ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE DONOR GUIDE:
ELECTION MANAGEMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACRONYMS

AAEA	Association of African Election Authorities
CEC	Central Election Commission (Georgia)
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
EA3	Electoral Assistance After Action Review
ECF-SADC	Electoral Commissions Forum -- Southern African Development Community
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
EDR	Electoral Dispute Resolution
EMB	Election Management Body
GEN AI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
GNSEI	Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Kenya)
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission (Nigeria)
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex+
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs (Georgia)
OCV	Out-of-Country Voting
PIANZEA	Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TSJE	Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral (Paraguay)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provides assistance to election management bodies (EMBs) as a core component of its electoral assistance and broader Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) programming. This guide provides a brief overview of election management assistance and offers strategic considerations and programming options for USAID and other donor agencies. While the primary audience of this guide is USAID staff, its content may be useful to other donors and other audiences.

Section 1 (Introduction) outlines the what, who, and why of election management assistance, defining key terms and concepts.

Section 2 (Strategic Considerations) covers the whether, when, and how of election management assistance, offering strategic considerations for USAID and other donors that may be contemplating or designing election management assistance programming. These considerations, which draw on USAID's nearly four decades of experience providing election management assistance across a wide range of contexts around the world, include:

- assessing the country's regime context, EMB independence, and the political will of key stakeholders to consider whether election management assistance may be appropriate and, if so, what approaches may be suitable;

- taking into account the timing of election management assistance in relation to the electoral cycle, as election management assistance is generally more likely to achieve meaningful results when it can be initiated in the early phases of an electoral cycle;

- developing an election management assistance strategy by:
  - identifying core election integrity challenges;
  - identifying windows of opportunity;
  - integrating with broader electoral assistance and DRG assistance strategies;
  - aligning with broader foreign assistance and policy;
  - coordinating with other donors; and
  - prioritizing localization, sustainability, adaptability, and "do no harm" considerations.

Section 3 (Programming Options) dives deeper into the how of election management assistance, outlining programming options for USAID and other donors. Common program areas for election management assistance include:

- strengthening EMB leadership and strategic planning;

- enhancing EMB independence;

- ensuring effective administration and operations;

- enhancing transparency and open election data;

- promoting inclusive voter education and participation;

- enhancing election-related information integrity and resilience;

- promoting appropriate use of technology and cybersecurity risk management;

- strengthening electoral security and mitigating election violence;

- strengthening electoral dispute resolution; and

- promoting political finance transparency and combating corruption.

Section 4 (Conclusion) provides a brief wrap-up of the content covered in this guide and introduces the Appendix, which offers additional resources for further exploration.

Election management assistance is a complex, nuanced, evolving, and often highly sensitive type of democracy assistance. USAID staff and other readers of this guide should not view its content as prescriptive. Rather, the guide is intended to serve as a starting point to inform donors' strategic and programmatic decision-making regarding ongoing or envisioned election management assistance.

1.1 What is Election Management Assistance?

WHAT?

Election management assistance is support provided to EMBs to improve election administration, with the broader aim of advancing election integrity. Election management assistance typically focuses on building the EMB's capacity and commitment to carry out its functions in an efficient, transparent, accountable, credible, and impartial manner.

Election management assistance is a core component of **electoral assistance**, which is a broader category of assistance provided to a wider range of electoral stakeholders, including but not limited to EMBs, international and citizen election observers, political parties and candidates, lawmakers, political party registration and political finance oversight bodies, judicial institutions, law enforcement and security agencies, and media actors that seek to advance democratic and peaceful elections.

Election management assistance can be thought of as part of the "supply side" of electoral assistance, as it helps government actors and institutions deliver more democratic elections. Electoral assistance, on the other hand, can be thought of as both the "supply side" and the "demand side," which also supports stakeholders who scrutinize or apply pressure on government institutions to deliver more democratic elections. USAID typically provides "supply-side" assistance alongside complementary "demand-side" programming.

1.2 Who are Election Management Bodies and Other Relevant Stakeholders?

WHO?

Election management bodies (EMBs) are government institutions responsible for some or all aspects of administering elections, referenda, and other plebiscites.

EMBs have varying names and forms, including "commissions," "councils," "boards," "agencies," "tribunals," or "units" within a larger government entity. An EMB typically includes a permanent national central body with subordinate bodies responsible for executing its mandate at sub-national levels. A common EMB headquarters setup includes national-level commissioners, who are responsible for policy making, supported by a secretariat with various departments that implement policy

and perform the administrative functions of election management. This setup can be mirrored at the sub-national levels, depending on the size of the country and the level of autonomy that the EMB has vis-a-vis other government agencies. An EMB's permanent staff is supported by a massive influx of temporary workers, often recruited from other government entities (e.g., ministries of education or health), who are hired and trained by the EMB to manage polling and counting operations surrounding election day.

EMB responsibilities commonly include, but are not limited to, the following five areas:

1) processes relating to **voters**, including:

    a) voter registration and voter list maintenance; and

    b) conducting voter education;

    c) coordinating with civil registry and census entities;

2) processes relating to **electoral contestants**, including:

    a) registration of **political parties**;

    b) certifying nominations of political parties and **candidates**;

    c) regulating the campaign period; and

    d) managing or overseeing political and campaign financing;

3) election operations, including:

    a) announcing election schedules;

    b) printing and procuring election materials;

    c) recruiting and training poll workers;

    d) distributing election materials to polling stations;

    e) accrediting **election observers** and **journalists**;

    f) coordinating election day security;

    g) facilitating voting at polling stations and, where applicable, via alternative voting arrangements, such as postal voting and out-of-country voting (OCV); and

    h) counting ballots;

4) electoral dispute resolution; and

5) results management, announcement, and certification.

Beyond these core areas, EMBs may be responsible for additional processes, such as electoral boundary

delimitation, political party primaries, civic education, and media monitoring. Some countries have multiple EMBs, where election management responsibilities are dispersed among different entities.

EMBs are commonly interdependent on **other government institutions** in certain aspects of election administration. For example, a civil registry body may be heavily involved in voter registration; public buildings (e.g., schools) are commonly used for polling stations; police and other security forces are tasked with ensuring public order and investigating electoral crimes and civil complaints; and public employees may be tapped to serve as temporary election workers. EMBs are also increasingly working with law enforcement and national security-focused agencies to mitigate risk associated with malign foreign influence threat activity, including cybersecurity and information manipulation threats targeting elections.

While election management assistance is provided to EMBs, it regularly seeks to facilitate engagement with other electoral stakeholders. This can include supporting the EMB to: engage **parliament** on reforming the legal framework for elections; work with **courts** or other **judicial bodies** to improve electoral dispute resolution processes; and facilitate dialogue between EMBs and political parties, citizen election observers, and/or **civic groups** representing women, indigenous populations, ethnic or religious minorities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, and other marginalized or underrepresented communities.

USAID generally provides election management assistance through the provision of technical assistance by international and/or local **implementing partners**.

1.3 Why Provide Election Management Assistance?

WHY? Democracy is about more than holding elections, but elections are central to democracy. At their core, democratic elections should facilitate the peaceful contestation of power and bestow the consent of the governed upon elected governments. Moreover, election-related civil and political rights are cornerstones of international human rights.[1]

Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 21.3

"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will 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."

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Article 25

"Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity [...] to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors."

The same can be said for DRG assistance. DRG assistance is about more than just electoral assistance. Indeed, USAID and other donors work to advance democracy, human rights, and governance in many areas beyond elections, including anti-corruption, civil society strengthening, and support to independent media, human rights defenders, and women and marginalized communities. But electoral assistance, including election management assistance, is a central component of DRG assistance.

USAID and other donors provide election management assistance to advance democratic and peaceful elections. In transitional contexts, the act of simply holding an election – or the second election after a transition – may represent a critical step on a country's path towards democracy. Election management assistance in such contexts may seek primarily to develop the institutional capacity of EMBs to execute core election administration functions and mitigate risks associated with conducting elections in a conflict-affected setting.

In other contexts, election management assistance can have narrower, different, or more nuanced goals, seeking to improve EMB capacity to execute certain functions and address election integrity challenges specific to the country context. In some backsliding contexts, election management assistance may seek to counteract the effects of anti-democratic forces that seek to undermine

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[1] See, e.g., *International Obligations for Elections: Guidelines for Legal Frameworks* (International IDEA, 2014): https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/international-obligations-elections-guidelines-legal-frameworks; *Election Obligations and Standards: A Carter Center Assessment Manual* (The Carter Center, 2023): https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/democracy/cc-OES-handbook-10172014.pdf; and *Model Commitments for Advancing Genuine and Credible Elections* (The Carter Center, IFES, International IDEA, National Democratic Institute, and Kofi Annan Foundation, 2024): https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/CC_Model%20Commitments%20Report_B2_final.pdf.

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public confidence in election processes and outcomes. Election management assistance program objectives are explored further in Section 3.

