Adequacy of funds to cover core costs specified in strategic/operational/risk and crisis contingency plans.
2. Adequacy of funds to cover diffuse costs specified in strategic/operational/risk and crisis contingency plans.
3. Adequacy of funds to cover integrity costs specified in strategic/operational/risk and crisis contingency plans.
4. Timing of a request for funds from the ministry/department of finance.
5. Funds (figure) requested, funds approved in an EMB budget, and the funds actually disbursed.
6. Alignment between the electoral calendar and public procurement rules.
7. Level of accountability in the procedures of budget approval and spending.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct an expert analysis that involves cross-checking the operational plans and available funds.
- Conduct an expert analysis of different types of costs.
- Compare the funds requested by the EMB in its budget and those approved by the funding approval authority (legislature or treasury) with the amount allocated.
- Compare with the budgets for previous elections and cross-check against violent or non-violent outcomes or emergency situations. Chart differences in expenditures throughout the different electoral phases. Observe if the current budget is in real terms an improvement compared to previous election year budget(s), and in particular if the current budget compensates for previous shortfalls.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of funding and budgeting issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 9. Inadequate financing processes for elections

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
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The budgetary procedure is delayed or submission of the budget is late.						
Funding is not received by the EMB in time.						
Funds allocated are deficient and may negatively impact the quality of electoral processes.						
Financial procedures, including procurement, are not transparent; do not match the election calendar.						
Funds apportioned to electoral security do not exist or are not sufficient.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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TRAINING AND EDUCATION

In narrow terms, operational training efforts are focused on developing the capacity of electoral officials to fulfil the technical and non-technical aspects of preparing and implementing electoral processes. Deficiencies in training for electoral officials (or its absence) can lead to misunderstanding of standard operating procedures.

Training and education may also target various electoral stakeholders, including state agencies that have specific electoral mandates, political parties, civil society organizations involved in election observation, and the media. Inadequate training and education of election stakeholders may raise tensions and contribute to distrust in the integrity of elections.

Meanwhile voter information and education relates to rights, duties, timelines and procedures (registration and voting), and is often sequenced to cover different phases of the electoral cycle. In many instances, EMBs conduct a voter information campaign as part of the broader electoral education effort. They may provide information on the electoral system, registration, ballot design, voting channels, voting locations, etc. Lack of public information and popular understanding may trigger confusion among voters, increase tensions, and result in lower voter turnout etc., thereby undermining the credibility of elections and results.

10. POOR TRAINING OF ELECTION OFFICIALS

Key terms and concepts

permanent staff; temporary staff; operational training; professional development; ICTs

As emphasized in the International IDEA Handbook on *Electoral Management Design*, it is essential that both permanent and temporary EMB staff receive appropriate operational training so that they fully understand their roles. This is especially important when they are interacting with voters or other stakeholders, handling ballots or other accountable materials, or dealing with sensitive issues.

At a minimum, such training needs to reinforce the importance of key requirements—such as respect for the law, neutrality and transparency—and to give participants a full understanding of the tasks they will be performing. For temporary staff, this will be the main emphasis, and manuals and checklists will be key tools. For permanent staff, training should also include an emphasis on the underlying systems and processes for which they will be responsible, with particular attention to contingency planning, backup mechanisms and problem solving (Catt et al. 2014: 187).

Poor or inadequate training may hamper service delivery and increase the risk of misjudgements or errors that may impact the reputation of the EMB or the election outcome itself. Mistakes can be systemic, technical, procedural or simply human, and can take place at any time before, during or after the election. Technical mistakes resulting in the faulty setup or maintenance of, for example, voting machines, voter identification devices (electronic poll books), touchscreens and result transmission devices (mobile phones) may hinder or interrupt polling. Procedural mistakes resulting in the loss of sensitive election material—in particular, completed votes—could jeopardize the electoral outcome. Human error, resulting in inaccurate result transmission, may distort early election results.

Observable indicators

1. Extent to which operational training is mandatory and codified in electoral law.
2. Existence of a needs assessment that includes a focus on operational training and professional development.
3. Existence and comprehensiveness of operational plans for the training of electoral officials.
4. Existence and availability of standardized training materials (curriculum, manuals, checklists, audio and video aids) directly relevant to the tasks of temporary poll workers (voter registration, counting votes and tabulation, SVAs).
5. Existence of sufficient numbers of male and female training facilitators.
6. Degree to which the national training programme (by cascade and/or mobile teams) has been completed around the country in a timely manner.
7. Level of understanding and skills obtained from the national training programme.
8. Existence of operational capacity for training (in the form of a division, directorate, department, unit, sub-unit or dedicated electoral training facility) within the EMB that is adequately staffed and budgeted.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Compile training plans for electoral officials. Use maps to indicate regions which lack adequate plans. Assess the extent to which training is timely and resourced. Assess the extent to which men and women are represented in the training.
- Conduct an expert review of the training methodology and training materials. Map regions where the training methodology and materials may need to be reassessed in order to overcome language and other barriers. Canvass staff on the extent to which skills are maintained and institutionalized within EMBs.
- Follow up on the pace, time allocation, and the outreach of training efforts. Chart levels/percentages of training implementation.
- Survey/quiz trained electoral officials. Chart particular topics where trained personnel show lack of understanding. Indicate areas where training should be repeated.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of training-related challenges and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 10. Poor training of election officials