The challenges faced by EMBs should not be understated. Indeed, an election is among the most complex enterprises a country undertakes. Administering an election is an immense leadership, logistical, administrative, financial, and communications challenge often conducted in difficult, rapidly-changing environments under intense internal and external pressure and strict deadlines. It involves a series of complex tasks, such as creating and maintaining an accurate voter register, supplying remote polling stations with voting materials, recruiting and training sometimes hundreds of thousands of poll workers, coordinating security, and educating voters. At stake is the credibility of the electoral process and its outcomes in the eyes of voters, candidates, and other election stakeholders.

Successful election management assistance strategies and programming can help EMBs navigate these challenges and enhance public confidence in election processes and outcomes. In some contexts, election management assistance can play an important role in galvanizing a country's efforts to arrest or bounce back from democratic backsliding or supporting its transition towards more stable and democratic governance.

2. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

As is the case for all types of DRG assistance, there is no one-size-fits-all strategic approach to election management assistance and no ready-made checklist that can tell donors whether, when, and how precisely to provide election management assistance in a given country context. However, drawing on USAID's nearly four decades of experience providing election management assistance across a wide range of contexts around the world, there are a number of common strategic considerations that donors can take into account when contemplating or designing election management assistance. These considerations are further grounded in USAID's Guiding Principles for Electoral Assistance.

When timing and resources allow, donor decisions regarding election management assistance should be informed by an in-depth assessment of the electoral and democratic development context, such as those envisioned by USAID's Electoral Assessment Framework[2] and Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework.[3] Election management assistance decisions can also be informed by taking stock of successes and lessons from the previous election cycle, which can be done using or drawing upon USAID's Electoral Assistance After Action (EA3) Review Methodology.

Recognizing that time and resources are often limited, this section summarizes and adapts issues presented in these frameworks, providing specific context relevant to election management assistance.

2.1 Threshold Considerations for Working with EMBs

WHETHER? Election management assistance is not appropriate for all country and electoral contexts. Regime context, EMB independence, and political will are common issues to assess when considering whether to provide election management assistance.

2.1.1 Regime Context

Assessing the country's regime context can be helpful when considering whether election management assistance may be appropriate and, if so, what approaches may be suitable.

Donors should be clear-eyed about the risk of election management assistance being perceived as lending credibility to flawed elections. In general, election management assistance is inappropriate in contexts where elections are wholly uncompetitive and exist primarily to lend democratic legitimacy to an autocratic government. While donors should not rule out election management assistance altogether in such contexts, they should consider the reputational risk that supporting the EMB could be perceived as supporting or endorsing a fundamentally flawed election process.

Recognizing that donors typically provide election management assistance in countries characterized as electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, or somewhere in between, and that such characterizations are highly nuanced and can change over time, the following table outlines characteristics of illustrative regime types and discusses high-level implications regarding the appropriateness of election management assistance in countries with each type of regime.[4]

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[2] USAID, *Electoral Assessment Framework* (March 2021): https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z4JJ.pdf

[3] USAID. *Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework* (September 2014): https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Master_SAF_FINAL%20Fully%20Edited%209-28-15.pdf

[4] This guide uses the Varieties of Democracies (V-Dem) Regimes of the World framework for illustrative regime types, but recognizes other categorizations may be useful. https://www.v-dem.net/our-work/research-programs/varieties-of-autocratization

ILLUSTRATIVE REGIME TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR ELECTION MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE
Closed Autocracy	The executive is either not subjected to elections or there is no meaningful competition in elections.	Election management assistance is unlikely to be appropriate in all but the rarest of cases. Donors should primarily consider "demand-side" approaches.
Electoral Autocracy	The country holds multiparty elections, but they fall short of democratic standards due to significant irregularities, limitations on party competition, freedom of expression and association, access to information, or violations of other requisites for democracies.	Election management assistance may be appropriate, depending on other factors discussed below and specifics of the country context. Election management assistance is most likely to be appropriate as a component of broader electoral assistance that includes "demand-side" programming.
Electoral Democracy	The country holds credible multiparty elections and achieves a sufficient level of institutional guarantees of democracy. However, it may still lack sufficient institutional checks and balances among the branches of government, full protection of human rights, and/or a well established rule of law.	Election management assistance is usually appropriate, depending on other factors discussed below and specifics of the country context.
Liberal Democracy	In addition to the characteristics of an electoral democracy, the country has effective legislative and judicial oversight of the executive, as well as protection of individual liberties and the rule of law.	Election management assistance may be appropriate, depending on other factors discussed below and specifics of the country context, though donors are less likely to work in such countries. Donors may consider targeted election management assistance, for example, helping an EMB address an emerging or transnational election integrity challenge and develop good practice that benefits EMBs regionally or globally.

As with all DRG assistance, an election management assistance strategy should be informed not just by regime type, but also by changes to the regime context, which may happen rapidly or gradually. There may be evidence that a country is progressing towards democracy, in stasis, or backsliding. Conflict-affected, post-conflict, and transitional environments can also include dramatic and rapid changes to the regime context.

2.1.2 EMB Independence

Assessing EMB independence can offer additional insights that should inform donor decision-making on whether to provide election management assistance.

EMB independence refers to the degree to which EMBs can operate without political interference. This includes independence from incumbent government influences, budgetary coercion, and partisanship. With no or limited independence, EMBs may succumb to political interference leading to the abuse of EMB resources and authorities for partisan purposes, undermining election integrity. Such abuse can include egregious conduct like results manipulation and disallowing candidates or parties for spurious reasons, as well as subtler efforts to create an unlevel playing field. Even when administered in accordance with the legal framework, public perceptions of the fairness of elections can be undermined when an EMB lacks independence. In many cases, an EMB may be required

to work with other public institutions (e.g., Ministry of Education, a cybersecurity agency, etc.) to administer certain parts of an election; the professionalism or independence of the other institutions can also impact EMB independence, or the perception of EMB's independence. As EMB independence is a key factor in the likelihood of significantly flawed elections and the credibility of elections in the eyes of the public, understanding the degree of EMB independence is therefore critical to determining the appropriateness and type of election management assistance in a given country context.

Assessing EMB independence requires looking at both structural and functional independence. **Structural independence** refers to "how the leadership and internal units of an EMB are composed, and how the EMB relates to the executive and other government entities." **Functional independence** reflects "EMB behavioral independence and how independently mandated functions are fulfilled."[5] This includes financial independence, which requires sufficient resources to carry out its mandate, a budget independent of executive control or alteration, discretion to allocate resources as needed, and regular and timely disbursements of funds to the EMB. The main contours of an EMB's structural independence can typically be found in a country's constitution and/or election legislation, whereas information about its functional independence can be harder to identify and is more likely to change over time.

The **EMB Model** used can be a helpful starting point when assessing EMB independence. The table below defines the three models of EMBs, as conceptualized by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).[6] The models primarily characterize EMBs by their relationship to the government, which can be indicative of some elements of their structural and functional independence. Election management assistance can be provided in countries with all three models, though it is more likely to be appropriate to EMBs with both strong structural and functional independence. It is also important to highlight

EMB MODEL	CHARACTERISTICS
Independent	The independent model establishes an EMB that is institutionally independent from the executive branch. Its leadership is not part of the executive branch. An important characteristic of this model is that the EMB has the authority to make decisions without seeking prior approval from the executive branch. This independence generally stems from the country's constitution or election law. The model does not preclude the EMB from being mandated by law or political reality from working with the executive branch of government on certain aspects of elections, which could impact its functional independence or perceptions of it.
Governmental	In the government model, the executive branch is responsible for preparing and holding elections, often via the Ministry of Interior or Justice. In some locations, local authorities are the entities charged with election management responsibility. A minister or a senior civil servant is commonly in charge of the elections. Accordingly, the government has direct control of the election management body.
Mixed	The mixed model is commonly made up of two entities, one that is independent and one within the government. One organization is charged with setting and supervising election administrative policies, while the other is tasked with the planning and delivery of elections. The policy-making entity is independent from the government, while the organization charged with delivering elections may be a ministry or local authority representing the executive branch or an independent entity.

[5] See, e.g., *Independence in Electoral Management* (International IDEA, 2021): https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/independence-electoral-management; and *Understanding and Assessing Electoral Commission Independence: A New Framework* (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2022) https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/WFD_A-new-framework-for-understanding-and-assessing-electoral-comission-independence.pdf

[6] Adapted from International IDEA, *Electoral Management Design* (2014): https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/electoral-management-design-2014.pdf

that election management assistance commonly seeks to enhance EMB independence, as discussed below in Subsection 3.2 Enhancing EMB Independence.

Many EMBs, typically those that follow an independent or mixed model, are led by a multi-member commission or similar policy-making body. The rules governing the composition of such bodies, the appointment, retention, and removal of members, and decision making – and how those rules play out in practice – can be illustrative of an EMB's independence. For example, a commission whose members represent multiple political parties may indicate some level of built-in independence, as ruling party representatives must work with other party representatives to reach decisions. However, such independence may be weakened if all members are appointed or can be removed by the executive branch, if the ruling party (or ruling party-aligned) representatives make up a decision-making majority, for example.