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

Very low
Enter
number 1
below

Low
Enter
number 2
below

Medium
Enter
number 3
below

High
Enter
number 4
below

Very high
Enter
number 5
below

Not applicable
Enter NA
below

Comprehensive operational plan for the training of electoral officials does not exist.						
Electoral officials do not acquire adequate knowledge during the training.						
Relevant electoral officials were not included in the training.						
Training providers lack skills and methodologies to conduct training.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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11. INADEQUATE TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

Key terms and concepts

political parties; political party financing; media; security sector agencies; judges; civil society organizations; local authorities; government agencies; electoral laws and procedures; social media platforms

Many EMBs provide training and education to political party representatives, judges, police officers, the media and CSO representatives on a regular basis ahead of an election event. For example, candidates and political party agents receive training on campaign finance laws, electoral procedures and codes of conduct. Journalists are often trained on ethical reporting during election periods and how to combat hate speech. Security sector agencies require training on the sensitivities of securing electoral actors and locations without interfering in the process. If politicians, elections observers, security sector agencies and journalists lack basic understanding about the technical aspects of electoral processes—including various procedures, and decision-making and EDR mechanisms—their misconceptions may translate into poor decision making or misjudged public statements and, in turn, raised levels of tension. The media have a responsibility to report rather than make news, and when this is neglected, it can harm the credibility and integrity of elections.

Observable indicators

1. Existence and comprehensiveness of electoral processes–related training programmes for various electoral stakeholders which integrate gender issues.
2. Extent to which electoral training programmes are tailored to specific needs of different stakeholders, such as languages, means of delivery, etc.
3. Frequency of periodic training for electoral stakeholders.

4. Level of stakeholders' understanding of different aspects of electoral processes.
5. Existence of operational capacity for training (in the form of a division, directorate, department, unit, sub-unit or dedicated electoral training facility) within the EMB that is adequately staffed and budgeted.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Review training plans for electoral stakeholders.
- Conduct an expert review of the training methodology and materials (curriculum, manuals, checklists, handbooks, audio and video aids).
- Collect information, including through fact-finding efforts, on the implementation of training events over time.
- Survey relevant electoral stakeholders on their understanding of electoral processes before and after the training is conducted.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of electoral stakeholder training issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 11. Inadequate training and education of electoral stakeholders

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
Comprehensive operational plan for the training of political parties/ media does not exist.						
Relevant political parties/media were not included in the training programmes.						
Political parties/media do not acquire adequate knowledge during the training.						
Training providers lack skills and methodologies to conduct training.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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12. POOR VOTER INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Key terms and concepts

inclusiveness; information in multiple languages; people with disabilities; LGBTQIA+; urban and rural communities; social and traditional media platforms

Voter information and education campaigns by the relevant EMB seek to provide knowledge, skills and confidence-building to enable citizens to participate in elections as candidates and as voters.³ These most often address at least the basics of eligibility requirements and timelines, and locations and procedures for registration and voting. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure accessibility to the whole population regardless of disability, language diversity, gender and other dimensions of social difference. Voter information and education campaigns should also be adapted for people who cannot read or write.

Voter information and education campaigns may be unclear, inaccurate, unresponsive to changes in the operating environment, or badly timed. They may fail to reach all citizens, especially marginalized groups such as women and elderly persons in rural areas, compromising electoral integrity. In most societies of the world, the unequal distribution of power between women and men disadvantages women's access to information. Disinformation and misinformation surrounding elections and election procedures add to the problem.

As a consequence, voters may lack clarity about the eligibility criteria for voter registration, the identification documents required, the designated voting

³ Note on customization: there is likely to be some overlap with risk factor 11, because public information is consumed also by specific stakeholders; some voters (who are electoral stakeholders in the wider sense) progress to becoming party political candidates or other party functionaries; election information and education also impacts domestic observers, etc.

location, the voting procedure and so on. Poorly informed citizens may be excluded from, or slow down and disrupt, electoral processes, or unnecessarily overburden EDR mechanisms, thus undermining the credibility of elections and results.

During times of emergency and crisis, EMBs will need to communicate any changes to the registration or voting process. For instance, following a natural disaster, the EMB may need to introduce health and safety measures or expand special voting arrangements. Any changes must be clearly communicated to the whole electorate, in multiple languages and in a timely fashion.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of an outreach plan that includes dates for periodic meetings with different stakeholders.
2. Accuracy and suitability of the information provided in the voter information and education materials.
3. Development of voter information and education materials for different language groups, those with disabilities and other minorities as well as illiterate persons (languages and formats).
4. Appropriateness of the timing of the voter information and education campaign.
5. Geographical scope of the voter information and education campaign.
6. Diversity of voter information and education channels (e.g. national and local broadcasters, newspapers, SMS messages, EMB website, social media, etc.).
7. Quality and social sensitivity of the voter information and education campaign.
8. Existence of operational capacity for voter information and education (in the form of a division, directorate, department, unit, sub-unit or dedicated electoral training facility) within the EMB that is adequately staffed and budgeted.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Assess the timelines for voter information and education.
- Analyse the geographical coverage of the voter information campaign and its capacity to reach all social groups. Take into account sex, age, ethnicity, language and religious groups. Consider voters with special needs.
- Conduct surveys among recipient and excluded groups measuring the effects of the voter information campaign (level of understanding of campaign messages among citizens).

- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of other voter information and education issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 12. A poor voter information and education campaign

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

Very low
Enter
number 1
below

Low
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number 2
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Medium
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number 3
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High
Enter
number 4
below

Very high
Enter
number 5
below

Not applicable
Enter NA
below

A comprehensive voter information campaign is not included in operational plans and budget.						
The timing is not sufficient for implementation of comprehensive voter information campaign.						
Voter information campaign is not implemented through various means, including traditional and social media.						
Voter information is not sensitive about, and accessible to, all citizens including language minorities, illiterate persons and marginalized groups such as women.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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REGISTRATION

Electoral processes encompass three types of registration:

1. **voter registration**, the process of verification of a citizen's eligibility to vote;
2. **registration of political parties and candidates**, including verification of eligibility to stand for election; and
3. **observers' accreditation**, a procedure designed to grant different actors access to observe relevant electoral activities.

All three may have an impact on the credibility and integrity of electoral processes.

13. PROBLEMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Key terms and concepts

exclusion; gender-based discrimination; special voter registration arrangements; disinformation/misinformation; voter registration technologies

Voter registration establishes the eligibility of individuals to cast their ballot in the election. As a general rule, eligibility to vote is a precondition for the registration of candidates.

Voter registration is a technically complex and sensitive process. Among the deficiencies that may potentially influence electoral outcomes are voters with multiple registrations, electoral registers containing the names of deceased or non-existent people, valid but rejected voter registration efforts and mistakes in assigning voters to the proper polling station. Digital technologies may resolve some issues, but often add an additional layer of vulnerability. Therefore, all political actors competing in elections will be very concerned with the quality of voter registration. Manipulation of voter registration, or perceptions that this has happened, will undermine the credibility of elections.

Observable indicators

1. Quality of information and education campaign regarding voter registration.
2. Level of accessibility of voter registration centres and/or mobile voter registration to all citizens, including internally displaced people.
3. Quality (service performance) of voter registration—including levels of transparency; and citizens' turnout when required during registration (data disaggregated by sex and age).

4. Appropriateness of registration technology and timelines for the introduction of any new registration technology.
5. Reliability and performance of voter registration technology.
6. Ratio of successful to rejected registrations.
7. Adequacy of citizens' and other stakeholders' understanding of complaint procedures.
8. Existence of a period for scrutiny of provisional electoral registers.
9. Number of complaints related to the voter registration process (disaggregated by sex).
10. Locations and scale of violent incidents relating to voter registration processes.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct periodic surveys with political parties, CSOs and citizens regarding their perceptions about the quality of the ongoing registration process. Obtain their views with respect to whether quality of registration is likely to affect electoral outcomes and, if so, to what extent.
- Check the availability of provisional voter registers and the efficiency of complaint procedures.
- Review voter registration logs, records of registration appeals at the relevant appeal bodies and the dynamics of case resolution.
- Collect data on incidents involving increased tensions and violence relating to registration processes.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of voter registration issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 13. Problematic voter registration

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

Very low
Enter
number 1
below

Low
Enter
number 2
below

Medium
Enter
number 3
below

High
Enter
number 4
below

Very high
Enter
number 5
below

Not applicable
Enter NA
below

Voter registration process started late in a significant number of locations.						
Voter registration centres are understaffed and women are under-represented.						
Voter registration centres lack sufficient materials and equipment, or are faulty.						
Voter registration staff lack understanding of, or violate, voter registration procedures.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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14. PROBLEMATIC REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

Key terms and concepts

exclusion; gender-based discrimination; special voter registration arrangements; political party financing; disinformation/misinformation; voter registration technologies

Political parties exist outside the electoral context besides competing in elections. That usually requires registration with the body in charge of conducting elections. Basic registration requirements may include providing information on party identity, programme documents, evidence of popular support, geographic coverage and financial viability. Basic registration requirements for political party candidates may include proof of eligibility to vote in a given electoral district and additional information (e.g. financial statements).

However, registration requirements can be used as an instrument to exclude groups or individuals from the electoral process. Denial of registration can incentivize excluded groups to boycott elections or turn to violent means of pursuing their political interests. In many situations, psychological and physical violence is used to prevent candidates from standing in elections and undermines the integrity of electoral processes.

Observable indicators

1. The level of difficulty or ease associated with meeting the requirements for party and candidate registration, including:
 - **Legal requirements.** Prior registration of the political organization, candidate registration, country of birth, signed statements, etc.
 - **Financial requirements.** Registration deposits, fees, financial declarations, etc.
 - **Logistical requirements.** Timelines; locations where registration can be done, etc.
 - **Gender requirements.** Whether candidacy lists permit both male and female candidates to be included.
2. Geographical and social representativeness and inclusiveness of political parties.
3. Number of incidents involving physical and psychological violence against prospective party candidates, disaggregated by sex, during primaries and the registration period.
4. Number of successful party registrations/number of rejected registrations.
5. Number of small parties (e.g. 'satellite' or 'briefcase' parties) in coalition with the ruling party or main opposition party (that potentially over-populate the electoral landscape and erode the opponents' potential).
6. Number of complaints received and processed, related to party and candidate registration.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct an expert overview of the legal framework for the registration of political parties and candidates and analyse its impact. Consider instances where party registration requirements may disqualify particular political, socio-economic or demographic groups such as women and young people from political competition.
- Review party and candidate registration logs, records of registration-related appeals and the dynamics of case resolution. Consider internal political party registration systems and internal complaints submitted by candidates, as well as the number of complaints made by one party against another.
- Gather data on violent incidents during primaries and throughout the registration period.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of party and candidate registration issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 14. Problematic registrations of political parties and candidates

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Legal requirements (e.g. eligibility conditions) are imposed as obstacles for the registration of coalitions, political parties and candidates.						
Financial requirements (e.g. registration deposits and financial declarations) are imposed as obstacles for the registration of coalitions, political parties and candidates.						
Timelines and registration locations create logistical obstacles for the registration of coalitions, political parties and candidates.						
Women applicants are intimidated and discouraged from standing as political candidates.						
A large number of complaints were submitted with respect to one or more coalition, political party or candidate nominations.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

15. PROBLEMATIC ACCREDITATION OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Key terms and concepts

international election observation; domestic election observation; international electoral standards and commitments; eligibility; gender-based discrimination; transparency; trust

For citizen observers, observation is an opportunity to exercise their right to participate in political affairs and to hold electoral authorities accountable. For the international community, election observation is an opportunity to hold state parties accountable to their obligations and seek to promote good practices through observer reports. Their presence may deter fraud.

Problematic accreditation can be perceived as a part of preparations to rig electoral results, which may contribute to increased tensions, outbreaks of violence or rejection of the results. In the case of domestic observation, some political actors may resort to pressure and intimidation to influence observer reporting. Authoritarian regimes will tend to limit international observers' presence and deny registration to domestic observation groups (ACE 2012; James, Clark and Asplund 2023).

Observable indicators

1. Level of difficulty associated with the accreditation of domestic and international observers.
2. Number of accreditations rejected and potential geographical focuses (disaggregated by sex).
3. Number of complaints related to rejected observations.
4. Number of incidents of obstruction or intimidation reported by observers.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct an expert overview of the legal framework for the accreditation of domestic and international observers.
- Identify groups and organizations that are denied access to observation.
- Interview national and international observation organizations about their views concerning the accreditation process. Obtain numbers of deployed observers, events observed and geographical coverage. Identify potential gaps.
- Survey citizens in relation to their level of trust in different electoral observation groups.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of observation/ accreditation issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 15. Problematic accreditation of domestic and international observers

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
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Legal requirements for accreditation of domestic and international observers are imposed as obstacles for accreditation.						
Timelines for accreditation of domestic and international observers are imposed as obstacles for accreditation.						
Accreditation of a relevant political party observer is rejected.						
Accreditation of a relevant civil society observer group is rejected.						
Accreditation of relevant international observation group is rejected.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

Political parties use the electoral campaign period to promote their political programmes and confront the political views of other political actors. Campaigning allows citizens to better understand the different political options and decide who to vote for. During the campaign period, political parties will use different strategies to reach voters and seek their support and funds. They will organize political rallies and parades and deploy promotional materials and media advertising to increase their profile and visibility. It is well-established that appearances in media debates are an important vehicle for winning popular support. Social media platforms have been essential political campaigning and fundraising tools in the last decade.

Nevertheless, in many contexts unequal media access (especially between women and men and between ruling and opposition political parties), provocative media messages and appearances, and aggressive campaigning actions have proven to increase tensions and led to outbreaks of election-related violence, including gender-based violence. Abuse of social media platforms and cyberattacks have also become levers for malicious interference in elections. Such efforts are directed against not only political competitors but also electoral management bodies.

16. UNEQUAL MEDIA ACCESS, PARTY VISIBILITY AND FAVOURITISM

Key terms and concepts

traditional media; social media; media access; level playing field; cybersecurity; malicious interference

During electoral campaigns, political parties use different media to send out their messages and appeal for popular support and funds. While traditional media (i.e. radio, TV and print media) maintain high importance in most countries, the role and importance of web-based social media have dramatically increased in recent years. As more people turn to the Internet to search for information, including on politics and elections, online media and especially social media have become an important arena for political communications. The majority of contemporary politicians understand that they have to use digital technologies as the primary means of engaging the electorate, especially when in-person interaction is limited.

Favouritism on the part of the state-owned media towards the incumbent candidates and parties is often a factor in raising tensions. This can manifest in biased reporting, gender discrimination in coverage and reporting, unfair allocation of air-time, discrimination against political opponents and other unethical reporting practices, among others. Private media may adopt the same practices to champion their favourite candidates and become political agitators instead of campaign facilitators. Such a scenario can undermine the credibility of the electoral process, increase tensions and fuel election-related violence directed against political opponents and journalists.

Social media is often seen as a platform that favours the visibility of previously disadvantaged candidates by allowing them to bypass traditional media. However, social media can also be monopolistic in being owned and controlled by powerful companies and dominated by political parties who have resources and connections (Trappel 2019).

Observable indicators

1. Existence and quality of media code of conduct provisions for electoral campaigning, governing both state and privately owned outlets.
2. Operationalization of the media code of conduct provisions.
3. Existence of mechanisms which ensure equal media access to political parties during the campaign period.
4. Degree of gender sensitivity displayed in media reporting and coverage.
5. Degree of equality in time allocated and the impartiality of reporting.
6. Number of complaints received by electoral dispute resolution bodies relating to unequal media access and favouritism.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Identify all existing bodies and methodologies for monitoring of the media, including from a gender perspective. Examine potential gaps.
- Identify the relevant legal framework which regulates broader media conduct, and specific documents or provisions that regulate media access during the campaign period. Observe its implementation directly or in partnership with existing media monitoring organizations.
- Review official complaints relating to equality of access to the media, not just across political parties but between women and men as well as socio-demographic/minority groups.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of media access issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 16. Unequal media access, party visibility and favouritism