Example: Weak EMB Independence - In one country where USAID works, the constitution establishes the EMB as an independent body with broad discretion to administer and regulate the electoral process. However, due to contradictory legislation and de facto autocratic power dynamics, in reality the EMB's independence is undermined. According to the constitution, the head of state appoints the EMB's commissioners after receiving recommendations from a parliamentary committee. Technically the appointment process includes stakeholder input and interviews in parliament. In reality, however, the process lacks independence, as stakeholders understand that the decision is made by the head of state, and the process is viewed as a formality. The EMB's independence is further restricted by a legal requirement that any regulatory and administrative measures or changes must be approved by the Ministry of Justice. In addition, while the constitution gives the EMB the responsibility for accrediting election observers, there is contradictory legislation stipulating that a cross-government body make decisions on observer accreditations.

Another area to investigate when assessing EMB independence is how the EMB is funded. EMBs can face political pressure from the national legislature or other government entities that control the approval and/or distribution of funds needed to administer elections. With reduced or delayed funding, an EMB may be less likely to initiate or implement integrity-strengthening reforms that

could weaken the ruling party's chances at the polls and/or its ability to continue manipulating electoral processes. Donors should assess how this risk is mitigated in a given country context, both in terms of structural barriers to potential political interference, as well as whether such pressure has been applied against the EMB recently and how the EMB navigated the situation.

EMB Independence Guidelines - In 2024, the Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity (GNSEI) released Guidelines for Safeguarding Election Management Body Independence in Engagement with Other Public Institutions. These guidelines are intended to "support EMBs to maintain their independence and political neutrality while effectively collaborating with and leveraging the capacities of other public institutions, including during crises." USAID supported development of the guidelines as a GNSEI Network Participant.

Guidelines for Safeguarding Election Management Body Independence in Engagement with Other Public Institutions
September 2024

2.1.3 Political Will

In addition to assessing the regime context and EMB independence, donors should take steps to assess the political will of key stakeholders – both internal and external to the EMB – when considering whether to provide election management assistance.

Recognizing that political will can be challenging to assess and often changes over time, donors may decide that election management assistance is inappropriate in a given country if they determine that key stakeholders lack adequate political will to make meaningful contributions to improving election integrity. For example, EMB leaders may demonstrate a willingness to receive donor support in areas they view as uncontroversial or apolitical (e.g., voter education, procurement of election technology or material, etc.), but may lack interest in working on thornier issues related to core election integrity challenges in the country (e.g., engaging parliament on electoral legal reform, improving results management transparency, strengthening electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, etc.). Donors' efforts to assess political will among EMB

leaders and key personnel should consider how political will may change over time, particularly how election management assistance on less sensitive matters may contribute to deepened trust in electoral assistance and the potential for increased political will to tackle core challenges over time. Donors should weigh reputational risks against the potential benefit of maintaining entry points with individual champions within institutions and being poised to take advantage of potential windows of opportunity that may emerge. These and other upfront adaptability considerations are discussed in further detail below in Sub-section 2.3.7 Adaptability.

The political will of key stakeholders external to the EMB should also be considered. For example, in a country where core election integrity challenges are entrenched in the legal framework, the political will of

key government and parliamentary leaders who have the power to amend the law is likely to be more important than the political will of EMB leaders. Similarly, in a country where EMB independence is undermined by political maneuvering (e.g., by withholding budgets, using temporary appointments, etc.), understanding the political will of external actors would be critically important to developing strategies for protecting or strengthening EMB independence.

2.2 Timing

WHEN? Donor strategy regarding potential election management assistance should be informed heavily by the electoral calendar. Each election should be viewed through the lens of the electoral cycle (see Figure I), as opposed to a singular event that takes place on election day.

Figure 1. The Electoral Cycle[7]

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[7] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/measuring-electoral-quality/introduction

In general, election management assistance and broader electoral assistance is more appropriate and more likely to achieve meaningful results when it can be initiated in the early phases of the electoral cycle, often two to three years in advance of the next election. For example, electoral assistance that seeks to support an election reform process can take several years, often including drafting and adopting amendments to the electoral legal framework, followed by updates to EMB procedures, training manuals, and broader implementation of reforms. If the reform envisions the introduction of a new technology, a lengthy international procurement process and implementation piloting may be required. In some country contexts, election management assistance strategy may take an even longer-term view, seeking to advance electoral integrity over multiple electoral cycles, involving different types of elections (e.g., presidential, legislative, local, etc.).

Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where election management assistance may also be appropriate and impactful on shorter time horizons. Political developments in the country, such as the announcement of snap elections or late changes to the electoral legal framework, may accelerate donor decision-making on potential electoral assistance and create a need to prioritize short-term over longer-term approaches. In addition, the timelines for donor resource availability and foreign policy decision-making surrounding a given country's election rarely line up neatly with the electoral cycle, which may also make longer-term approaches impracticable. In crowded donor environments or high-profile transitional elections, it can also be common for donors to provide smaller-scale, shorter-timeframe election management assistance targeting specific components of election management, such as strategic communications, voter education, and/or poll worker training support. Such assistance should be coordinated with donors and implementing partners who provide larger-scale election management assistance to ensure complementarity, maximize impact, and "do no harm." Indeed, the history of electoral assistance includes no shortage of well-intentioned programs that were ill suited to the realities of electoral timelines.

2.3 Election Management Assistance Strategy

HOW? Strategic considerations for potential election management assistance should include, but not be limited to: identifying core election integrity challenges; identifying windows of opportunity; integration with broader electoral assistance and DRG assistance strategies; alignment with broader foreign assistance and policy; donor coordination; localization and sustainability; adaptability; and "do no harm."

2.3.1 Identifying Core Election Integrity Challenges

As with all development assistance, election management assistance should be designed to advance specific objectives. Identifying the country's core election integrity challenges, and considering how election management assistance may contribute to addressing them, is a logical first step. When time and resources allow, this should be done through a formal assessment, such as USAID's Electoral Assessment Framework. When an assessment is not possible, a more limited exercise that includes desk review of relevant materials[8] and consultations with the EMB and other key electoral stakeholders may suffice.

The following illustrative questions can help donors identify a country's core election integrity challenges, and how election management assistance may help address them:

● What do EMB leaders and key personnel view as their biggest challenges or areas for improvement? Is the EMB open to receiving donor assistance in these areas?

● Has recent or ongoing election management assistance elevated any issues as particularly pressing or promising for new or expanded support?

● What issues were most prominently highlighted by international and/or citizen election observers in recent elections? What were their priority recommendations for the EMB and stakeholders that interact with the EMB?

● What do other key stakeholders – including political parties, lawmakers, journalists, civic groups, and representatives from marginalized

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[8] Useful resources can include, but are not limited to: recent reports from reputable international and citizen election observers; and election-focused assessment reports, possibly funded by other donors.

or underrepresented communities – view as the biggest challenges to election integrity? What improvements do stakeholders believe would lead to improved public confidence in election processes and outcomes?

- What level of trust do citizens place in the EMB, EMB leaders, and/or electoral processes? Is public opinion research available that touches on these and related issues?

- What do stakeholders view as the most prominent barriers to meaningful political participation and leadership experienced by women and/or other traditionally underrepresented or marginalized communities? Is the EMB well positioned to help address any identified barriers?

- What issues were most prominently raised in post-election lessons-learned convenings, if held?

- Have there been any changes to the legal or procedural framework for elections since the last elections? Can implementation challenges and/or effects on voters be expected?

- Are any aspects of election management at risk of failure or serious maladministration?

- Is the country failing or falling short on meeting its election-related obligations or commitments under international treaties and instruments (e.g., ICCPR, African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Copenhagen Document, etc.)? Do other practices not align with broader international electoral good practice (e.g., the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice on Electoral Matters, Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, etc.)?

It is important to recognize that identified core election integrity challenges may be outside of the EMB's mandate or manageable interests and, as such, poorly suited to be meaningfully addressed solely through election management assistance. For example, an EMB would be well placed to take steps to improve the perceived fairness of candidate nomination processes under its control, but poorly positioned to change discriminatory or unreasonable candidate eligibility

requirements enshrined in the country's constitution or laws – unless, for instance, commenting on electoral legal reform is part of its mandate.

Donor efforts to identify core election integrity challenges should also be forward looking and attempt to anticipate issues that may emerge in future elections. This should include thinking about how new technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) tools, and/or changes in the threat landscape, such as increased cyber or foreign influence threat activity targeting elections, may introduce new challenges.

2.3.2 Identifying Windows of Opportunity

Donors should also seek to identify windows of opportunity that could provide a higher likelihood of success in addressing particular challenges through election management assistance. Windows of opportunity may include, but are not limited to: recent political breakthroughs, a political transition, the emergence of an election reform process that appears to have political will or momentum behind it, turnover among EMB leaders or key personnel, changes to the electoral legal framework, promising results from pilot initiatives, or newfound recognition of the importance of addressing a particular election integrity challenge. A new or clearly identified window of opportunity can provide the justification for new or increased programming in this area.