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

Very low
Enter
number 1
below

Low
Enter
number 2
below

Medium
Enter
number 3
below

High
Enter
number 4
below

Very high
Enter
number 5
below

Not applicable
Enter NA
below

The code of conduct for the state and private media with respect to electoral campaigning through media does not exist.						
Parties and candidates do not all have equal access to the media during the electoral campaign period.						
Media favours particular candidates and parties in their programmes.						
Media discredits particular candidates and parties in their programmes.						
Media reporting and coverage is not gender sensitive.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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17. PROVOCATIVE USE OF MEDIA BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

Key terms and concepts

inflammatory language; psychological violence; political party campaigning; gender-based disinformation; gender-based violence, online and offline

Campaigning through broadcast media or online typically provides a space for different political players to confront the policy positions of their opponents and has unique strengths in offering this. In well-established and transitional democracies alike, political debates facilitated by the media have been essential in informing audiences of policy options and winning voters' support. However, media campaigning often leaves behind principled, issue-based discussion and enters the terrain of derogation and hate speech. Online spaces are frequently used by political parties and candidates to target their opponents or election officials. In many societies, insults towards women in politics tend to focus on undermining their status and capacity as leaders, in contrast with men who are cast as 'naturally' fitted to leadership and public life. Other false statements and narratives disseminated in the media may be directed at creating imaginary threats and a feeling of insecurity in order to mobilize support. Such campaigning has often seen negative outcomes.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of social media platforms' policies on hate speech/other unethical content.
2. Extent (geographical and frequency) of provocative media campaigning.
3. Type of media where provocative campaigning is recorded.
4. Type of ownership of media where provocative campaigning is recorded.

5. Political actors involved in provocative media campaigning.
6. Extent of use of inflammatory language, gender stereotyping and hate speech.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Conduct extensive media monitoring or establish cooperation with media monitoring organizations to obtain data about provocative media campaigning by political parties.
- Distinguish between different actors engaged in provocative campaigning by political affiliation, place in the party hierarchy, gender and geographical influence.
- Assess the seriousness of incidents according to their capacity to increase the risks of election-related violence, among others.
- Review the record of official appeals relating to inappropriate media campaigning by political parties. Examine the efficiency and appropriateness of responses.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of provocative media campaigning issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 17. Provocative use of media by political parties and candidates

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

The legal framework/code of conduct does not impose sanctions for provocative media campaigning by political parties.						
Political parties are using media for provocative campaigning.						
A large number of complaints relating to provocative campaigning in media are received.						
Political parties who use media for provocative campaigning are not sanctioned.						
Provocative campaigning through the use of media is directed against women's parties and female candidates.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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18. PROVOCATIVE POLITICAL PARTY AND CANDIDATE RALLIES

Key terms and concepts

public gatherings; inflammatory language; physical and psychological violence; gender-based disinformation; gender-based violence, online and offline

Political parties and candidates organize rallies during the electoral campaign period to reinforce links between the political leadership, the party activists and the party supporters. Electoral rallies are also demonstrations of strength, unity and power.

In conflict-prone societies where political divides often correspond with social divides and gender discrimination, election rallies may represent high-risk events. The disposition of the crowd, inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech can inspire violent action, whether it was the organizers' intention or not. Additionally, actions taken to limit, obstruct or prevent competitors from holding political rallies may create perceptions of an unlevel playing field, trigger violent reactions and ultimately undermine the credibility of elections.

Observable indicators

1. Scope of political party rallying (parties, events, locations, frequency).
2. Number/type of rallies prohibited by the relevant authorities.
3. Effectiveness of security arrangements in place to prevent campaign-related violence.
4. Extent of use of inflammatory language, gender stereotyping and hate speech.
5. Number of violent incidents or clashes following political rallies.

6. Political issues/policies associated with violent incidents or clashes.
7. Number of victims (disaggregated by sex).

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Collect data about planned and scheduled political party rallies from the authorities responsible for approving them at different levels. Cross-check with the data from the respective political actors.
- Obtain information on and analyse the security sector arrangements surrounding political party and candidate rallies. Assess whether the security deployment is proportionate to the size of the event and the risks associated with it.
- Monitor or liaise with monitoring networks to obtain records of inflammatory rhetoric, gender stereotyping and hate speech at party rallies.
- Record incidents linked with the political party campaigning, during or after party rallies, including information about perpetrators and about the victims, broken down by sex. Obtain official police reports and media reports, deploy fact-finding teams, establish hotlines (for example SMS data crowdsourcing).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of other issues concerning provocative rallies and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 18. Provocative political party and candidate rallies

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

The legal framework/code of conduct does not impose sanctions for provocative party rallying.						
Political parties are using provocative and inflammatory language during party rallies.						
A large number of complaints relating to provocative campaigning are received.						
Political parties who use provocative and inflammatory language during party rallies are not sanctioned.						
Political party rallies escalate tensions and/or lead to violent outbreaks before, during or after rally events.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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19. PROVOCATIVE AND VIOLENT ACTIONS BY POLITICAL PARTIES

Key terms and concepts

election-related violence; physical and psychological violence; gender-based violence, online and offline

Electoral processes are supposed to offer political parties a playing field where the quality of their electoral manifesto, personnel and/or track record will determine their chances of success. In some contexts, however, political actors resort to psychological and physical violence to ensure their electoral success is secured before election day. Such actions mostly take place during the electoral campaign period. They involve aggressive party activists, recruited thugs or members of party 'militias' who commit acts of harassment, intimidation, assaults, violence against electoral officials (women being particularly targeted), destruction of property, political assassinations and other unlawful acts. Actions are directed against political opponents, their supporters, journalists and others. These scenarios are particularly dangerous as a single act may trigger responses and start a cycle of violence.

Observable indicators

1. Incidents of intimidation, threats, destruction of property, physical harm, kidnappings, political murders and other violent acts committed against electoral actors, journalists, registrants and voters.
2. Psychological, sexual and physical violence directed against vulnerable social groups such as women, children, ethnic and religious minorities during the election period.
3. Prosecution and conviction rates for perpetrators of violence associated with political parties.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Obtain official information about incidents of election-related violence. Use police reports, media reports, and civil society network reporting; engage in fact-finding; establish hotlines and utilize crowdsourcing technology. Distinguish between the perpetrators and victims, including victim subgroups.
- Obtain information on the number of judicial processes against individuals or groups associated with political parties who committed provocative and violent actions. Compare with the number of incidents obtained from the police, human rights activists, observer networks and the media. Indicate any discrepancies.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of election-related violence and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 19. Provocative and violent actions by political parties

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Individuals and groups associated with political parties perpetrate psychological and physical violence against political opponents and their supporters.						
Individuals and groups associated with political parties perpetrate psychological and physical violence against vulnerable groups, including minorities.						
Individuals and groups associated with political parties perpetrate psychological and physical violence against marginalized groups, including women.						
Individuals and groups associated with political parties perpetrate psychological and physical violence against journalists.						
Perpetrators of violence associated with political parties are not prosecuted.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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VOTING OPERATIONS

Voting operations will in most cases include logistical preparations for election day, the conduct of regular voting and special voting arrangements, the vote counting and the tallying of results. Critical aspects of voting operations will include logistics and security related to the handling of electoral materials, the integrity and transparency of SVAs and out-of-country voting, real or perceived problems with the integrity of voting on election day, and the technical accuracy and credibility of the counting and result tallying.

If technical operations are executed poorly, or in a way which can create perceptions that there has been manipulation and rigging of the result, reactions can be violent. In such circumstances the integrity of electoral processes and the credibility of results they yield can be undermined.

20. INSUFFICIENCY, DESTRUCTION AND LOSS OF SENSITIVE AND NON-SENSITIVE MATERIALS

Key terms and concepts

sensitive electoral materials; non-sensitive electoral materials; logistical operations; ICTs

EMBs are responsible for ensuring that election day goes without complications. One important precondition for successful voting is proper logistical arrangements. These will include the timely and sufficient provision of sensitive and non-sensitive materials to all polling locations and ensuring that these materials are protected at all times.

Failures or delays in supplying essential electoral materials, their poor handling or security, and lack of transparency before or after voting and counting can negatively impact perceptions about the integrity of an election and its results.

Observable indicators

1. Sufficiency of the quantities of electoral materials produced.
2. Appropriateness of timing for the dissemination of non-sensitive and sensitive materials.
3. Level of security of transport and storage premises.
4. Level of engagement of security sector agencies (SSAs).

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Verify the feasibility of the plans for producing and disseminating electoral materials made by the EMB. Consider the appropriateness of designated resources and timelines.

- Survey the level of confidence in logistical preparations for voting operations among political actors, CSOs and the broad electorate.
- Assess and evaluate the preparedness and performance of SSAs responsible for securing electoral materials. Map locations, such as EMB offices and storage facilities, where security was provided/not provided.
- Review relevant appeal records for associated complaints.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of electoral materials issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 20. Insufficiency, destruction and loss of sensitive and non-sensitive materials

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Sensitive and non-sensitive election materials are not produced in sufficient quantities.						
Sensitive and non-sensitive election materials are not properly and safely stored.						
Sensitive and non-sensitive election materials are not properly secured during transportation.						
Sensitive and non-sensitive election materials are not disseminated.						
Handling of sensitive and non-sensitive election materials is not transparent.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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21. PROBLEMATIC SPECIAL VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

Key terms and concepts

electoral legal framework; transparency; election observation; out-of-country voting; inter-agency collaboration

Special voting arrangements (SVAs), including out-of-country voting, are options for voters who cannot attend regular polling stations on election day. Such voters may be housebound or living in institutional settings, refugees, diplomatic or military personnel and members of diasporas. Arrangements allow them to vote on a specified day or series of days, either in-person before election day at special locations, at mobile polling stations on election day or by post, for example (Ellis et al. 2007; Barrat et al. 2024).

Organizing voting for populations abroad is more complex than organizing in-country polling, and taking on this logistical and financial burden in a challenging environment, especially in post-conflict contexts, is rarely without risks. A large external population could change the outcome of an election, which may not be politically acceptable in-country (Goldsmith n.d.). Moreover, due to complexities associated with external voting and other SVAs, political actors or independent observers may not be in a position to independently verify an election's integrity. All these issues can become disputed in a closely contested election.