2.3.3 Integration with Broader Electoral Assistance and Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Assistance Strategies

Election management assistance is often provided as part of broader electoral assistance programming, that includes support to both: the EMB and potentially other "supply-side" actors and "demand-side" actors, such as citizen election observers, other civil society actors, and journalists. It is therefore essential that donors consider how election management assistance would fit into their broader electoral assistance strategy. For instance, donors may wish to consider approaches that attempt to support electoral stakeholders in tackling identified election integrity challenges from multiple angles and ensure strong complementarity between "supply-" and "demand-side" programming. This could include efforts to foster domestic multi-stakeholder connectivity and dialogue, such as supporting multi-stakeholder post-election lessons learned exercises or EMB mechanisms for engagement with civil society, political parties, parliament, and others. Narrower

examples could include: providing support to an EMB on open election data and other transparency measures alongside support to citizen observers, political party poll-watchers, or journalists to enhance independent scrutiny of election processes; and supporting an EMB on electoral accessibility for persons with disabilities alongside support to disability rights groups on advocacy and political participation.

Similarly, donors should also consider how election management assistance would fit into their broader DRG assistance strategies, which may reveal opportunities for further complementarity and/or multi-sectoral approaches to address election integrity and other DRG challenges. For example, anti-corruption efforts may benefit from election management assistance on campaign and political finance transparency; rule of law strengthening efforts may benefit from programming to strengthen electoral dispute resolution; and/or parliamentary strengthening efforts may benefit from support on electoral legal reform or EMB oversight. Such considerations can help ensure that election management assistance is well integrated into DRG strategies, as well as identify areas where other DRG programming may contribute to advancing election management assistance objectives.

Efforts to integrate election management assistance with broader electoral assistance and DRG strategies should include dedicated, mainstreamed consideration of how EMBs can contribute to addressing barriers to meaningful political participation and leadership experienced by women and other traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups. For example, DRG assistance programming that seeks to advance women's participation in politics and public life may benefit from complementary election management assistance programming with the EMB on voter education targeting women, publication of gender-disaggregated election data, developing and implementing a gender equality policy, and/or combating violence against women in elections. These and other programming examples are discussed in further detail below throughout Section 3.

2.3.4 Alignment with Broader Foreign Assistance and Policy

Donors should also consider how envisioned election management assistance strategies align with broader foreign assistance and policy. There may be broader political, economic, or military aspects to the host country's relationship with the donor country or organization due to its geography, economy, history,

or geopolitical significance that may be relevant. For example, election management assistance in a conflict-affected or post-conflict environment may need to be integrated with the donor country's diplomatic, development assistance, or humanitarian efforts regarding peace-building and stabilization.

2.3.5 Donor Coordination

It is not uncommon for multiple donors to provide electoral assistance at the same time in the same country. When considering election management assistance, donors should take steps to understand other donors' existing programs, budgeting cycles, plans for future programs, and associated strategies. While ongoing programming by one donor does not necessarily preclude similar programming by another, coordination is essential to avoid duplication of effort, ensure complementarity when possible and appropriate, strategically allocate limited resources, and tackle challenges that may be beyond the means of an individual donor.

2.3.6 Localization and Sustainability

Localization and sustainability should be front of mind when considering election management assistance. USAID is committed to put local actors in leadership roles where possible by adhering to a localization approach.[9] For example, this may include activities to support EMBs to identify and/or prioritize challenges and needs, which can then inform program priorities and foster more EMB ownership of the program outcomes. Donors should devise election management assistance strategies that work towards the ultimate end goal of an EMB that can sustainably and independently execute its mandate.

In some situations, such as post-conflict or transitional environments in countries with very limited experience with elections, donors may need to take a long-term view on sustainability, understanding that arriving at such a point may require support across multiple electoral cycles. In such situations, election management assistance may initially need to involve donor-funded international actors playing a more prominent role in administering certain aspects of elections (e.g., directly procuring and delivering election materials, seconding election experts to perform key functions, etc.), though this is increasingly rare. In situations with higher EMB capacity and experience, election management assistance can support EMBs to address a more targeted, narrowly-focused set of challenges. In most instances, a dedicated capacity-

building component has proven instrumental for skills transfer and timely local ownership by EMB officials.

To further support localization and sustainability, donors may also explore anchoring components of their election management assistance to regional or international associations or networks of EMBs, including potential fostering of new associations or networks. Whether through formal convenings or informal networking and information sharing, these forums can provide EMBs with valuable networks of peers they may be able to rely upon – with no or limited international donor assistance – when considering new initiatives or navigating new or evolving challenges.

EMB Associations and Networks - To foster cross-border learning and share best practices on election management, many EMBs have organized themselves into associations or networks. Prominent EMB associations and networks include the African Association of Election Authorities (AAEA), ArabEMBs, the Electoral Commissions Forum of Southern African Development Community (ECF-SADC) countries, and Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators (PIANZEA) network. These groups vary in terms of level and type of activities offered to their members. Some groups have less than half a dozen EMB members, while the largest, the Association of World Election Bodies, has more than a hundred members.

2.3.7 Adaptability

Elections are highly complex processes that often take place in fluid and dynamic environments. EMBs' openness to external partners and donor support can also change over time. Donors should therefore devise election management assistance strategies that can be flexible and responsive to new or evolving challenges and unexpected windows of opportunity that may emerge. This may include approaches that seek to build trust with EMB leaders and key personnel through support on issues that are viewed as less politically sensitive (e.g., voter education, accessibility, etc.) in hopes of tackling more entrenched or sensitive issues over time. As noted in the previous section, donors can support activities to help EMBs identify and prioritize challenges, such as operational planning, strategic planning, risk

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[9] https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/USAIDs_Localization_Vision-508.pdf

management, tabletop exercises or other types of scenario-based training, post-election lessons-learned workshops, and/or assessments that dive deep into specific areas of election administration. Donors should adopt strategies that enable appropriate adaptation to the needs and gaps that may surface through such programming.

As adapting strategy and programming during implementation takes time and resources, donors should seek to balance the need for adaptability with a clear strategic vision for their election management assistance. A good balance can help minimize costs and ensure that donor support remains focused and coherent.

2.3.8 Do No Harm

Donors should ensure their election management assistance strategies reflect the principle of "do no harm." Election management assistance is provided in a wide variety of political contexts, including those affected by conflict or transitions and those with limited

political and civic space for democratic actors. The environment surrounding elections and politics is often politically sensitive and high stakes, which can exacerbate risks for individuals, partners, and processes supported by donors. Thus, election management assistance should integrate overarching "do no harm" principles and ensure human rights principles are considered. This includes building in risk mitigation strategies for local actors and prioritizing efforts to mitigate negative impacts on women, youth, and other marginalized groups – populations that are disproportionately impacted, directly and indirectly, by electoral and political violence.

Donors should also be cognizant of and comprehensively plan for possible conflicts and/or electoral and political violence and its structural causes. This includes building conflict sensitivity into program design and working with local partners to consider how program activities, communications, and partnerships can mitigate conflict or avoid exacerbating conflict.

Credit: Johan Ordonez / AFP

3. PROGRAMMING OPTIONS

HOW? Election management assistance programs can seek to advance a variety of objectives using a wide range of activities. To help donors apply their election management assistance strategies, this section provides an overview of common election management assistance objectives and corresponding illustrative activities. These programming areas are, in many cases, interrelated and should not be viewed as exhaustive.

Common election management assistance objectives include:

- strengthening EMB leadership and strategic planning;
- enhancing EMB independence;
- ensuring effective administration and operations;
- enhancing transparency and open election data;
- promoting inclusive voter education and participation;
- enhancing election-related information integrity and resilience;
- promoting appropriate use of technology and cybersecurity risk management;
- strengthening electoral security and mitigating election violence;
- strengthening electoral dispute resolution; and
- promoting political finance transparency and combating corruption.

3.1 Strengthening EMB Leadership and Strategic Planning

The decision-making and behavior of EMB leaders is critically important to delivering high quality elections and addressing election integrity challenges. Election management assistance frequently seeks to strengthen the leadership skills of EMB leaders and key personnel, including their ability to make strategic decisions, identify and manage risks, build the resilience of the institution, and establish a long-term vision for the EMB. Such support is increasingly important as EMB leaders confront an ever expanding set of new and evolving challenges, including cybersecurity threats, malign foreign influence and disinformation campaigns, extreme weather events and natural disasters, pandemics, mass migration, political and social instability, and democratic backsliding.

EMB Strategic Planning in Nigeria - Following the highly controversial 2007 elections in Nigeria, the new commissioners of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) believed it was necessary to overhaul the institution in order to regain stakeholders' trust in its independence and ability to deliver acceptable elections. Benefiting from technical assistance, a dedicated task force was established with representatives from across the EMB to develop a strategic planning concept note. Once approved, consultations were held with civil society for input to the reform agenda and the development of the INEC's first five-year strategic plan outlining its mission, vision, values, and strategic objectives. While the development and implementation of the strategic plan were far from perfect (e.g., inclusion weaknesses, insufficient monitoring and evaluation, etc.), the INEC's public recognition of shortcomings, openness to stakeholder feedback, and publication of a written action plan had a profound effect on the EMB's standing in the community. The strategic planning process also gave the INEC staff a sense of direction and enabled them to internally articulate concerns.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to strengthen EMB leadership and strategic planning include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- leadership development, enhancing EMB leaders' skills to improve executive management of the EMB, communication with the public, media, and key stakeholders, and change management, including following leadership transitions;[10]

- women's leadership development, addressing specific obstacles faced by women in politics and public life;

- strategic planning and management, including monitoring of strategic plan implementation;[11]

- risk management, improving EMB leaders' ability to identify threats, vulnerabilities, and associated risks to the successful delivery of elections and election integrity (e.g., cybersecurity, physical security, electoral fraud and malpractice, environmental hazards), and apply appropriate mitigations;

- crisis management, including crisis communications, through tabletop exercises and other scenario-based training;

- post-election lessons learned exercises; and

- facilitating peer-to-peer learning among EMB leaders.

3.2 Enhancing EMB Independence

Election management assistance commonly includes programming that seeks to enhance EMB independence, bolstering its ability to operate without political interference from incumbent government influences, budgetary coercion, and partisanship. Such support is often provided alongside complementary electoral assistance to a broader range of stakeholders, such as lawmakers who have the power to amend the legal framework to strengthen structural elements of EMB independence; judicial bodies involved in adjudicating cases related to EMB independence and roles; and civic groups engaged in election reform advocacy.

The issue of political interference in the work of EMBs is a thorny one that is challenging to address directly via assistance. Ruling parties and incumbent governments often seek to apply pressure on EMB leaders and personnel through varying means, including but not limited to legal ambiguities, withholding or delaying

funding, and withholding permanent appointments. Such pressure can critically undermine the independence and functioning of these bodies. Indeed, there are cases where EMBs, previously known for delivering credible elections, begin to struggle due to political interference. As election management assistance continues to evolve beyond capacity building and logistical support to EMBs, donors are increasingly faced with the more complex challenge of supporting an EMB to maintain or enhance its independence.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to enhance EMB independence include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- budgetary planning and related intergovernmental coordination, including engaging parliament and relevant government agencies on timely and adequate funding;

- informing electoral legal framework reform processes relevant to EMB independence, including ensuring clear legal mandates for EMBs and other public institutions with election-related responsibilities;

- identifying and implementing transparency measures to help enable meaningful independent scrutiny of EMB decision-making and election administration, increasing the likelihood of exposing threats to EMB independence;

- developing codes of conduct and/or public annual asset disclosures for EMB leaders and key personnel, setting public standards for impartial and ethical behavior, enabling meaningful independent scrutiny, and dissuading personal financial gain;

- developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) and insider threat mitigation measures to enhance EMB professionalism and better position EMBs to withstand political pressure and detect deviations from SOPs, including potentially partisan or malicious behavior by insiders; and

- establishing training centers and certification programs and developing related training materials to ensure robust training of EMB staff on ethical standards, SOPs, and technical election topics, improving staff professionalism and capacity to administer elections independently and impartially.

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[10] See, e.g., Executive Curriculum in Electoral Leadership (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2019): https://www.ifes.org/news/new-executive-training-curriculum-builds-resilience-and-independence-electoral-leaders

[11] See, e.g., *Strategic Planning for Effective Election Management* (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2011): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/strategic_planning_guide_2011_0.pdf and *Strategic Planning for Electoral Management Bodies* (European Center for Electoral Support, 2022): https://www.eces.eu/template/Strategic%20Planning%2009.11.22%20FInal%20version%20AP%20Format.pdf

3.3. Ensuring Effective Administration and Operations

Election management assistance often includes programming that seeks to strengthen EMB capacity to efficiently and effectively deliver high-quality elections and reduce risks of maladministration. For EMBs with limited capacity, this can include extensive support on planning and delivering the core components of election administration, from voter registration to results management. Election management assistance can also provide more targeted support to help an EMB address a specific election administration challenge, such as implementing a significant process change or new legal requirement, or simply improving a process that has experienced shortcomings in the past. In some circumstances, donors may fund direct logistical and administrative support and/or commodities and procurement assistance.

Election management assistance seeks to not only improve the technical implementation of elections, but also to contribute to public confidence in electoral processes and outcomes by reducing the likelihood of mistakes and irregularities that contribute to stakeholder criticism of the EMB – recognizing of course that many of the issues that affect public confidence in elections are outside of the EMB's control.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to ensure effective administration and operations include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- operational planning covering all phases of the electoral cycle, including development of an EMB's election calendar, timelines, and related assessments;[12]

- budgeting, broader cost and resource management;

- recruitment, training, and retention of EMB personnel, including core staff and technical experts;

- implementation of core EMB functions, including: voter registration and list maintenance, electoral boundary delimitation, candidate registration, production and distribution of election materials, recruitment and training of poll workers, election day operations (e.g., polling, counting, etc.), results management, and post-election auditing;

- development of EMB rules and regulations, procedures, manuals, and/or materials; and

Strengthening EMB Capacity in Pakistan - Leading up to general elections in 2008, Pakistan was preparing to return to electoral democracy following more than a decade of military rule. During this decade much of the election-related institutions and practices were dismantled, requiring extensive reform efforts to overcome knowledge gaps and rebuild trust in institutions prior to holding elections. A robust multi-year election management assistance program was developed. Relying on more than half a dozen long-term advisors embedded with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), numerous fundamental aspects of the electoral processes were reformed to overcome integrity vulnerabilities. Advisors supported the ECP to: develop a new voter register with 80 million registrants; overhaul polling station and counting procedures; upgrade voter awareness approaches; and modernize poll worker training for hundreds of thousands of temporary polling staff. Long-term advisors were supplemented by a mix of short-term experts filling critical gaps, such as software developers, ICT and data center managers, election dispute resolution experts, a ballot paper designer and an election security advisor. As these experts were recruited by different donors, and the election calendar constantly changed due to local operational and political conditions, close donor collaboration and flexibility were essential for operational efficiencies.

- collection and management of election data, improving data-driven decision-making and public communications.

3.4 Enhancing Transparency and Open Election Data

Election management assistance regularly seeks to enhance the transparency of election processes, including through the proactive publication of election data. Whether mandated by the electoral legal framework or using their own discretion, EMBs are centrally positioned to help create an enabling environment for effective and meaningful independent scrutiny of elections, including by election observers, parties and candidates, parliament and

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[12] See, e.g., *Introduction to Operational Planning: A Guide for Election Management Bodies* (IFES, 2023): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/IFES%20Operational%20Planning%20Guide_Feb_2023.pdf

other governmental oversight bodies, the media, and the public at large. Such independent scrutiny not only helps the EMB educate voters, candidates, and parties about election processes, but also can improve election administration by surfacing issues that need attention and providing checks against potential partisan, discriminatory, or harmful behavior by EMBs.

While such assistance can be valuable as stand alone programming, donors often provide election management assistance to EMBs on transparency and open election data alongside complementary electoral assistance programming that supports observers, independent media, political parties and candidates, and/or other non-governmental actors. For example, donors supporting citizen election observers to monitor polling operations, counting, and results management processes – a common tactic to deter and detect manipulation of election results – may also seek to support EMBs on complementary transparency measures, such as timely and proactive publication of polling and counting sites and disaggregated polling station-level results data.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to enhance transparency and open election data include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- developing open election data policies, systems, and procedures, including assessment of data collection and management practices to identify opportunities for proactive disclosure, practices for sharing data with key stakeholders (e.g., political parties, observers, etc.) and responding to public information requests, accessibility improvements, and appropriate safeguards to protect personally identifiable information and other sensitive data;

- results management transparency, including timely publication of disaggregated polling station-level results data;

- systems and procedures for facilitating accreditation of election observers, journalists, and party/candidate agents, and supporting their physical access to polling sites and other relevant election offices and locations; and

- improving procedures, forms, and associated training to enable or improve collection of gender-disaggregated turnout data.

3.5 Promoting Inclusive Voter Education and Participation

Election management assistance commonly includes programming that seeks to help EMBs educate voters and promote inclusive participation in elections. As different subsets of the eligible voter population may have varying levels of experience with voting, consume information differently than others, and/or face historical or ongoing obstacles to political participation, such assistance frequently includes a focus on promoting inclusivity, seeking to educate voters and increase participation among eligible voters from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized communities, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, and/or LGBTQI+ individuals. Due to the sensitivities and security risks

Inclusive Voter Education in Kenya - In Kenya, the Changamka Na Sanaa outreach campaign targeted women and youth in informal settlements in Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru and Mombasa through graffiti art installations. Graffiti is often used in the country for social justice messaging, but this was the first time it had been used as a messaging tool for voter education. Another voter education initiative specifically targeted Chama women from the informal settlements in Embakasi Central constituency (Kayole and Soweto) as voter educators to lead community mobilization efforts to register and vote.[13] These initiatives enabled Kenya's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to reach a segment of the population from one of the largest informal settlements in Nairobi County, which often receives little attention. Although the number of potential voters reached may reflect a small number of Kenya's electorate, it is the EMB's responsibility to attempt to reach even the most isolated and historically marginalized groups in society. The Chama women initiative also highlights the importance of designing voter education programs targeting women to reduce the knowledge disparity that often prevent women from voting, including the lack of information about their right to vote and other limitations, such as traditional gender norms and lower literacy rates.