Observable indicators

1. Number (proportion) of SVA and external (out-of-country) voters registered.
2. Effectiveness of systems in place to manage external voting.
3. Number (proportion) of SVA voters voting in person and by mail.
4. Number of political, civil society and international observers accredited to observe external voting and other SVA.
5. Existence and quality of the testing or piloting of SVA that have been newly modified or introduced.
6. Level of citizens' and observers' trust in external voting and other SVAs.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Verify voter registration for figures relating to numbers of SVA voters, including external voters who vote in person and those voting by post. Map countries and locations where external voting is to be conducted. Indicate countries where observers are accredited to observe these processes.
- Conduct expert analysis to understand the extent to which in-country and external votes using SVAs may influence the distribution of power in the country.
- Identify geographical regions where some or all of the activities associated with special and external voting are not independently verifiable.
- Survey the confidence in and general views of the special and external voting arrangements, on the part of political actors and citizens (disaggregated by sex).
- Compile information about SVAs including by mapping locations and routes to be followed by mobile voting facilities. Consider when and where there may be increased security risks.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of SVA issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 21. Problematic special voting arrangements

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Special voting arrangements do not exist.						
Special voting arrangements are questioned.						
Stakeholders are concerned with the number of registered special voters.						
Observers are not in a position to observe special voting.						
Consolidation of votes cast through special voting arrangements is not trusted.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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22. PROBLEMATIC ELECTION DAY OPERATIONS

Key terms and concepts

electoral training; polling procedures; sensitive and non-sensitive materials; voters' and observers' access; early voting; postal voting; special voting arrangements; transparency; election observation

Election day operations are designed to facilitate the process of all eligible voters casting their ballots. The large numbers of citizens and time constraints involved make election day operations very complex. In many countries, more than half of the population will exercise its democratic right on election day. This process is to be managed by a large number of female and male electoral management officials and staff and supported by security sector personnel. Political parties, CSOs and international organizations provide a presence in electoral facilities across the country to scrutinize and testify to the integrity of the voting process.

Problems and irregularities which take place on election day have effects which are difficult to repair afterwards. If the margins for victory are expected to be narrow, even the smallest irregularity, real or perceived, may spark tensions, conflict or violence and eventually undermine electoral credibility beyond recovery. Due to the short time in which voting takes place, election day problems can culminate in the days following the actual voting.

Observable indicators

1. Timely opening of polling stations across all geographical units.
2. Sufficiency and competence/professionalism of polling station staff.
3. Accessibility of polling stations.
4. Waiting times at the polling stations.
5. Number of complaints relating to the voting process (disaggregated by sex).
6. Number of interventions by EMB.
7. Number of interventions by SSAs.
8. Number of violent incidents (disaggregated by sex).

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Obtain information about all polling stations in the country.
- Continuously obtain close to real-time data from polling stations through the electoral officials or election observers. Take record of polling stations that experience problems with opening or with their work.
- Establish hotlines (for example SMS data crowdsourcing) to obtain information about incidents and irregularities.
- Maintain communication with political actors.
- Obtain figures on complaints filed at the polling stations and with the relevant appeal authorities.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of election day issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 22. Problematic election day operations

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
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Polling stations did not open on time.						
Waiting time at the polling stations is too long.						
A large number of complaints relating to voting processes are received.						
Violent incidents occurred at the polling stations.						
Violent incidents related to elections occur in other public places.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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23. PROBLEMATIC BALLOT COUNTING AND RESULT TALLYING

Key terms and concepts

election observation; transparency; electoral training; counting procedures; ICTs

Vote counting and tallying of the results usually follow immediately after the polling stations close. These activities are particularly sensitive and vulnerable to abuses (manipulation).

Vote counting and result tallying are very complex processes and thus prone to human error. In most cases, errors in vote counting and tabulation will disadvantage some parties more than others and it may be hard to establish whether the error is a consequence of a genuine mistake or a deliberate act. If political actors, civil society and international observers are obstructed in their work, suspicions may arise that integrity is compromised, to the point where the legitimacy of results is undermined.

Observable indicators

1. Number and locations of delayed counting process
2. Transparency of counting processes
3. Access and presence of election observers
4. Number and type of challenges to the vote counting and result tallying
5. Number of discrepancies between figures for citizens who voted and ballot papers counted.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Obtain close to real-time reports from the counting locations through the electoral officials or election observers. Consider counting progress and record delays. Distinguish between regular and disputed counting operations.
- Maintain contacts with political party liaison officers and observer groups. Establish hotlines (use SMS data crowdsourcing platforms).
- Collect data about formal challenges relating to vote counting and tallying.
- Collect data relating to election-related incidents during this period which do not take place at the counting locations.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of counting and tallying issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 23. Problematic ballot counting and result tallying

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Counting process is delayed.						
Discrepancies between the number of voters who voted and the number of ballots counted exist.						
A large number of challenges to the vote counting and result tallying are received.						
Political party agents reject to co-sign the result sheets.						
Violent incidents occurred at the vote counting location.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

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VERIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS

The body responsible for the conduct of elections is usually responsible for announcing the final election results. The preliminary results provide good indications of the electoral outcomes and the distribution of political power for the next term of elected office.

Admitting defeat and handing over political power to the opponents is difficult for incumbents that do not win. Political leaders who are disappointed with the initial figures will often feel strong incentives to use all available mechanisms to challenge the election results and change them in their favour.

Any inconsistencies, delays and lack of transparency on the part of bodies in charge of managing results and electoral appeals will create more scope for such challenges. Where elections are 'winner-takes-all' competitions, political parties may pursue gains by resorting to manipulation or violence.

24. POOR MANAGEMENT OF ELECTION RESULTS

Key terms and concepts

transparency; result management system; lost or damaged election materials; electoral malpractices; ICTs

EMBs are responsible for the compilation of election results from the field, reconciliation of results at the electoral district and central levels, announcement of the preliminary election results and announcement of the final election results.

The imperative is to minimize the time lapse between election day and the announcement of the final election results. Any unnecessary or unexplained delay, be it ICT related or not, will feed suspicions about the integrity of the results processing. Whether real or perceived, biased processing of election results will increase the likelihood of disputed or failed elections.

Observable indicators

1. Testing and piloting of the electronic result system before election day (access to telecommunication networks and Internet throughout the country; and electricity for all result announcement equipment at the level of polling/tabulation centres).
2. Timing of delays in announcing the election results.
3. Number and location of particular geographical regions experiencing delays.
4. Type of reasons for delay and if/how such information is communicated.
5. Level of trust among political actors regarding election result management.

6. Level of transparency of result management at different levels.
7. Existence of mechanisms for relaying visible, accurate and transparent results to the general public.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Use official and observers' data to map regions, municipalities and polling stations for which election results are delayed.
- Obtain the official reasons for delays and cross-check with independent observers.
- Interview relevant political actors, both women and men, about their perceptions of delays in the announcement of results. Monitor increased risks resulting from increased dissatisfaction or distrust in the process.
- Assess the transparency of election results management independently and through canvassing observers' views and experiences.
- Obtain data on numbers and type of complaints relating to the management of the election results.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of results management issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 24. Poor management of election results

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Transmission of election results is not transparent.						
Transmission of election results is delayed.						
Results are not adequately presented to the public.						
Results are lost.						
A large number of complaints relating to management of election results are received.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

25. POOR MANAGEMENT OF THE FINAL ROUND OF ELECTORAL APPEALS

Key terms and concepts

electoral justice; electoral complaints; electoral dispute resolution

In most cases, electoral dispute resolution involves the EMB, administrative bodies and judicial institutions. Their respective mandates and hierarchy may differ across different electoral systems.

Any appeal that is not dealt with and adequately remedied may create discontent and seriously contribute to the deepening or aggravation of conflicts. In an already tense situation, unresolved issues could trigger conflict and rejection of results and serve as an excuse for violence.

Observable indicators

1. Number of appeals pending ruling after election day.
2. Number of appeals filed concerning election day, the counting processes and the management of the election results.
3. Number of appeals effectively resolved by the relevant EDR bodies after elections.
4. Level of satisfaction among political parties concerning the performance of EDR bodies.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Obtain official records of appeals submitted during or after election day. Distinguish between different categories.
- Obtain official records on appeal management and resolution and observe geographical regions and bodies which fail to process appeals in a timely manner.
- Interview political actors in relation to their satisfaction with the performance and composition of EDR bodies.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of EDR issues and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 25. Poor management of the final round of electoral appeals

Assess the extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Complaints relating to voting operations and election results are not processed in a timely manner.						
Complaints about voting operations and election results are not adequately investigated.						
Rulings on voting operations and election result complaints are not adequately elaborated.						
Election results are verified without resolution of significant cases, such that electoral outcomes may be affected.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

26. REJECTION OF THE ELECTION RESULTS

Key terms and concepts

rejection of results; protest; election-related conflicts and violence

The rejection of the electoral results is an act of last resort for defeated challengers or incumbents, which may result from a real or perceived lack of integrity in the electoral process and its outcome. In very broad terms, rejection of the result by a particular party may result in self-exclusion from other democratic processes and institutions. Actions may include protests with the potential for violent outcomes involving protestors or security sector agencies.

Observable indicators

1. Number of cases of rejection, or threats of rejection, of the election results.
2. Number and the content of statements of political parties, candidates, election observers and other relevant social groups about the course of action following the rejection of the results.
3. Number and scale of protests, gatherings and other events relating to the rejection of results.
4. Number of incidents of violence perpetrated by protestors.
5. Number of incidents of violence perpetrated by SSAs.
6. Number and categories of victims (types and severity of harm) including damage to property, gender-based violence, etc.

Data gathering and analysis methodology

- Obtain data through media monitoring and interviews with political actors relating to the circumstances surrounding the rejection of the results. Note inflammatory language and threats of violent outcomes.
- Monitor media; deploy or use existing networks and crowdsourcing platforms to obtain close to real-time reports about non-violent and violent protests and related events across the country. Capture and project basic data, including the size of the event and political patronage.
- Obtain data on violent incidents following protests, including on perpetrators and victims (disaggregated by sex).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues pertaining to rejection of results and consider historical trends.

Risk assessment questionnaire 26. Rejection of the election results

Assess the **extent of the truth of the below statements by entering the appropriate number in respective columns**

	Very low Enter number 1 below	Low Enter number 2 below	Medium Enter number 3 below	High Enter number 4 below	Very high Enter number 5 below	Not applicable Enter NA below
--	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Political actors threaten to reject final election results.						
Political party supporters announce demonstrations against election results.						
Demonstrations related to election results are violent.						
Political actors reject election results.						
MEAN VALUE: (Numerical sum of scores divided by the number of statements)						

The mean value is indicative of a risk associated with a given factor in a given region at a given time. Risks are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is very low and 5 is a very high risk to electoral credibility. Data collection over a more extended period will allow for charting and observing trends.

Consider using [ERMTTool](#) to upload data, generate geographical risk maps and trend charts, and/or create and maintain an electoral risk register.

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About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

WHAT WE DO

We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

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The organization of elections is a complex undertaking for any society. It requires the broadest social mobilization and implementation of various electoral activities, while complying with strict procedures and deadlines. Therefore, many things can—and often do—go wrong due to deficient laws, logistical hurdles, technical and human errors, or unethical actions taken by key electoral actors, to mention a few. When risks materialize, they can generate stresses, shocks or crises that can undermine the integrity of the electoral process.

This Guide outlines key process-related (endogenous or internal) risk factors that undermine electoral integrity, either as a cause or contributing cause. Combined with the partner Guide on external risk factors, which covers context-related risks, it provides a more complete overview of electoral integrity risk.