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[13] https://www.ifes.org/programs-initiatives/kenya-electoral-system-support-kess

often associated with providing support to these groups, donors should be guided by the principle of Do No Harm. Donors often provide election management assistance to EMBs on voter education and inclusive participation alongside complementary electoral assistance programming that supports civic-led voter education and mobilization.

Election management assistance may also include support to EMBs on educating and facilitating the participation of voters who may require or benefit from alternative voting arrangements, such as out-of-country voters, refugees, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and active duty military personnel.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to promote inclusive voter education and participation include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- strengthening capacity to design and conduct voter education campaigns, including message and material development, testing, targeting, implementation, and evaluation;

- engaging private sector entities to enhance voter education efforts (e.g., social media companies, advertising firms, text messaging service providers, etc.);

- engaging other government entities with relevant mandates for voter or civic education (e.g., ministry of education);

- establishing stakeholder engagement mechanisms to facilitate dialogue with non-governmental electoral stakeholders, including civil society organizations representative of the country's diversity, as well as coordination and amplification of voter education efforts;

- training EMB leaders and personnel on cross-cultural communications and conflict resolution skills;

- identifying and addressing obstacles to inclusive participation in all aspects of election processes, including through assessments and developing and implementing relevant policies and procedures;[14]

- improving accessibility for linguistic minorities by translating voter information, ballots, and other relevant election materials into minority languages;

- improving accessibility for persons with disabilities, including access to information about the election process in accessible formats, physical access to in-person voting sites and election facilities, voting assistance, tactile ballots, and alternative voting arrangements; and

- designing and implementing alternative voting arrangements, including intra-governmental coordination with relevant agencies (e.g., ministry of foreign affairs for OCV).

3.6 Enhancing Election-Related Information Integrity and Resilience

EMBs must administer elections and communicate with the public in an increasingly complex information environment, navigating expanding modes of communication (e.g., social media platforms, mobile messaging apps, etc.) and threats to information integrity and resilience, including malign foreign influence campaigns and other information manipulation activities targeting elections. The emergence of Gen AI exacerbates this complexity, as more believable inauthentic content becomes easier to produce and spread online. Helping EMBs navigate these challenges, election management assistance increasingly includes programming that seeks to enhance election information integrity by strengthening EMBs' capacity to provide fact-based, impartial information, serve as authoritative sources of official information about elections, and counter threats to election information integrity. This also helps enhance electoral stakeholder's confidence in the EMB as a source of trustworthy, accurate information.

Donors often provide this type of election management assistance to EMBs on election information integrity alongside broader electoral assistance to journalists, civic groups, and other non-governmental actors conducting complementary activities. This broader set of programming can include building media capacity to cover elections and conduct fact-checking; bolstering election observation efforts to assess, expose, and discourage information manipulation; and supporting local efforts to strengthen media literacy, "pre-bunk" (i.e., preemptively debunk) common false election-related narratives or claims, and build societal resilience against information manipulation.

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[14] See, e.g., *Developing a Disability Inclusion Policy: A Strategic Planning and Implementation Guide for Election Management Bodies* (IFES, 2022): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Disability%20policy%202022_final.pdf; and *Gender Equality and Election Management Bodies: A Best Practices Guide* (IFES, 2014): https://www.ifes.org/publications/gender-equality-election-management-bodies-best-practices-guide

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to enhance election information integrity and resilience include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- crisis communications and media training for EMB leaders, communications staff, and other key personnel;

- developing and implementing a strategic communications plan;

- improving digital literacy among EMB leaders and key personnel;

- facilitating communications-focused exercises and scenario-based training;

- understanding and countering foreign malign influence and information manipulation threats, including generative AI-enabled threats;

- monitoring the information environment, including identifying information manipulation, hate speech, and other potentially harmful content on traditional and social media;

- coordination and information sharing with relevant government agencies regarding threat activity;

- engaging social media platforms and relevant technology firms on high-profile user account security and information sharing on potential threat activity targeting elections;

- establishing stakeholder engagement mechanisms to facilitate dialogue with political parties, civil society, and media on information integrity challenges; and

- facilitating peer exchanges among EMB leaders and key personnel on new and evolving information integrity challenges.

3.7 Promoting Appropriate Use of Technology and Cybersecurity Risk Management

As EMBs seek to modernize their systems and better serve voters in an era of rapid digitization, they must consider how best to use technology and manage associated cybersecurity risk. EMB cybersecurity concerns have become particularly pronounced following high-profile state-sponsored cyber threat activity targeting U.S. election and political infrastructure in 2016. Accordingly, promoting the appropriate use of technology in elections and helping EMBs manage cybersecurity risk have become increasingly prominent election management assistance programming areas.

EMBs are increasingly employing technologies to improve and streamline election processes, such as voter registration, voter verification, voting, counting, and tabulation. This includes expanded use of election-specific technologies, including voter registration databases, biometric voter registration and verification systems, electronic voting and counting equipment, and results management systems, as well as technologies not specific to elections, such as systems for managing large numbers of temporary personnel and tracking the delivery and return of election materials.

While such technologies, once institutionalized, can provide meaningful benefits (e.g., expand access for persons with disabilities, expedited ballot counting, protect against voter impersonation, etc.), they can also bring new challenges. In addition to procurement, cost implications, training, implementation, maintenance, and cybersecurity challenges, introducing new technologies can expand opportunities for stakeholders to criticize or make false claims about the technologies, potentially contributing to decreased public confidence in elections. Given such complexities, donors should be cautious when considering providing election management assistance that involves supporting the procurement or use of new technologies. Donors are often best positioned to support technical assistance that helps EMBs navigate the challenges associated with considering and, if appropriate, introducing new technologies as opposed to funding their procurement – though this is a common request EMBs make of donors.

EMBs, implementing partners, and donors operate in modern workplace environments, relying to varying degrees on IT systems to conduct their work. Thus, donors should recognize that cybersecurity risk exists in all election management assistance programs – not just programs that involve explicit cybersecurity-focused activities or the introduction of new technologies.

Election management assistance that seeks to strengthen EMB cybersecurity risk management can be complicated by EMB leaders' wariness towards external assistance that involves providing access to sensitive IT systems or sharing information on potential cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Donors and their implementing partners may find more willingness by EMBs to receive support that seeks to increase cybersecurity awareness and strengthen EMB resilience to cybersecurity incidents, such as facilitating exercises that involve cybersecurity-focused scenarios or reviewing procedures to ensure the EMB is well positioned to recover from a cybersecurity incident or technological failure.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to promote the appropriate use of technology and cybersecurity risk management include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- informing decision-making regarding adoption of new technologies, including potential benefits and drawbacks, financial sustainability, IT management capacity, considerations of international norms and human rights, procurement transparency, supply chain risk management, and other issues relevant to the appropriateness of technological solutions to the context and challenges faced by the EMB;

- establishing stakeholder consultation mechanisms to engage the public, political parties, and other key election stakeholders to inform technology-related decision making and gain the buy-in of these stakeholders;

- piloting new technologies;

- bolstering EMB capacity to integrate new technologies, when appropriate;

- voter education on new technologies;

- strengthening EMB awareness and capacity regarding cybersecurity risk management;

- reviewing the legal and procedural framework to identify areas for improvement regarding cybersecurity risk management, including not only technological controls, but also physical and procedural mitigations that protect against and build resilience to cybersecurity incidents and technological failures;

- intra-governmental coordination and information sharing on cybersecurity matters;

- implementing cybersecurity risk mitigations, including inventorying IT assets, data management, account and access control management, vulnerability management, service provider management, and incident response and data recovery planning;

- facilitating engagement with private sector cybersecurity service providers, including on risk and vulnerability assessments, penetration testing, and incident response support services;

- facilitating engagement with cybersecurity researchers, including adoption of vulnerability disclosure policies;

- tabletop exercises or other scenario-based training regarding cybersecurity incidents; and

- pre- and post-election testing or auditing of voting equipment to ensure and demonstrate to the public that it is working as intended.

3.8 Strengthening Electoral Security and Mitigating Election Violence

The security environment surrounding elections involves governmental actors beyond the EMB, including law enforcement and other government agencies with security-related authorities. Donors regularly provide electoral assistance to strengthen the security environment surrounding elections and mitigate election violence, which can include assistance to a wide range of non-governmental and governmental stakeholders, including the EMB.[16] Such assistance is more common in conflict-affected and post-conflict environments, as well as countries that have experienced election violence in the recent past or where stakeholders are concerned that election violence is likely to occur. In these conflict-affected contexts, programming can be informed by a specific assessment on electoral security, drawing on USAID's Electoral Security Framework.[17]

Election management assistance that seeks to strengthen electoral security and mitigate election violence can support EMB involvement in intra-governmental and stakeholder coordination efforts on security matters and improve EMB capacity to address specific electoral security challenges, such as enhancing the physical security of election facilities and protecting EMB personnel, temporary election workers, and voters. Election management assistance often includes targeted programming that seeks to mitigate electoral violence risks related to specific categories of potential voters, especially women and other marginalized groups that are often disproportionately impacted by electoral violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence.[18]

Enhancing EMB-Law Enforcement Collaboration in Georgia - In Georgia, the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) have benefited from donor-supported initiatives like the "Enabling a Peaceful Environment to Administer Credible Elections" (ePeace) electoral security training, which encourages collaboration and shared responsibility between electoral stakeholders to strengthen the security environment.[19] The ePeace training deepened the CEC and MIA's knowledge of election security and the importance of upholding the values of neutrality and impartiality. As a result of this initiative, a coordination mechanism was established between the CEC and the MIA to ensure improved election security planning and implementation leading up to elections and in their immediate aftermath. The collaboration between the two entities has further deepened to include joint election violence risk mapping exercises.

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[19] Source: The ePeace training was funded by USAID under The Strengthening Electoral Processes (SEP) project implemented by IFES. See: https://www.ifes.org/our-expertise/election-integrity/election-conflict-security.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to strengthen the electoral security environment and mitigate election violence include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- assessments of the electoral security environment, including assessing risks associated with election violence and other potential security incidents and identification of electoral hotspots;

- security planning;

- EMB involvement in intra-governmental coordination mechanisms on electoral security;

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[16] See, e.g., *Best Practices in Electoral Security, A Guide for Democracy, Rights and Governance Programming* (USAID, 2013): https://creativedc.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Electoral_Security_Best_Practices.pdf

[17] Available at: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAEA453.pdf

[18] As defined in the *U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally* (2022), the term "technology-facilitated gender-based violence" refers to "a threat or act of violence committed, assisted, aggravated, and amplified in part or fully by using information and communication technologies or digital media that is disproportionately targeted at women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals. It is a continuum of multiple, recurring, and interrelated forms of gender-based violence that takes place both online and offline. Examples can include online harassment and abuse; non-consensual distribution of intimate digital images; cyberstalking; sextortion; doxing; malicious deep fakes; livestreamed sexual violence of children, youth, and adults; rape and death threats; disinformation; intimate partner violence; and recruitment into trafficking and abusive labor." https://www.state.gov/reports/united-states-strategy-to-prevent-and-respond-to-gender-based-violence-globally-2022/. For additional information and resources, see USAID's webpage on Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response: https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/reducing-gender-based-violence

- establishing platforms for dialogue with political parties, civil society, traditional and religious leaders, and/or other stakeholders that can take steps to strengthen the electoral security environment;

- developing codes of conduct for candidates and political parties with relevant provisions to deter election violence;

- establishing and implementing systems for tracking election violence incidents, including gender-based violence;

- monitoring the information environment, including identifying potential incitement of violence, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and hate speech on traditional and social media;

- utilizing electoral violence risk and incident data to inform and adapt electoral violence mitigation efforts;

- developing EMB-led training programs and materials for law enforcement and security agencies on election processes, the electoral legal and procedural framework, and election violence mitigation strategies; and

- voter education on the importance of peaceful elections, including election violence deterrence messaging.

3.9 Strengthening Electoral Dispute Resolution

Complementing the role of courts, EMBs often play an important role in resolving election-related disputes. This can include adjudicating complaints regarding high-profile matters (e.g., presidential candidate eligibility, allegations of outcome determinative election fraud, etc.), as well as lower-profile issues (e.g., political rally permit refusal, defacement of campaign posters, late opening of voter registration site, etc.). Effective electoral dispute resolution (EDR) systems can provide means of redress for violations of electoral rights and opportunities to remedy identified flaws in electoral processes.

Donors commonly seek to strengthen EDR through electoral assistance to a range of stakeholders, including judges, law enforcement, EMBs, lawyers, citizen election observers, and party/candidate agents. Election management assistance components of such support typically seek to improve EMB-led EDR mechanisms and strengthen EMB engagement with external

EDR mechanisms, including timely and transparent adjudication.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to strengthen electoral dispute resolution include technical assistance or support to EMBs on:

- development and implementation of EDR laws, regulations, and procedures;

- establishing or improving case management systems and tools;

- building the capacity of EMB personnel and temporary election staff on EDR processes, including on engaging law enforcement, judges, and other governmental entities with EDR responsibilities;

- establishing mechanisms for coordination and information sharing with law enforcement, courts, and other governmental entities with EDR responsibilities;

- strengthening EMB capacity to conduct or participate in election-focused investigations;

- enhancing EMB communications, transparency, and voter education efforts on EDR matters, including proactive publication of case information in an accessible format; and

- establishing regional peer networks of election arbiters to facilitate information sharing among judges and EMB leaders on EDR best practices and comparative experiences.

3.10 Promoting Political Finance Transparency and Combating Corruption

EMBs often have responsibilities related to managing and enforcing political party and campaign finance transparency requirements. Through these and other authorities, EMBs can play an important role in combating corruption.[20] Leveraging long-standing efforts to strengthen political finance transparency through electoral assistance, donors are increasingly seeking to advance anti-corruption efforts through election management assistance.

Election management assistance can also seek to combat corruption internal to the EMB itself, such as corruption surrounding the hiring of key personnel and procurement of sensitive election materials and systems

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[20] USAID defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power or influence for personal or political gain." 2022 Anti-Corruption Policy.

crucial to the integrity of the elections, such as ballot papers and election technology.

Strengthening Political Finance Oversight and Transparency in Paraguay - After 2020 legal changes to the Law for Regulation of Political Finance, Paraguay's Supreme Electoral Justice Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia Electoral, or TSJE) developed two systems designed to increase political finance transparency and counter the influence of organized crime and corruption in elections. To support the development of these systems, USAID facilitated exchanges between the TSJE and Colombia's electoral management body, which uses a platform known as Cuentas Claras to track money in politics. The National Political Finance System, known as SINAFIP, allows political parties, organizations and candidates to report campaign income and expenditures. The second system, the National Observatory of Political Finance (known as ONAFIP), allows Paraguayans to access that political financial information. Alongside the creation of these systems, USAID supported the TSJE to create and institutionalize a permanent Technical Unit for Political Financing that is responsible for all aspects of political finance as well as a political finance training plan for staff. The TSJE also works closely with Paraguay's Anti-Money Laundering Secretariat to track illicit financing in politics.

Illustrative election management assistance activities that seek to strengthen political finance transparency and combat corruption include technical assistance and support to EMBs on:

- strengthening capacity to manage and enforce political finance requirements;

- developing regulations and procedures on political finance reporting for political parties and candidates;

- engaging parliament and appropriate government agencies on political finance-related legal and regulatory framework reform;

- engaging anti-corruption institutions, law enforcement, financial intelligence units, and other relevant government agencies on political finance and anti-corruption matters, including digital advertising and foreign funding;

- establishing mechanisms for dialogue with political parties on political finance, including around issues of fair access to funding for traditionally marginalized candidates such as women;

- improving political finance transparency measures, such as timely, accessible, machine-readable, and granular[21] online publication of political party and campaign finance reporting;

- developing codes of conduct and/or public annual asset disclosures for EMB leaders and key personnel;

- strengthening EMB procurement capacity and processes, including assessing corruption risks, implementing transparency measures and other identified mitigations, facilitating coordination with government procurement specialists; and

- facilitating peer exchanges among EMB leaders and key personnel on political finance and anti-corruption.

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[21] Granular refers to data that is provided at a detailed level, such as the level at which the source data is collected, rather than just summary-level data. For example, granular campaign expenditure data is provided at the transaction level, including cost and the recipient of funds or goods.

4. CONCLUSION

This guide presents strategic considerations and programming options to help USAID and other donor agencies answer the who, what, why, when, how, and whether of election management assistance. As election management assistance is a complex, nuanced, evolving, and often highly sensitive type of democracy assistance, this guide should not be viewed as prescriptive. Rather, it should be viewed as a starting point for donors that are contemplating, designing, or modifying election management assistance programming. Many topics covered in this guide can be explored further in the resources detailed below in the Appendix.

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources that may be useful for donors considering election management assistance are listed and linked below. This non-exhaustive list helped inform the development of this guide.

Election Management

ACE Electoral Knowledge Project, *Guide to Electoral Management*: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/default

European Centre For Electoral Support, *Strategic Planning for Electoral Management Bodies* (2022): https://www.eces.eu/template/Strategic%20Planning%2009.11.22%20FInal%20version%20AP%20Format.pdf

IFES, *Strategic Planning for Effective Election Management* (2011): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/strategic_planning_guide_2011_0.pdf

IFES, *Assessing Electoral Fraud in New Democracies: Refining the Vocabulary* (2012): https://www.ifes.org/publications/assessing-electoral-fraud-new-democracies-refining-vocabulary

IFES, *Introduction to Operational Planning: A Guide for Election Management Bodies* (2022): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/IFES%20Operational%20Planning%20Guide_Feb_2023.pdf

IFES, *Leadership in Crisis: Ensuring Independence, Ethics and Resilience in the Electoral Process* (2020): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Leadership%20in%20Crisis_rev200304.pdf

IFES, *Guardrails for Democracy* (2022): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Guardrails%20for%20Democracy1.pdf

IFES, *Election Investigations Guidebook Standards, Techniques and Resources for Investigating Disputes in Elections (STRIDE)* (2020): *https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/ifes_election_investigations_guidebook_december_2020.pdf*

International IDEA, E*lectoral Management Design* (2014): https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/electoral-management-design-2014.pdf

International IDEA, *Independence In Electoral*

Management, Electoral Processes Primer 1 (2021): https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/independence-in-electoral-management.pdf

UNDP, *Electoral Management Bodies as Institutions of Governance* (2000): https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Elections-Pub-EMBbook.pdf

USAID, *Electoral Assessment Framework* (2021): https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z4JJ.pdf

USAID, *Electoral Assessment Framework Toolkit* (2021): https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XSMK.pdf

USAID, *Report on the Modernization of Electoral Assistance* (2020): https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/open/electoral-assistance/fy2020

Westminster Foundation for Democracy, *A New Framework for Understanding and Assessing Electoral Commission Independence* (2020): https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/WFD_A-new-framework-for-understanding-and-assessing-electoral-comission-independence.pdf

Strategic Communications and Information Integrity

Center for an Informed Public, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Graphika, & Stanford Internet Observatory, *The Long Fuse: Misinformation and the 2020 Election* (2021), Stanford Digital Repository: Election Integrity Partnership. V1.3.0: https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:tr171zs0069/EIP-Final-Report.pdf

CounteringDisinformation.org, *Election Management Body Approaches to Countering Disinformation*: https://counteringdisinformation.org/topics/embs/1-strategic-communication-and-voter-education-mitigate-disinformation-threats

CounteringDisinformation.org, *A Guide to Promoting Information Integrity* (2023): https://counteringdisinformation.org/

Creative Associates International, *Electoral Integrity Framework Project Election Malpractice Primer: Insights and Priorities* (2012): https://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/archive/questions/replies/531723839/52093951/Creative-Electoral-Integrity-Framework-Project.pdf

Democracy Reporting International, *Guide to Monitoring Image and Video-Based Social Media* (2021): https://democracyreporting.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/images/3021Guide%20to%20Monitoring%20Image%20and%20Video-based%20Social%20Media.pdf

IFES, *Working Paper on Social Media, Disinformation and Electoral Integrity* (2019): https://www.ifes.org/publications/social-media-disinformation-and-electoral-integrity

IFES, *Crisis Communication and Disinformation Playbook and Training Curriculum*: https://www.ifes.org/programs-initiatives/crisis-communication-strategies-address-disinformation

IRI, *Combating Information Manipulation: A Playbook for Elections and Beyond* (2021): https://www.iri.org/resources/combating-information-manipulation-a-playbook-for-elections-and-beyond/

IRI, *Countering Foreign Authoritarian Influence*: https://www.iri.org/what-we-do/countering-foreign-authoritarian-influence/

International IDEA, *The Information Environment Around Elections* (2022): https://www.idea.int/our-work/what-we-do/elections/information-environment-around-elections

Shorenstein Center, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policymaking* (2017): https://shorensteincenter.org/information-disorder-framework-for-research-and-policymaking/

UNDP, *Promoting information integrity: global reflections from electoral stakeholders* (2023): https://www.undp.org/publications/promoting-information-integrity-elections-global-reflections-election-stakeholders

UNDP, *Information Integrity for Electoral Institutions and Processes Reference Manual for UNDP Practitioners* (2024): https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/governance/publications/information-integrity-electoral-institutions-and-processes-reference-manual-undp-practitioners

UNDP, *Defending Information Integrity: Actions for Election Stakeholders* (2024): https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/governance/publications/defending-information-integrity-actions-election-stakeholders

UNDP, *Information Integrity to Sustain Peace during Electoral Processes* (2024): https://www.sustainingpeace-select.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2023/03/SELECT-Information-Integrity-report_compressed130323.pdf

Westminster Foundation for Democracy, *Why Election Management Bodies Need Strategic Communications Plans* (January 2023): https://www.wfd.org/commentary/why-election-management-bodies-need-strategic-communication-plans

Electoral Security

ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, *Best Practices in Electoral Security* (2013): https://aceproject.org/best-practices-guide-in-electoral-security/view

IFES, *Increasing the Success and Sustainability of Democracy and Governance Interventions in Post-conflict Countries* (January 2022): https://www.ifes.org/publications/democracy-and-governance-post-conflict-countries#:~:text=Using%20data%20from%20more%20than%2025%20years%20of

IFES, *Overcoming Challenges to Democracy and Governance Programs in Post-Conflict Countries: CEPPS Lessons Learned* (May 2021): https://www.ifes.org/publications/overcoming-challenges-democracy-and-governance-programs-post-conflict-countries-cepps

USAID, *Electoral Security Framework, A Technical Guidance Handbook for Democracy and Governance Officers* (July 2010): https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAEA453.pdf

USAID, *Best Practices in Electoral Security, A Guide for Democracy, Rights and Governance Programming* (January 2013): https://creativedc.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Electoral_Security_Best_Practices.pdf

Election Technology and Cybersecurity

International IDEA, *Introducing Biometric Technology in Elections* (June 2017): https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/introducing-biometric-technology-elections

NDI/IFES, *Implementing and Overseeing Electronic Voting Technologies* (2015): https://www.ndi.org/implementing-and-overseeing-e-voting-counting-technologies

Open Election Data Initiative: https://openelectiondata.net/en/

USAID, *Cyber Security Primer* (October 2021): https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/10-26-21_EXTERNAL_CyberPrimer-CLEARED-accessible.pdf

USAID, *Electoral Cybersecurity Briefing Series* (2022-2023): https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/document/electoral-cybersecurity-donor-program-development-guide

Inclusion

IFES, *Gender Equality and Election Management Bodies: A Best Practices Guide* (2014): https://www.ifes.org/publications/gender-equality-election-management-bodies-best-practices-guide

IFES, *Electoral Rights of Environmentally Displaced Persons* (April 2021): https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/electoral_rights_of_environmentally_displaced_persons_april_2021.pdf

International IDEA, *Democracy for All? Minority Rights and Minorities' Participation and Representation in Democratic Politics* (November 2011): https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/democracy-for-all-minority-rights-and-minorities-participation-and-representation.pdf

International IDEA, *Special Voting Arrangements: Between the Convenience of Voting and the Integrity of Elections* (2021): https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/special-voting-arrangements-integrity-of-elections.pdf

IOM, *Support to Out of Country Voting*: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/mepmm/op_support/esu_ocv_080107.pdf

UN Women and UNDP, *Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Political Participation* (2015): https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/7/inclusive-electoral-processes

USAID, *Gender Integration in Democracy, Human Rights and Governance: Programming Toolkit* (2015): https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAE696.pdf

USAID/CEPPS, *Raising their Voices: How Effective are Pro-Youth Laws and Policies?* (2019): https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/iri.org/iri_proyouth-report_.pdf

UNDP, *Building inclusive democracies: A guide to strengthening the participation of LGBTI+ persons in political and electoral processes* (2023): https://www.undp.org/publications/building-inclusive-democracies-guide-strengthening-participation-lgbti-persons-political-and-electoral-processes

UNDP, *Strengthening Women's Political Participation: A Snapshot of UNDP-supported Projects Across the Globe* (2023): https://www.undp.org/publications/strengthening-womens-political-participation-snapshot-undp-supported-projects-across-globe

UN Women, *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation* (2024): https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures

UNDP, *Supporting the introduction of Temporary Special Measures (TSMs)* (2023): https://www.undp.org/governance/publications/supporting-introduction-temporary-special-measures-tsms

Conceptual

USAID, *Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Policy* (2024): https://www.usaid.gov/policy/democracy-human-rights-and-governance

USAID, *Electoral Assistance Guiding Principles* (2024): https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/USAID%20Guiding%20Principles%20for%20Electoral%20Assistance_updated_Accessible.pdf

USAID, *Key Considerations for Programming in Politically Sensitive Countries* (2019): https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/201may.pdf

USAID, *Guidance on Programming in Closed Spaces* (2012): https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20Guidance%20on%20Programming%20in%20Closed%20Spaces%20Ident.pdf

USAID, *Social and Behavior Change in Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance: A Primer* (2023): https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XWX4.pdf

V-Dem Institute, *Defiance in the Face of Autocratization* (2023): https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf