

GUIDE ON INTERNAL RISK FACTORS TO ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN WEST AFRICA



GUIDE ON INTERNAL RISK FACTORS TO ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN WEST AFRICA (2022–2023)

Cases from Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo

Nadia Nata

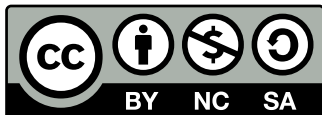
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Introduction

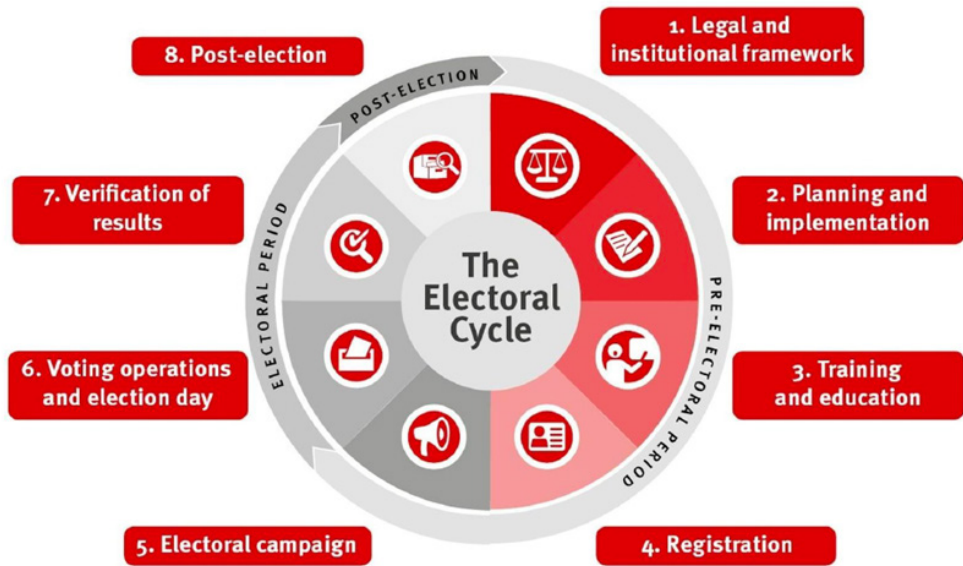
This Guide benefited immensely from the *Electoral Risk Management Tool: Internal Factors Guide* (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018) published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). It has been developed within the framework of the project Supporting Electoral Risks Management and Conflict Prevention in West Africa implemented by the Africa and West Asia regional programme of International IDEA. It provides an overview of the internal risk factors to electoral processes that could threaten the integrity and security of elections in West Africa from 2022 to 2023. The period under analysis in this Guide ends as of 28 February 2023. The list of factors analysed in this Guide combines those presented in previous editions of the guides published by International IDEA.

The Guide draws on the methodology developed by International IDEA and presented in its *Electoral Risk Management Tool: Internal Factors Guide* (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Internal risk factors are election-specific and do not exist outside the electoral context (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). They relate to electoral actors, events, practices and materials that can undermine the credibility of electoral processes or, in the worst-case scenario, trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

This Guide focuses on five case countries in West Africa (Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Togo) and highlights 27 internal factors grouped into seven phases of the electoral cycle (see Figure

Internal risk factors are election-specific and do not exist outside the electoral context.

Figure 1. The electoral cycle



Source: International IDEA.

1). However, we also understand that the titles given to the risk factors are not all-encompassing or optimal for all contexts. Each phase, and its associated factors, is covered in a separate chapter. This Guide does not discuss the electoral cycle's last phase (post-election). Although there is a possibility that some risks from the internal electoral processes could materialize in this last phase, the underlying risk factors might not be process related (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). That phase is discussed in the *Guide on External Risk Factors to Electoral Processes in West Africa (2023–2024): Cases of Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo* (Nadia Nata 2023).

The internal risk factors presented below are described in four different sections (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018):

1. Introduction: a summary of the concerns related to a particular factor that represent a risk to electoral processes and could cause, or contribute to causing, election-related violence.
2. Empirical cases: describes the electoral context in each country in which the particular factor was identified as a trigger of or a factor in triggering election-related violence.
3. Observable indicators: the means for measuring and evaluating the various factors.
4. Data collection and analysis methodologies: the proposed data sources, collection techniques and methods for analysis needed to understand each situation.

Combined with the *Guide on External Risk Factors to Electoral Processes in West Africa*, this Guide will help users identify risks of election-related violence in any electoral context. The list of factors is not exhaustive. With the aid of International IDEA's Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool) software, users can modify the list by renaming or deleting items or adding new risk factors and descriptions (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). In addition, the ERM Tool's Geographical Information System (GIS) instrument will allow users to collect and manage data, as indicated in sections on observable indicators and methods for data gathering and analysis (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).

Phase I

THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Electoral legislation is the collection of legal and structural elements defining or influencing an electoral process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). It can comprise some or all of: (a) the constitution; (b) national laws, which may take the form of a comprehensive electoral code; (c) provincial or state laws, which in federal states may govern processes for provincial or state and local electoral events; (d) ordinances and regulations made by national or lower-level authorities; (e) regulations, proclamations and directives issued by an electoral management body (EMB), where it has the powers to do so; (f) customary laws and conventions, which may be integrated into an electoral law; (g) administrative policies made by an EMB or other bodies; and (h) codes of conduct, voluntary or otherwise (Wall et al. 2006). The framework can likewise integrate international standards from international agreements and principles. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), and the Economic Community of West African States Declaration of Political Principles (ECOWAS Declaration 1991).

Irrespective of the wider institutional framework in a particular country, there will always be a body or bodies accountable for electoral management (Catt et al. 2014). In emerging democracies, it is normal for electoral legal frameworks to contribute to electoral integrity by making EMBs liable for controlling the whole process (Catt et al. 2014). Nonetheless, some functions such as boundary delimitation, the registration and funding of political parties, voter registration, electoral dispute management, the elections results certification and announcement, and the provision of voter education

and information, may be contracted out by an EMB, or upheld by other institutions or civil society organizations (CSOs) (Catt et al. 2014). When the electoral functions are allotted to more than one institution, the legal and policy framework should be exceptionally clear about each institution's functional responsibilities and obligations, the hierarchy and the coordination mechanisms between the institutions (Catt et al. 2014). In the West Africa context, no substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the six months prior to an election, except with the consent of a majority of political actors (ECOWAS Protocol 2001).

1. CONTESTED ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Introduction

At the most basic level, the electoral system translates votes cast into seats won by political parties and candidates (International IDEA 2005). Different electoral systems can aggravate or moderate societal tensions and conflict (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). A study published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2009) points to four variables of an electoral system that may trigger conflicts: (a) the equation for deciding how votes are converted into seats; (b) district magnitude; (c) the votes-to-seat ratio; and (d) boundary delimitation.

When an electoral system is not seen as inclusive and fair, or the political environment does not permit a general inclination that political parties have an opportunity to win next time, losers may feel compelled to use non-democratic, confrontational, and even violent tactics (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2005).

Empirical cases

Ghana

On two previous occasions—2008 and 2012—demarcations led to redrawing constituencies, so they were aligned with administrative districts created by the government (EU EFM 2019). In both instances, the process was contested by electoral stakeholders resulting in public discontent, expressed through petitions, demonstrations, the destruction of public assets, and the arrest of some traditional leaders (Bening 2012: 15). In 2021, a new population census took place. In 2020, the government created a new district in the Oti region and as a result a new constituency (Guan) was

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Not resolving those deviations during the demarcation process prior to the 2023 elections will contribute to widening disparity in equality of vote between counties and constituencies and further feed tensions in the country.

created in 2023. There are concerns that the previous practice of effectively engaging the populace before creating new districts and constituencies seems to be dying out (IMANI 2018: 92). Large-scale contestations may lead to tension and ultimately undermine the credibility of future elections.

Liberia

The delimitation of electoral boundaries was not implemented during the 2017 elections because the legal requirements to trigger the conduct of boundary delimitation by the National Elections Commission (NEC) were not met. This situation compelled the NEC to utilize the electoral districts that were delineated during and for the 2011 elections as a result, the delimitation of boundaries did not fully comply with the principle of equal value of the vote (EISA 2017). With wide-ranging deviations in the number of voters per district, the constituency borders also did not comply with the principle of equal suffrage (Carter Center 2018b). For example, the electoral district with the largest number of registered voters (Montserrado 4, with 63,786) had six times as many voters as the district with the lowest number of registered voters (River Gee 3, with 10,604) (EISA 2017). This does not meet international best practices (Carter Center 2018b). As a result, during the House of Representatives election in 2017, a perceptible inequality of the vote emerged (EU EOM 2017). Not resolving those deviations during the demarcation process prior to the 2023 elections will contribute to widening disparity in equality of vote between counties and constituencies and further feed tensions in the country (see Sonpon 2023).

Mali

On 24 June 2022, the President of the Transition in Mali promulgated the new electoral law adopted by the National Transition Council (CNT). Its article 167 stipulates that the electoral constituencies are the administrative districts called 'cercles' (the second smallest administrative subdivision in Mali) and the communes of the district of Bamako for the parliamentary election. In 2012 (through law No. 2012-018/of 2 March 2012), 9 new regions in addition to the existing 10 regions and 11 new cercles were created in Mali. The new regions and cercles are currently being delimited into their constituent communities. That process has created tensions in several localities that claim they are being marginalized to benefit some politicians' electoral interests. For example, on 3 May 2021, demonstrations in Markala were severely repressed by police from Segou resulting in two serious injuries (Sangaré 2021). On the one hand, all the cercles must be operationalized to participate in the upcoming legislative

elections (MODELE Mali n.d.). On the other hand, there is also the possibility that their first usage in an election may reveal issues which could fuel tensions and undermine the integrity of the election.

Sierra Leone

Since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1995, lawmakers have been elected by Proportional Representation (PR) system (1995 and 2002) and first-past-the-post system from 2007 to 2018. However, for the 2023 elections, a return to a district block PR voting system was first announced by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) in October 2022, following a directive from President Julius Maada Bio (ESCL 2022; Oxford Analytica 2022). Equally, electoral systems are assessed based on the legal framework. The amendment of section 38A in the 1991 constitution gives the right to the president to issue directives based on professional advice to adopt the PR system in the case where boundaries are not delimited. In this case, the policy of boundary delimitation was adopted, a committee was formed to kick start the process. Based on logistical and time constraints, the commission found it impractical to complete BD when the timeline for voter registration was far advanced. The commission was faced with the legal mandate for the term of office of the presidency and did not want to create more confusion by deferring the date for elections. The prudent thing to do at the moment is to revert to the alternative which is a legal provision. The commission advised the president based on current circumstances to use the PR system. The commission then drafted regulations including the allocation of seats by percentage for both the parliamentary and local council elections. There was a public debate in parliament and the media on the ramifications, but the process itself was highly regulated to meet the standards of international best practise.

Observable indicators

1. The level of inclusiveness and equal representation guaranteed by the electoral system.
2. The level of accountability guaranteed by the electoral system.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct a professional analysis of the effects of (a) the electoral formula; (b) district significance; (c) the votes-to-seat ratio; and (d) boundary delimitation.
- Conduct surveys on the opinions of political and non-political actors about the electoral system's suitability.

- Analyse geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

2. UNFIT ELECTORAL LAW

Introduction

Electoral law is made up of one or more pieces of legislation governing all aspects of the process for electing the political institutions defined in a country's constitution or institutional framework (Wall et al. 2006).

Electoral law may undermine credibility of electoral processes if it does not effectively include all eligible individuals and groups in terms of ensuring their right to vote or to participate in elections. It can likewise be intended to lean towards one party over another.

Empirical cases

Mali

On 24 June 2022, the President of the Transition in Mali promulgated the new electoral law adopted by the National Transition Council (CNT) on 17 June 2022. The newly created Independent Authority for Elections Management (AIGE) is already being criticized for not meeting the criteria of an independent authority given the weight of the attributions (article 5 of the law) of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MATD) in the management of elections in Mali (MODELE Mali n.d.). Furthermore, according to article 155 of the new electoral law and article 7 of the revised transitional charter, the transitional officials are eligible for the next end of transition elections that they are going to organize as well as the referendum on the new constitution. The electoral law amended on 15 February 2023 provides for special early voting arrangements for members of the military and other security forces (Studio Tamani 2023) and some political parties have expressed fears about it.

This possible participation of the military authorities would be unprecedented in the history of post-coup elections in Mali. But, in the context of the criticism of the shared responsibilities between the AIGE and the MATD, some voices have raised fears about the integrity of the election, which may be expressed through demonstrations and repression (RFI 2022b).

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Sierra Leone

On 27 July 2022, the Parliament of Sierra Leone passed a law on The Public Elections Act 2022. It has also been signed by the Sierra Leonean President Julius Maada Bio. There was definitely a plan by the Judiciary for a special court exclusively to fast tract electoral offences. This could be a potential area to invest. In the event of a close election result, this could undermine peaceful elections.

Furthermore, the lawmakers introduced a one-third gender quota for all appointed and elected positions ahead of the 2023 election. The passed law provides that for every three candidates nominated, one of them shall be a woman (see Public Elections Act, article 58(2)). This had been a campaign promise by the ruling president during the 2018 elections. Nevertheless, the new Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act may have a limited impact due to weak enforcement mechanisms (Oxford Analytica 2022). Although the Commission has in place administrative mechanism to implement this Act (Section 58(7) of the Public Elections Act 2022), historically women in Sierra Leone have long been subject to political inequality (Madina 2023), the weakness of enforcement mechanisms could undermine electoral integrity or create the likelihood of psychological violence against women willing to contest.

Togo

Even though the Togolese electoral code has been amended several times, notably once in 2012, twice in 2013, and once in 2019, it has often been a subject of controversy between the opposition and the government (EISA 2020a). The issue for the opposition is the lack of depth in the reforms. The last modification in 2022 follows the 29 proposals formulated by the National Concertation between Political Actors (CNAP) from 19 January to 13 July 2021 (Savoir News 2021). Out of the hundreds of political parties registered in Togo, only 26 were invited to the CNAP due to eligibility criteria, including that of having participated in at least one of the last three elections in the country. Only 17 political parties responded to the invitation, including the Action Committee for Renewal (CAR) and National Alliance for Change (ANC), including the Action Committee for Renewal (CAR) and National Alliance for Change (ANC), which later suspended their participation (Djade 2021). The main opposition party in the country, ANC, is still calling for a thorough cleaning of the electoral framework, through courageous reforms, so that the next elections can be transparent and fair (Togo Presse 2021). This creates concerns that a lack of consensual and thorough reforms will undermine the credibility of electoral processes and results.

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Observable indicators

1. The level of compliance of the electoral law with the regional—African Union (AU) and ECOWAS—and international—United Nations—electoral standards and obligations (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
2. The level of harmonization of the election law with other national legal acts.
3. The extent to which the electoral law is acceptable and inclusive in regulating all aspects of the electoral processes (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
4. The level of stakeholder and public confidence in the electoral law.
5. The record of contentions against the electoral law.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct a specialist overview and analysis of the electoral law and its impact on all groups. Analyse potential negative impacts in different regions and among different social groups and political actors (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Conduct periodic surveys with political actors and the general public targeting both men and women to understand their levels of satisfaction with the electoral law. Ensure that all surveys collect data on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, including their membership in marginalized groups. These include their age, sex, language, political orientation, ethnicity, religion, location and any minority group membership they may have (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Collect information on official complaints filed and resolved at the respective administrative and judicial instances relating to the electoral law. Distinguish between the groups who submit complaints and disaggregate the complaints based on gender, political affiliation, geographic areas and related electoral phase.
- Assess the inclusiveness and transparency of the legislative processes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

3. INADEQUATE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING AND CAMPAIGNS

Introduction

Regulations related to funding political parties and election campaigns, commonly known as political finance, are critical

to promoting integrity, transparency and accountability in any democracy (Hamada and Agrawal 2020: 6). However, if it is not effectively regulated, political party financing can undermine the integrity of political processes and institutions and jeopardize the quality of democracy (Hamada and Agrawal 2020; Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012). The need to regulate uncontrolled, undisclosed and opaque political finance is a major challenge to the integrity of elections in emerging and mature democracies alike (Hamada and Agrawal 2020; Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012). Poorly regulated political finance can diminish political equality, provide opportunities for organized crime to purchase political influence and undermine public confidence in elections (EC Ghana 2000).

Empirical cases

Ghana

Political parties in Ghana are compelled to submit to the Electoral Commission the statements of their accounts, funding sources, expenditures and liabilities upon receiving their final certificate of registration, before and after an election, and once a year (Political Parties Act 574, articles 13, 14, and 21, respectively). Most of them did not comply with these obligations due to the absence of public funding. The situation increases the corrupting influence of money in politics due to the opaqueness of the system (EU EFM 2019). There is evidence of a nexus between campaign finance and organized crime in Ghana, including illegal mining, illegal oil distribution (bunkering), fraudulent business, procurement infractions and associated kickbacks from the award of contracts. For example, in September 2009, John Hardy, Counsel for the UK's Serious Fraud Office (SFO), told the Southwark Crown Court in London that five politicians of the governing National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration, including MP and Roads Minister Dr Ato Quarshie, took bribes in the award of a contract to British firm Mabey and Johnson (Adam Smith International and CDD-Ghana 2021). In April 2020, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) charged Asante K. Berko, Managing Director of the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR), for allegedly arranging the payment of USD 2.5 million in bribes to Ghanaian Government officials and MPs between 2015 and 2016 to facilitate the approval of a contract (Adam Smith International and CDD-Ghana 2021).

The absence of an adequate law to prevent fraud is a serious gap in the legal framework that could lead to an abuse of state resources

Poorly regulated political finance can diminish political equality, provide opportunities for organized crime to purchase political influence and undermine public confidence in elections.

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and corruption in the electoral process and continue to impact the integrity of elections in Ghana (African Union 2021).

Liberia

In Liberia, the existing legal framework does not provide for public funding for political parties or campaigning (EISA 2017). Even though there is a provision for campaign finance regulation, only a few parties respect the requirements of article 83(d) of the Constitution about the publication and submission of annual statements of assets and liabilities (EISA 2017). After the 2017 elections, only two political parties (Movement for Progressive Change (MPC) and Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction (MDR) out of the 26 parties submitted their financial statement. In 2005, serious allegations were made that foreign funds were illegally channelled into campaigns to influence voters through in-kind donations of rice and other goods (NDI and Carter Center 2005). The Campaign Monitoring Coalition, a Liberian civil society group, claimed widespread abuse of state resources and vote buying by some candidates and submitted a report to that effect to the National Election Commission (NEC) for further investigation (NDI and Carter Center 2005). Based on observation of the 2017 elections, the current implementation of the campaign and political party finance regulations is insufficient to guarantee equality, transparency and accountability in the election process. This situation could undermine the integrity of the upcoming elections.

Sierra Leone

Public funds do not finance political parties in Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, the Constitution (section 35(3)) provides that a statement of the sources of income and the audited accounts of a political party, together with a statement of its assets and liabilities, shall be submitted annually to the Political Party Registration Committee.

During the 2018 elections, many situations of abuse of state resources and vote buying as well as a disproportionate influence from the diaspora community—especially over the smaller parties—were reported. There was no law that regulates campaign financing and no legislation regulating the use of state resources for campaign purposes in Sierra Leone (EISA 2020c). Although there is now a provision in the Political Parties Regulation Commission Act 2022 that requires political parties to report on their funds and asset under Section 35 of the Act, in the electoral context of June 2023, the limitation of the institutional and procedural frameworks for

The absence of an adequate law to prevent fraud is a serious gap in the legal framework that could lead to an abuse of state resources and corruption in the electoral process and continue to impact the integrity of elections in Ghana (African Union 2021).

The limitation of the institutional and procedural frameworks for enforcement of the new regulation and insufficient follow-up could undermine the integrity of the process by reinforcing inequality between the contestants.

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Togo

In Togo, the state contributes to financing political parties and electoral campaigns through the finance law or by a decree issued by the Council of Ministers. In 2018, the amount of campaign financing for the legislative elections was set at CFA 250 million (USD 405,000) for 130 candidate lists. For the municipal council elections of 30 June 2019, the Council of Ministers set the amount at CFA 450 million (USD 730,000) for 569 candidate lists. Sixty-five per cent of these funds must be distributed equally between all the lists. The remaining 35 per cent will be distributed in proportion to the votes obtained among the lists that obtained at least 10 per cent of the vote (Togo Presse 2019). The specific conditions for regional elections will be set by decree.

The concern is the implementation of the provisions. Indeed, during the 2020 presidential elections, by the end of the electoral campaign, the presidential candidates had not yet received the promised funding to finance their campaigns (EISA 2020a). This gap in the law did not promote equal opportunities for the various candidates (EISA 2020a) and showed the equity and integrity of an election can be undermined by not implementing existing laws. Without a specific enforcement mechanism, this gap can affect any other election by the will of those in power.

Observable indicators

1. Existence of regulations or bans and limits on private income—who can contribute to political parties and candidates and how these donations are limited (International IDEA 2022).¹
2. Existence of regulations for public funding: provision of direct and indirect public funding available to political parties and candidates (International IDEA 2022).
3. Existence of regulations on spending: rules for how much political parties and candidates can spend and what they can spend it on (International IDEA 2022). Including any regulations for online campaigning, codes of conduct for campaigns, and so on.
4. Existence of reporting requirements, oversight and sanctions: requirements for financial reporting, oversight of political finance

¹ This Guide draws heavily on the content of the global guides of the Internal Risks Factors of 2018 (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018) and the draft of the 2022 (International IDEA 2022) and the 2023 (Nadia Nata 2023).

regulations and the sanctions that are available for breaches (International IDEA 2022).

5. Existence of a publicly accessible political finance disclosure site.
6. Timely and proportionate application of sanctions.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct an expert overview of the political party financing and campaigning legal framework. Analyse the extent to which it establishes a level playing field for all political actors. Identify advantaged and disadvantaged stakeholders.
- Review EMB materials and website and assess through a survey with stakeholders the quality of guidance provided by EMBs to political parties on political party financing.
- Examine the existence and compliance with reporting requirements from political parties to required institutions.
- Collect information about oversight actions, complaints, and sanctions relating to political party campaigning.

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

Introduction

In recent years most EMBs have had to deal increasingly with a range of new and fast-moving issues and challenging environments. For example, the use of social media exposes voters to an infodemic where facts, disinformation, misinformation and political messaging become increasingly difficult to distinguish. Further, political stakeholders adopt the tactic of questioning the integrity of the electoral results. The security challenges as well as all incidents related to violent extremism that led to the departure of the administration from some localities in the Sahel can be mentioned here as emerging challenges. Natural and man-made hazards (e.g. Covid-19, floods) and cyberattacks can make the conduct of elections more difficult. Such eventualities can negatively impact participation and, therefore, require that special voting arrangements are extended or put in place.

Rigid, outdated or overly prescriptive legal and institutional frameworks can make it difficult or impossible to adjust electoral processes accordingly. At the same time, too much leeway for interpreting and implementing the legal framework can equally lead

to controversy and a possible lack of credibility in elections and their administration.

Heavy-handed regulation of the online space can threaten democracy and credible elections, but a complete lack of regulation can equally shift the level playing field and prevent meaningful political competition.

Emerging challenges increasingly make it necessary that state agencies, beyond the EMB, play a critical role in providing the required capacity and expertise to the electoral process. In the absence of a properly defined mandate, such agencies may be unable to provide such support, for example, on issues related to security (including cyber and traditional security), anti-corruption, new media, disinformation and health (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

As indicated in the 1986 Constitution of Liberia, article 93(a), 'Voting for the President, Vice President, members of the Senate and members of the House of Representatives shall be conducted throughout the Republic on the second Tuesday in October of each election year'. Therefore, because Liberia's electoral date is fixed by the Constitution, elections will always fall in the rainy season (NEC n.d.). Holding elections in the rainy season means there is always a likelihood that there will be extraordinary logistical challenges. However, the EMB and other agencies have limited manoeuvring resources to deal with these situations (NEC n.d.). In 2017, holding the elections in the rainy season risked 'jeopardizing the logistics of elections' (EU EOM 2018a), a likelihood which could totally undermine the integrity of the process as well as its results. For example, the electoral technology that the NEC may wish to use could malfunction in humid conditions (EU EOM 2018a).

Observable indicators

1. Existence of legislation that responds to emerging challenges.
2. Existence of mandates among state agencies to provide needed support and expertise to the EMB to deal with emerging challenges.
3. Existence of frameworks that require or promote inter-agency collaboration to respond to emerging challenges.
4. The level of guidance and support that electoral stakeholders receive from the EMB to deal with emerging challenges.

Heavy-handed regulation of the online space can threaten democracy and credible elections, but a complete lack of regulation can equally shift the level playing field and prevent meaningful political competition.

Emerging challenges increasingly make it necessary that state agencies, beyond the EMB, play a critical role in providing the required capacity and expertise to the electoral process.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct an expert review of the electoral law and other relevant legal frameworks to establish the extent to which a comprehensive regulation exists that responds to emerging electoral challenges.
- Examine mandates, rules and procedures of the EMB and other agencies with election-related responsibilities that require dealing with emerging electoral challenges.
- Assess the procedures and quality of collaboration between state agencies on election-related matters.
- Assess the extent to which the EMB and other state agencies provide information and guidance to electoral stakeholders on emerging electoral challenges.
- Analyse the geographic and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

5. DISPUTED EMB DESIGN AND COMPOSITION

Introduction

An EMB is an organization, or a body, legally responsible for managing some, or all, of the elements essential for the conduct of elections and direct democracy instruments. It may be a stand-alone institution or a unit within a larger institution that has a broader mandate (Wall et al. 2006). These core responsibilities include planning voting operations, determining who is eligible to vote, receiving and validating the nominations of electoral participants (for elections, political parties, or candidates), conducting the ballot, counting the votes and tabulating the votes (Wall et al. 2006).

Three broad electoral management models exist: independent, governmental and mixed. No matter which model is used, it is important that the EMB can ensure the credibility of the electoral process and the legitimacy of the election results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). EMBs are expected to follow principles of independence, impartiality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, professionalism, and service-mindedness (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

If any of these constitutive principles are lacking, the EMB's work may be distrusted by key actors and can lead to outbreaks of election-related violence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Empirical cases

Ghana

In Ghana, the members of the Electoral Commission (EC) are appointed by the president for an indefinite term of office, on the advice of the Council of State, without any requirement for consultation with the opposition. That lack of inclusiveness in the appointment mechanism does not ensure the election administration body's independence and the electoral stakeholders' trust (EU EFM 2019). Indeed, during the 2016 electoral period, the then opposition party New Patriotic Party (NPP) and some other smaller parties questioned the neutrality and competence of the EC (EU EFM 2019). Likewise, the NDC that became the opposition also expressed mistrust in the impartiality and professional capacity of the EC Chairperson (EU EFM 2019). Furthermore, there were also concerns around the public perceptions of the process of impeachment and dismissal of the EC Chairperson and two deputies who were found guilty (WANEP 2022). In some quarters, this was interpreted as politically targeting these officials. In 2020, during the general elections, several hundred supporters of the NDC, wearing red and black, protested the election results on the main road of the EC by burning tyres and causing a heavy traffic jam (Usaini 2020). The NDC further proceeded to the Supreme Court and there was unanimous verdict by the Supreme Court in favour of the result announced by the EC. If such actions of public expression of perceived distrust, continues to prevail it could influence the perceptions of the integrity of the elections and their outcome.

Mali

In Mali, electoral law No. 2022-019 of 24 June 2022 defines the EMB as a hybrid entity with two bodies: the Independent Authority for Elections Management (AIGE) and the MATD. In addition, the AIGE comprises 15 appointed members: eight members by the public authorities, four by political parties and three by civil society. The members of the public authorities are appointed as follows: three by the head of state, one by the prime minister, two by the president of the legislative body, one by the president of the High Council of Communities and one by the president of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council. The members representing political parties and civil society are appointed according to the modalities these institutions or organizations set.

Such a composition gives an absolute majority to the public authorities who can set up the AIGE board without needing members

That lack of inclusiveness in the appointment mechanism does not ensure the election administration body's independence and the electoral stakeholders' trust

of political parties and civil society. It carries the risk of tension and instability within the AIGE, as the weight of the MATD's remit already threatens its independence. The majority presence of the public authorities, which is reinforced in the divisions of the AIGE at the regional, cercle and commune levels (article 22), is composed of seven members: four representatives from the public authorities, two from political parties, and one from civil society. The impossibility of installing all of the AIGE's divisions across the country may result in the impossibility of voting in regions under the control of military groups or terrorists, such as in northern Mali (Azawad) and the centre of Mali by the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). The AIGE's composition can generate perceptions that could undermine trust in the independence, impartiality and integrity of the body, the electoral process and its results.

Sierra Leone

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) comprises five electoral commissioners appointed by the president after consultation with the leaders of all the registered political parties and the approval of parliament (Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991: section IV, article 32). During the 2018 electoral period, stakeholders including political parties expressed high confidence in the ECSL as a credible election umpire (EISA 2018). However, according to public opinion polls conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI), trust in the ECSL has fallen by 49 per cent since February 2018. In a first poll, 67 per cent of Sierra Leoneans identified that they trust the ECSL a great deal. By the final poll in January 2022, only 18 per cent identified that they greatly trusted the ECSL (Kern and Fischer 2022). The IRI's poll shows that only 41 per cent of Sierra Leoneans believe that the country is heading in the right direction, a decrease of 13 percentage points from 2018 (Kern and Fischer 2022). According to a report published by Irish Aid in March, 2023, on *Citizen's Knowledge, Attitudes And Practices Towards Politic And Election*, these perception are on a decline. Critics argue that the ECSL, as constituted and staffed, lacks the competence and trust to conduct free, peaceful and credible elections in 2023 (Thomas 2022). These mixed perceptions and declines in public opinion could negatively impact the trust in the ECSL and may undermine the integrity and acceptance of outcome of the next elections.

Critics argue that the ECSL, as constituted and staffed, lacks the competence and trust to conduct free, peaceful and credible elections in 2023 (Thomas 2022). Those negative perceptions and

declines in public opinion could impact the trust in the ECSL and also undermine the integrity and results of the next elections.

Togo

In Togo, the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) has often been at the heart of debates between the opposition and the government. The CENI is not at all trusted by 35.4 per cent of Togolese while 20.2 per cent trust it a little and 20.9 per cent trust it partially (Afrobarometer 2022a). The CENI installed on 4 April 2022 is composed of 17 members: seven from the parliamentary majority, seven from the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition, two from civil society and one from the administration. On 9 May 2022, Yabré Dago, one of the representatives of the civil society, was elected president of the CENI. But in Togo, the civil society environment is dominated by human rights' non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and is full of politicized and non-politicized actors (EISA 2020a). The decisions of the CENI are taken by a majority of votes, which can be easily constituted by the government (RFI 2022a).

Among other factors, this composition influences the public's perception of the 'integrity of the elections' and the EMB, which are described as 'increasingly deteriorating' (IIAG 2020). During the 2020 presidential election, the opponent Agbeyomé Kodjo was declared second by the CENI with 19.46 per cent of the votes but rejected the results, proclaimed himself president and was arrested and prosecuted for that. This shows how the EMB composition and the candidate's perceptions can undermine the independence, impartiality and integrity of the body as well as the elections and the acceptance of their results.

Observable indicators

1. The levels of trust and confidence enjoyed by the EMBs throughout each country (International IDEA 2022).
2. The level of independence and the inclusiveness of the EMBs, including from a gender perspective (International IDEA 2022).
3. The level of impartiality of the EMBs.
4. The level of transparency of the work carried out by the EMBs (International IDEA 2022).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct an expert overview and analysis of the legal framework that regulates the establishment and the work of the EMBs. Examine the extent to which a legal framework is gender—or

conflict—sensitive. The objective is to check if it ensures the representation of different groups, genders, minority populations, and so on.

- Survey and interview political actors and citizen groups to measure perceptions of, and trust in, the EMBs' work. Conduct reviews on a periodic basis and graph the degree of trust across time to understand trends (International IDEA 2022).
- Analyse the EMBs' working practices relating to inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability. Interview political and civil society actors, targeting those who are concerned about this issue, or include this in the above survey (International IDEA 2022).

6. INADEQUATE AND BIASED ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Introduction

Electoral dispute resolution (EDR) mechanisms provide a formalized structure for appeals through which electoral actions or procedures can be legally challenged (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Disputes may arise at any point throughout the various stages of the electoral process (Orozco-Henriquez, Ayoub and Ellis 2010). If clear, effective and trusted EDR mechanisms are not put in place from the initial stages of electoral processes, electoral actors may decide to resort to alternative means in resolving disputed issues such as protests, boycotts or violence (Orozco-Henriquez, Ayoub and Ellis 2010).

Empirical cases

Ghana

The electoral legislation does not provide for administrative dispute resolution. A citizen with an electoral complaint can only seek redress in court, which can be an expensive and lengthy process (EU EFM 2019). Although alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are outlined in the Courts Act, they are rarely used (EU EFM 2019). The law does not provide any timeframes for the resolution of petitions challenging the election results, thus delaying legal redress at a sensitive time (EU EFM 2019).

The gradual eroding of the role of the Inter Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) in mediating electoral disputes could spell doom for Ghana's democracy if not checked (Bombande 2022).

If clear, effective and trusted EDR mechanisms are not put in place from the initial stages of electoral processes, electoral actors may decide to resort to alternative means in resolving disputed issues such as protests, boycotts or violence.

Liberia

In Liberia, under the elections legal framework, the National Election Commission (NEC) magistrates and the Hearing Officers in the Dispute Hearing Office have jurisdiction to hear contested election complaints. However, the Magistrates do not hear complaints alleging violation of campaign finance regulations or complaints concerning inter and intra-party dispute. Their decisions emanating from contested election dispute can be appealed to the NEC Board of Commissioners and then to the Supreme Court, which has seven days as stated in article 83(c) of the Constitution to adjudicate (NDI n.d.) During the 2017 elections, the presidential run-off was originally scheduled for 7 November, but preparations were put on hold by Liberia's Supreme Court to allow time to resolve a complaint filed by the Liberty Party (Carter Center 2018b). Indeed, the provided deadlines were not enough for the NEC as well as the Supreme Court to adjudicate. Finally, the complaint was ultimately rejected by the Supreme Court, which required the NEC to proceed with the run-off elections after fulfilling several conditions set by the court to address problems in the first round. In line with the Constitution, the NEC then called the run-off elections for 26 December (Carter Center 2018b). During the seven-week legal proceedings, the political and security situation remained calm and peaceful, and no incidents of violence were reported (NDI n.d.). This shows how the design of the EDR mechanism could undermine the election's integrity and trigger tensions and violence.

Mali

According to the 2022 electoral law modified in 2023 (articles 161, 166, 170, 173, 177), the prerogatives of the Constitutional Court are related to the management of pre-electoral disputes, the proclamation of final results and the management of post-electoral disputes. In the details and in the new draft of the constitution, the Constitutional Court carries out the general tabulation of votes, checks the regularity of the ballot and proclaims the final results, while its lack of capacity to manage EDR in transitional contexts is a weakness. During the 2020 parliamentary election, this kind of prerogative accumulation affected the electoral process. Indeed, while the provisional results gave 43 seats to the Rally for Mali (RPM) chaired by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the Constitutional Court decision finally granted 51 seats out of the 147 in the Assembly to the party then in power. This triggered the anger of several election stakeholders and a military coup led by Colonel Goïta and his men on 24 May 2021 (Laplace 2021). In Mali, the upkeep of the old prerogative of the EDR mechanism is viewed as a risk to electoral

integrity. It could continue to undermine the integrity of upcoming elections and their results.

Sierra Leone

In the weeks preceding the 2017 elections, a series of legal challenges were brought before the Supreme Court regarding the eligibility of several presidential candidates (Carter Center 2018a). Most notably, the candidate from the National Grand Coalition (NGC) was challenged on the grounds that he had dual citizenship, which is a basis for ineligibility under the Constitution (Carter Center 2018a). Following a series of technical delays in the proceedings, the court postponed its substantive hearing to 28 March, breaching the court's 30-day deadline for adjudication of the case and denying timely remedy of the dispute (Carter Center 2018a). Other actors argue that the Supreme Court's capacity to resolve disputes independently is also weakened by the 2018 changes to its composition—including the nature of the 2018 change in the Supreme Court leadership (Songhai Advisory 2022b). This means that the previous performances and struggles of political interest can generate perceptions about the EDR mechanism and undermine the professionalism of its members as well as the integrity of the elections and their results.

Following the 7 March 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, the main political parties alleged electoral malpractices. On 20 March, a former All People's Congress (APC) candidate filed an application with the High Court against the National Elections Commission (NEC)—named later as the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)—seeking an interim injunction from further announcing or publishing 7 March results and from conducting the 27 March run-off.

On 24 March, the High Court issued an interim injunction through an unorthodox legal procedure (without giving the two sides the opportunity to argue their case), which forced the NEC to suspend its election preparations (EU EOM 2018b). Various interlocutors, including opposition parties and CSOs questioned the fairness of the decision-making process and the independence of the judiciary (EU EOM 2018b).

On 26 March, the injunction was lifted by a High Court ruling. The Supreme Court at the request of the NEC extended the 14-day deadline for holding the run-off to 31 March (EU EOM 2018b). The NEC brought the High Court ruling before the Supreme Court for legal review. Regrettably, the Supreme Court did not hear the case before election day (EU EOM 2018b). As a result, it appeared to many that

the High Court judgment was politically inspired and in the interests of the ruling party; and that the indecision of the Supreme Court was also potentially politically advantageous to the ruling party, depending on the electoral outcome, as it provided the opportunity to question or to ratify the results (EU EOM 2018b). This shows how the lack (or perception of the lack) of independence in courts' decisions can undermine electoral integrity and election results.

Observable indicators

1. The existence of EDR bodies.
2. The level of accessibility of the EDR bodies.
3. The level of effectiveness of the EDR bodies.
4. The level of independence of the EDR bodies.
5. The level of impartiality of the EDR bodies.
6. The level of transparency of the EDR bodies.
7. The degree of trust in the EDR bodies.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct surveys and interviews with the political leaders or actors and other citizen groups to gauge the degree of confidence in the work of EDR bodies.
- Collect data on the number of election-related complaints received, solved and pending a ruling from the EDR bodies and disaggregate the complaints on the basis of gender.

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Phase II

PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

Once the electoral legal and institutional framework is finalized, planning and preparation for the implementation of electoral activities needs to be instigated (International IDEA 2022). This may include developing by-laws, revising or adopting processes that will improve internal and external communication management, developing crisis management plans and implementing risk management frameworks.

In all instances, developing operational plans for the implementation of the different phases of the current electoral cycle—voter information; registration of voters, political parties and candidates, and observers; political party campaigning; polling and counting; and result management—is necessary (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Operational plans will point to activities to be implemented, timelines, geographical scope, human resources, training needs, budget, and so on (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

In many aspects, effective planning and preparations will require collaboration with other state and non-state actors. Weakness or controversy in one electoral phase and an inability to prevent or mitigate risks can compromise the integrity of the subsequent phases, or the whole electoral process (International IDEA 2022).

7. INADEQUATE ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES, RULES AND REGULATIONS

Introduction

The electoral legal framework extends to numerous administrative rules such as ordinances and regulations made by national or lower-

level authorities; regulations, proclamations and directives issued by an EMB; and customary laws, conventions and codes of conduct (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). These rules are important as they set a clear and detailed normative framework that can be effectively operationalized (International IDEA 2022). A lack of legislative clarity may negatively impact the credibility and transparency of the electoral processes and increase the risk of arbitrary manipulation, potentially leading to undemocratic outcomes and conflicts (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Mali

On 24 June 2022, a new electoral law was promulgated in Mali for the end of the transition electoral calendar agreed with ECOWAS from March 2023 to February 2024. Therefore, it is necessary to update or develop new administrative procedures and regulations in record time without prejudice to their overall coherence.

The political parties and alliances for the return to constitutional order were calling for a review of the electoral law and denouncing the delay in organizing the next elections (referendum, legislative and presidential). The president of that group of political parties believes that organizing six elections in 2023 is a utopia (Studio Tamani 2022a). Consequently, the need for an updated and realistic timetable is obvious (MODELE Mali 2023).

On 10 March 2023, to mitigate concerns about the timing of the first of the planned elections, the transitional authorities asserted that the February 2024 deadline for the next presidential election, which should mark the return to constitutional order, remained an 'absolute priority' (RFI 2023). Due to the delay, a modified version of the electoral law was promulgated in March 2023 and the referendum postponed to June 2023. Already, the risk here is the likelihood of low ownership of these laws, procedures and regulations during the upcoming elections. The situation shows how the timing of elections in transitional periods and poorly planned administrative policies, rules and regulations could contribute to undermining electoral integrity or triggering violence during their implementation.

It is necessary to update or develop new administrative procedures and regulations in record time without prejudice to their overall coherence.

The situation shows how the timing of elections in transitional periods and poorly planned administrative policies, rules and regulations could contribute to undermining electoral integrity or triggering violence during their implementation.

Observable indicators

1. The level at which legislative acts are operational through specific regulations and instructions.
2. The extent to which electoral officials, political actors and citizen groups, including men and women, are acquainted with, and understand, the electoral processes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The electoral actors' confidence level and satisfaction with the various administrative rules and procedures.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Use surveys to measure the level of endorsement for the electoral regulations among the electoral actors (International IDEA 2022). Distinguish between political actors by asking for survey respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, including location and minority/marginalized group membership (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Identify political actors who did not endorse particular legal provisions, such as codes of conduct for political parties (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Through the same surveys, assess knowledge and understanding of relevant electoral regulations among electoral officials, political actors, and citizen groups, including women and youth groups (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

8. POOR PERFORMANCE IN ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Introduction

Developing a strategic plan is a first step in concentrating the efforts of an EMB on achieving its legal responsibilities (Wall et al. 2006). Operational planning will help develop a clear blueprint for the steps to be taken to organize credible elections. The plan should include descriptions, timelines, the geographic scope of preparations, activities and details of the human and funding resources required (International IDEA 2022).

Poor implementation of electoral activities might result in mistakes and delays (International IDEA 2022). If these problems are seen as deliberate tactics intended to favour certain political groups, or

Developing a strategic plan is a first step in concentrating the efforts of an EMB on achieving its legal responsibilities.

as having the potential to influence electoral outcomes, they could trigger violence (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Mali

The timetable adopted by the government provided for the referendum in March 2023, the legislative elections in October and November 2023 and the presidential election in February 2024.

On the ground, CSOs and key political actors such as the M5 RFP 'Mali Kura' movement expressed concerns about the organization of transparent and secure elections due to the slow implementation of the electoral timetable (Studio Tamani 2022a). In the specific context of Mali's transition where almost all the legal frameworks governing elections are new, such a perception of slowness in implementing the election timetable can fuel fears that it is a strategy used by the authorities to prolong the transition period. This can lead to tensions and violence that can also contribute to delays to operations and compromise the integrity of the elections and their results.

Liberia

Until the first round of the 2017 elections, political parties expressed measured confidence in the NEC's impartiality and regularly raised concerns about its capacity to manage the logistical arrangements for the election and sufficiently train staff (Carter Center 2018b). After the first round, during which some voters were unable to easily locate their names on the final registration roll (FRR), political parties questioned the quality of the voter list and the NEC's management of it (Carter Center 2018b). At various stages, the NEC struggled to adhere to the election timeline (Carter Center 2018b). There were delays in the procurement and delivery of materials, including ballots (Carter Center 2018b). In addition, for both rounds, procedures were developed late in the process and training schedules were frequently delayed (Carter Center 2018b). After the election, the Liberty Party filed a complaint which took seven weeks of legal proceedings to resolve. The presidential run-off which was originally scheduled for 7 November was put on hold by Liberia's Supreme Court and finally occurred on 26 December (Carter Center 2018b). This shows how the electoral process's management can undermine the elections' integrity and create long legal proceedings.

Observable indicators

1. The existence of guidelines for strategic and operational electoral planning among relevant stakeholders (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. Strategic plans and operational concepts exist at the responsible bodies.
3. The level of coherence of the strategic and operational plans (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The level of consultation among responsible stakeholders during the planning period and the capacity to implement operational plans (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The existence of a communication plan.
6. The existence of risk management processes.
7. The existence of crisis management plans.
8. The existence of monitoring and evaluation procedures and mechanisms (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Obtain strategic and planning documents from an EMB. Examine the quality, sufficiency, practicability, resource availability and timelines envisioned.
- Cross-check harmonization between the strategic planning and implementation documents produced by an EMB and those from different stakeholders that have electoral mandates.
- Evaluate the extent to which an EMB has implemented key management processes, such as risk management, crisis management, monitoring and evaluation.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

9. INADEQUATE FUNDING, FINANCING AND BUDGETING OF ELECTIONS

Introduction

Electoral costs can be grouped in three different categories:

1. *Core costs* (direct or event costs) are routinely associated with implementing an electoral process in a stable electoral environment (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. *Diffuse costs* (or indirect costs) relate to electoral services that cannot be disentangled from the general budgets of agencies that

assist with the implementation of an electoral process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

3. *Integrity costs* are necessary to provide security, integrity, political neutrality and a level playing field for an electoral process (Wall et al. 2006).

Inadequate and untimely resources may force EMBs to make compromises which can impact the integrity of electoral processes (Hamada and Agrawal 2020). Core cost deficiencies may affect the technical integrity of the electoral process; a lack of diffuse funds will limit the engagement of supporting agencies, such as those tasked to provide security, while a lack of integrity funds may harm the legitimacy of the process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Empirical cases

Mali

Despite more than 20 years of democracy, Mali still struggles to mobilize the needed resources for its elections without resorting to funding partners (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). For the presidential and legislative elections planned for 2018, the budget shortfall to be sought from partners was XOF 55 billion (approx. USD 90.4 million)—over half the projected cost (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). Even though most of the costs were funded by the government, support from Mali's partners was essential (Malijet 2020a). The elections planned for 2022 were supposed to cost XOF 96.095 billion (approx. USD 157.9 million), with contributions expected from technical and financial partners (Républicain 2021). Lastly, considering the impact on Mali's economy of ongoing costs related to Covid-19, security crises and the transition, the elections planned for 2023 could require support from partners. Indeed, the national budget adopted by the national transitional council on 1 December 2022, already has a budget deficit of 24 per cent with a provision of XOF 70.750 billion (approx. USD 116.3 million) for the elections (Studio Tamani 2022b). This shows how funding mobilization is still a key challenge that can be exacerbated during difficult times and therefore can contribute to undermining the integrity of elections integrity and their results by delaying implementation.

Liberia

During the 2017 elections in Liberia, complaints were filed by the Unity Party and Liberty Party concerning the lack of integrity of the final registration roll (FRR), problems faced during the registration

Inadequate and untimely resources may force EMBs to make compromises which can impact the integrity of electoral processes.

period and improper use of the addendum to the FRR on election day (Carter Center 2018b). The case took seven weeks of legal proceedings and delayed the presidential run-off (Carter Center 2018b).

In 2023, for the first time, Liberia decided to move from optical manual registration (OMR) to biometric voter registration to deal with the issues of double registrants and duplications, which marred previous elections. The initial projected cost of USD 91 million for the 2023 general elections was adjusted by the Government of Liberia to USD 53 million.

The Government of Liberia provided USD 20 million to the National Elections Commission under the elections budget for fiscal year 2022 for the biometric voter registration (BVR) exercise and other pre-electoral activities. (Data as provided by NEC Liberia). The NEC has complained about not receiving all the funding required to conduct the voter registration process and had to split the already ongoing process into two phases due to that inadequate funding (AllAfrica 2023). Because of this decision, political actors started questioning the legality of the voter registration (Daily Observer 2023).

In the Fiscal Year 2023, the Legislature approved the amount of USD 33 million for the conduct of the General Elections. Despite this, the Commission faced the challenge of delays in the provision of funds which led to the reduction in the period of implementation of some activities as well as impeded operational activities. This shows how the budgeting processes and inadequate funding can influence election management and undermine the integrity of elections and their results.

Ghana

In 2020, voter education was conducted primarily by the EC and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and to a lesser extent by some CSOs, in English, six local languages and sign language (EU EOM n.d.).

However, the NCCE has expressed concerns over a shortage of funding available to reach all sections of society (EISA 2020b). There is also a need for greater coordination among CSOs conducting civic and voter education to avoid overlaps in reaching out to the public as not all CSOs belong to the NCCE (EISA 2020b).

Observers have reported that the outreach capacity of the NCCE staff at the district level was often negatively affected by a lack of financial and human resources (EU EOM n.d.). This shows the budgeting processes, and the budget availability, can impact election management at the local level and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. There are adequate funds to cover core costs specified in strategic, operational, risk management and crisis contingency plans (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. There are adequate funds to cover diffuse costs specified in strategic, operational, risk management and crisis contingency plans (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. There are adequate funds to cover integrity costs specified in strategic, operational, risk management and crisis contingency plans (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The timely access to requested funds from the ministry or department of finance (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The accountability level in budget approval and spending procedures (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct an expert analysis that involves cross-checking the operational plans with available funds.
- Conduct an expert analysis of diffuse/indirect costs and integrity costs (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Compare current budgets with the budgets for previous elections and cross-check against violent or non-violent outcomes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Chart differences in expenditures throughout the different electoral phases. Observe whether the current budget is, in real terms, an improvement compared to the previous budget(s), and in particular, whether the current budget compensates for previous shortfalls (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Phase III

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Training and education efforts are conventionally focused on training electoral officials on technical aspects of preparing and implementing electoral processes (International IDEA 2022). Still, they are increasingly becoming critical for all electoral stakeholders as elections are a societal enterprise. During the different phases of the electoral cycle, campaigns were organized to educate and inform registrants and voters about the electoral timelines, the registration and voting procedures and their rights and duties.

Deficiencies in the training of electoral officials and any misunderstanding of electoral processes or wrong perceptions among political actors, the media and the general public, may raise tensions and contribute to deepening conflict and distrust in the credibility of elections (International IDEA 2022).

10. POOR TRAINING OF ELECTION OFFICIALS

Introduction

Operational training and professional development are an investment in the EMB's ability to perform its main task—to administer an electoral contest. One of the main pillars of professionalism in electoral administration is the proper training and development of permanent EMB staff, temporary management staff appointed for specific electoral events and the large number of field staff that may be temporarily engaged for large-scale events (Wall et al. 2006).

Poor or inadequate training may hamper service delivery and increase the risk of election blunders that may harm the reputation of the EMB

or the election outcome itself. Mistakes can be systemic, technical, procedural or human and can occur any time before, during or after the election (Asplund 2023). Technical mistakes resulting in the faulty setup or maintenance of voting machines such as electronic voter identification devices (electronic poll books), touchscreens and transmission of results devices (mobile phones) may hinder or interrupt polling (Asplund 2023). Procedural mistakes resulting in the loss of sensitive election material—particularly completed votes—could jeopardize the electoral outcome (Asplund 2023). Human error, resulting in inaccurate result transmission, may distort early election results. Even rudimentary judgement mistakes matter. When people have a bad experience at the polling station, for example in some countries asking for a tax certificate, and they encounter a poll worker with a political party symbol on their clothes or someone who is rude—that becomes the narrative. With the advent of social media, this private encounter can quickly spread and multiply in terms of reputational damage (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Sierra Leone

In 2018, during the presidential, parliamentary and local elections, the NEC recruited over 85,000 ad hoc staff to serve in the 11,200 polling stations across the country. The number was reduced to around 63,000 for the run-off election. Using a train-the-trainers methodology, the staff were mainly trained on the NEC polling and counting procedures manual.

On election day, some confusion was noted regarding voting by security personnel and polling officials and the filling out of forms. The conduct of polling staff during the first round of elections was pointed out and could also explain the high number of invalid votes. (EISA 2018).

Therefore, for the run-off elections, the staff were retrained on all aspects of the polling and counting procedures with a focus on the completion of forms, queue control and voting by security and polling officials.

For the general election in 2023, recruiting and deploying unqualified polling staff is one of the risks identified through the National Elections Threat Assessment/District Risk Mapping process (IESPEC and ONS 2022). This shows the importance of effective training

Poor or inadequate training may hamper service delivery and increase the risk of election blunders that may harm the reputation of the EMB or the election outcome itself.

of polling staff and how poor training can undermine an election's integrity and results.

Liberia

For the 2017 elections, the NEC hired over 400 electoral supervisors responsible for recruiting and training about 26,950 polling place staff on the required procedures (NDI n.d.).

At the end of the training, the candidates for the various positions of the polling staff were given a test and the results determined their assignment in the hierarchy of the polling place, with higher scorers being assigned the presiding officer roles and the lowest scorers as the queue controllers (EU EOM 2017).

But, on election day, the queue controller role emerged as vital to the conduct of the first round of the elections (EU EOM 2017). The main factors of the first-round delays can be attributed to inconsistent training of polling personnel, late divulgation of polling procedures and insufficient guidelines for queue controllers (EU EOM 2017). Some improvement was made for the rescheduled run-off. However, this shows the importance of proper training for all roles in the hierarchy of the polling place and how inadequate training or insufficient guidelines for a role can fuel tension and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. The existence of operational capacity in the shape of an administrative entity (division, directorate, department, unit, sub-unit, or an electoral training facility) within the EMB structure that is adequately staffed and budgeted.
2. The existence of training needs assessments and career development goals.
3. The existence and comprehensiveness of operational plans for the training of electoral officials (International IDEA 2022).
4. The existence and quality of training materials.
5. The existence of sufficient numbers of training personnel (International IDEA 2022).
6. The quality of the skills of the training providers.
7. The degree to which the national training programme has been completed (International IDEA 2022).
8. The level of understanding and skills obtained from the training (International IDEA 2022).

Proper training for all roles in the hierarchy of the polling place is important, and inadequate training or insufficient guidelines for a role can fuel tension and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Gather training plans for electoral officials. Use maps to indicate regions that lack adequate plans. Assess the level to which men and women are represented in training (International IDEA 2022).
- Conduct an expert review of the training methodology and curriculum (International IDEA 2022). Map regions where the training methodology and curriculum may need reassessment to overcome language and other barriers (International IDEA 2022). Canvass the extent to which skills are maintained and institutionalized within EMBs (International IDEA 2022).
- Follow up on the pace and the outreach of training efforts. Chart the progress of training implementation.
- Survey/quiz trained electoral officials. Graph particular topics on which trainees show a lack of understanding. Point to regions where training should be repeated.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

11. LACK OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

Introduction

Many EMBs provide training and education to political party representatives, judges, police officers, media and CSO representatives. For example, candidates and political party agents receive training on campaign finance laws, electoral procedures, and codes of conduct. Journalists are often trained on ethical reporting during elections and how to combat hate speech. Security sector agencies require training on sensitivities to securing electoral actors and locations without interfering in the process. If politicians, elections observers, security sector agencies and journalists lack a fundamental understanding of the technical aspects of electoral processes—including various procedures, EDR mechanisms and decision making—their false perceptions may misinform their actions and reporting, which in turn may increase tensions (International IDEA 2022). The media have a responsibility to report rather than make news, and when the opposite occurs, it can harm the credibility of elections (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Mali

Mali has an active journalism sector. However, in the *2022 World Press Freedom Index* by Reporters Without Borders (RSF 2022), Mali is ranked 111th out of 180 countries. Indeed, more than 90 per cent of active journalists did not graduate from journalism school but learned on the job (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). Consequently, they do not comply with the extant code of ethics and often send out unverified information. In addition, the lack of advertising and subscription revenues makes the Malian media particularly susceptible to undue political influence, as politicians dictate journalistic output by providing much needed finance (Media Landscapes n.d.).

Even though journalists have been trained by different actors on election coverage and conflict-sensitive journalism, the quality of information that goes out during Malian elections has been judged to be low (Media Landscapes n.d.). This shows how the level of training, the qualifications of journalists and media financing can fuel tensions and undermine the integrity of elections and their results.

Ghana

During the 2020 elections in Ghana, the EC regularly communicated with the public and electoral stakeholders, primarily through social media (EU EOM n.d.) The official website was revamped but somehow underused by the EC and some important information was not publicly available (for example, some EC decisions; minutes of meetings; a nationwide list of parliamentary candidates; detailed polling, counting and collation procedures; and details on functionality and parameters of the biometric verification devices) (EU EOM n.d.).

The EC also organized regular national-level meetings for the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) attended by EC representatives, contesting political parties, as well as by civil society and cooperation partners (EU EOM n.d.).

However, the main opposition party also complained about insufficient consultations by the EC during IPAC's deliberations on election preparations (EU EOM n.d.). After the election, several hundred opposition party supporters contested the election results (Usaini 2020).

This shows how information sharing and consultation with contesting political parties is crucial and any weakness can fuel tension and undermining the integrity of the elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. The existence and comprehensiveness of electoral processes-related training programmes for various electoral stakeholders integrating gender issues.
2. The extent to which electoral training programmes are tailored to the specific needs of different stakeholders, for example, languages, means of delivery and so on.
3. The level of implementation of training programmes for electoral stakeholders.
4. The level of stakeholders' understanding of different aspects of electoral processes.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Review training plans for political electoral stakeholders.
- Conduct a professional review of the training methodology and curriculum.
- Collect information, including through fact-finding efforts, on the implementation of training events.
- Survey relevant electoral stakeholders about their understanding of electoral processes before and after the training.

12. POOR VOTER INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Introduction

A voter information and education campaign is an effort organized by the relevant EMB to provide accessible information, at times in multiple languages, enabling citizens to participate in elections as candidates and as voters (International IDEA 2022). It often addresses eligibility requirements and timelines and locations and procedures for registration and voting (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Voter information and education campaigns may be unclear, inaccurate, nonresponsive, or badly timed and fail to reach all citizens, especially marginalized groups such as women and elderly persons in rural areas. In most societies of the world, the unequal

distribution of power between women and men disadvantages women's access to information (International IDEA 2022).

Therefore, voters may lack clarity about the eligibility criteria for voter registration, the identification documents required, the designated voting location, the voting procedure and so on (International IDEA 2022). Poorly informed citizens may be excluded from, or slow down and disrupt, electoral processes, unnecessarily overburdening EDR mechanisms, thus undermining the credibility of elections and results (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

During the 2011 elections in Liberia, the percentage of invalid votes was 6.4 per cent (EISA 2017). One of the reasons was poor voter information and education campaigns. During the 2017 elections, some civic and voter education material was delivered to the counties with a delay and also was not available in minority languages, contrary to international commitments and standards (EU EOM 2017). Another contributing factor is the country's high illiteracy level (EU EOM 2017).

The lack of voter information and education greatly impacted the entire electoral process, because citizens received very limited information. This shows how voter information that is unclear, is badly timed and fails to reach all citizens (especially marginalized groups such as women and elderly persons) can affect the trust in election results (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's high illiteracy level contributed to many invalid votes during the 2012 elections.

During the 2018 elections, voter education was entirely provided, as an emergency solution, by international partners. It was limited to basic messages presenting candidates, election dates and instructions on how to mark ballots, and delivered in the last three weeks before election days (EU EOM 2018b).

Even though the voter turnout was high, about 80 per cent (EU EOM 2018b), the high number of invalid votes attests to the deficiency in civic and voter education. Indeed, the invalid votes were 5.2 per cent

Voter information and education campaigns may be unclear, inaccurate, nonresponsive, or badly timed and fail to reach all citizens.

(139,427) and 1.24 per cent (31,694) of all votes cast for the first and second rounds respectively (EISA 2020c).

Voter or electoral education was one of the areas that ECSL made a lot of gains. The UNDP election project catered for extensive electoral education programmes down to the level of the wards. The reduction of the number of invalid votes during the run-off shows how clear and consistent voter information can positively impact the integrity of the elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. The accuracy and suitability of the information provided in the voter information and education materials.
2. The development of voter information and education materials for minorities (in terms of language) and people with disabilities.
3. The appropriateness of the timing of the voter information and education campaign.
4. The geographical scope of the voter information and education campaign.
5. The degree of diversity of voter information media (national and local radio, newspapers, TV, as well as SMS messages, EMB website and social media).
6. The quality and social sensitivity of the voter information and education campaign.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Assess the timelines for voter information and education (International IDEA 2022).
- Analyse the voter information campaign's geographical coverage and capacity to reach all social groups. Consider gender, age, ethnicity, language and religious groups. Consider accommodations for voters with needs, such as people with disabilities.
- Conduct surveys among recipient and excluded groups measuring the effects of the voter information campaign (level of understanding of campaign messages among citizens) (International IDEA 2022).

Phase IV

REGISTRATION

Electoral processes involve three types of registration:

1. Voter registration—the process of verification of a citizen's eligibility to vote.
2. The registration of political parties and candidates—verification of their eligibility to stand for election (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. Observer accreditation—a procedure intended to grant different election stakeholders access to observe relevant electoral activities.

All three may have an impact on the credibility and integrity of electoral processes as well as restrictions on political parties (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). They can represent potential factors contributing to election-related tensions and violence.

13. PROBLEMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Introduction

Voter registration establishes the eligibility of individuals to cast their ballot on election day. As a general rule, eligibility to vote is a precondition for the registration of candidates (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Voter registration is a technically complex and sensitive process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Voters with multiple registrations, electoral registers containing the names of deceased or non-existent people, rejected voter registration, mistakes in assigning voters to the proper polling station, and other factors may potentially influence

electoral outcomes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Therefore, all political actors competing in elections will be very concerned with the quality of voter registration (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). In transitional contexts, or fragile and conflict-affected contexts, security issues are a primary concern. They can complicate the voter registration exercise, for example for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Manipulation of voter registration, or perceptions that this has happened, may undermine the credibility of elections (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Ghana

In the 2020 elections, the biometric voter registration process was one of the most contentious issues (EU EOM n.d.). The NDC, in particular, raised concerns about the timing of the exercise, which was held during the Covid-19 pandemic, and its impact on turnout as well as the document requirements for new registrants (EU EOM n.d.). Although the EC proceeded to compile the voters' register and the process was reported as generally peaceful, inclusive and credible, with over 17 million certified voters included, the exercise laid the basis for the NDC's constant doubt and questioning of the EC's impartiality (EU EOM n.d.).

Concerns about the failure of the biometric identification system introduced by the EC during the registration process were also raised by a section of the stakeholders (EISA 2020b). Measures have been put in place by the EC to address the concerns, including the use of manual verification (EISA 2020b), but there are some doubts about these steps solving all problems.

For the 2024 general elections, it is necessary for all stakeholders to reach a consensus on the use of the Ghana Card as proof of citizenship before it is rolled out. Otherwise, it could breed tension in the 2024 general elections, contribute to a loss of trust and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results (Bombande 2022).

Liberia

During past elections in Liberia, election registration data ended up being corrupted due to issues with the optical manual registration (OMR) system used for voter registration. For the 2023 presidential

Voter registration is a technically complex and sensitive process.

Manipulation of voter registration, or perceptions that this has happened, may undermine the credibility of elections.

and legislative elections, more than three million Liberians will be eligible to vote. The NEC has planned to transition from OMR registration to biometric voter registration technology for the registration of these voters (Menjor 2022).

The voter registration was planned to start on 15 December 2022, and end on 24 March 2023. But due to internal wrangling in the administration of the NEC, the registration process was postponed (News Public Trust 2022). Later, the NEC split voter registration into two phases due mostly to budget constraints. Because of that, political actors started questioning the legality of voter registration (Daily Observer 2023). During the conduct of the two phases, the exercise faced many challenges that had various effects such as localized instances of violence and complaints by political actors. This shows how the voter registration process is sensitive, and any related difficulty can undermine the public trust in the credibility of the voter roll as well as the integrity of elections and their results.

Mali

Ahead of the 2020 legislative elections, political parties voiced concerns about the franchise for IDPs, and that there were no plans to make it possible for them to vote in the election (Bicu and Wolf 2020; Malijet 2020b).

Given the extreme vulnerability of IDPs, who lack basic necessities (food, water, shelter, sanitation, etc.), it is wrong to expect them to worry about registering on the electoral roll of their host community within six months of their arrival (MJDH 2022).

Continuing to exclude IDPs may fuel tension and undermine the integrity of the elections and the national character of their results.

From October to December 2022, the annual revision of the electoral rolls was affected by inadequate communications, coinciding with the harvest period, difficult access to certain localities due to road conditions, flooding and insecurity. More importantly, the IDPs and refugees were not considered during the first phase of the exercise scheduled in October (MODELE Mali 2022). In the context of the upcoming 2023 constitutional referendum and 2024 elections in Mali, continuing to exclude IDPs may fuel tension and undermine the integrity of the elections and the national character of their results.

Sierra Leone

For the 2018 elections, the voter registration exercise was postponed three times due to organizational challenges. However, stakeholders largely expressed confidence in the accuracy of the final voter register.

For the 2023 elections, contentious census figures approved in September 2022 recorded significant population increases in ruling party strongholds. Although the ECSL used a combination of the 2016 and 2022 census figures to determine seat allocation, they remained a perception that the intended reform to hold the election using a proportional representation system, increases the chances for some political parties to secure a majority share of parliamentary seats and of the presidential vote in the 2023 polls (CRISIS 24 n.d.).

Observable indicators

1. The level of quality of performance of the voter registration centres (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. Citizens' turnout (data disaggregated by gender).
3. The level of reliability and performance of voter registration technology (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The number of successful registrants versus the number of rejected registrations (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The appropriateness and the level of actors' understanding of complaint procedures (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
6. The existence of time for scrutinizing provisional electoral registers.
7. The number complaints related to the voter registration process (data disaggregated by gender).
8. The quantity and location of violent incidents relating to voter registration processes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct periodic surveys with political parties, CSOs and citizens regarding their perceptions of the quality of the ongoing registration process (International IDEA 2022). Obtain their views with respect to the extent to which quality of registration can or will predetermine electoral outcomes (International IDEA 2022).
- Check the availability of provisional voter registers and the efficiency of complaint procedures (International IDEA 2022).
- Review voter registration logs, records of registration-related appeals at the relevant appeal bodies and the dynamics of case resolution (International IDEA 2022).
- Collect data on incidents involving increased tensions and violence related to the registration processes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Examine the geographical and gender distribution of the issues and consider historical tendencies.

14. PROBLEMATIC REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

Introduction

Political parties exist outside the electoral context but also compete in elections (International IDEA 2022). That usually requires registration with the body in charge of conducting elections. Basic registration requirements may include providing information on party identity, programme documents, evidence of popular support, geographic coverage, and financial viability (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Basic registration requirements for political party candidates may include proof of eligibility to vote in a given electoral district and additional information such as financial statements (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Registration requirements can be used as an instrument to exclude groups or individuals from the electoral process.

However, registration requirements can be used as an instrument to exclude groups or individuals from the electoral process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Denial of registration can incentivize excluded groups to boycott elections or turn to violence to pursue their political interests. In many situations, psychological and physical violence can prevent candidates from standing in elections (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

In Liberia, the code of conduct requires presidential appointees aiming to be candidates to resign two or three years prior to the election (NDI n.d.). During the 2017 general elections, the NEC initially rejected three candidates for failing to meet the eligibility requirements mentioned in the National Code of Conduct for all Public Officials and Employees of the Government of the Republic of Liberia of 2014 (NDI n.d.). The three candidates rejected by the NEC appealed to the Supreme Court, which reversed the NEC's decision in two cases (Harrison Karnweah, vice presidential candidate for the Liberty Party, and Jeremiah Sulunteh, vice presidential candidate for the Alternative National Congress) (NDI n.d.). The Supreme Court stated that their code of conduct violations were not egregious enough to reject the candidates and mandated the NEC to fine them instead (NDI n.d.). This means that the registration of political parties and candidates must be based on reasonable requirements and a legal framework; failing to do so can fuel tensions and undermine the integrity of the elections.

Ghana

For the 2016 elections in Ghana, 15 political party representatives and two independent candidates applied to contest the presidential election (EU EOM 2017).

The EC disqualified 13 presidential candidates for failure to comply with the provisions of the regulations governing nominations. Of the 13 candidates, 5 sought legal redress in the courts of law (EU EOM 2017).

While waiting for the court's decision, the printing of the notice of poll and presidential ballot papers was put on hold.

The Supreme Court later ruled against the EC and instructed it to allow the 13 disqualified presidential candidates to re-apply (EU EOM 2017). The electoral calendar was constantly changing due to ongoing litigations. Finally, of the 17 candidates, only 6—National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic Party (NPP), Progressive People's Party (PPP), Convention People's Party (CPP), People's National Convention (PNC) and National Democratic Party (NDP) succeeded in contesting the presidential elections (EU EOM 2017).

This shows how the registration of political parties and candidates can lead to disqualifications and litigation which can delay the implementation of the planned activities and undermine the integrity of the elections.

Observable indicators

1. The level of difficulty or ease associated with meeting the requirements for party and candidate registration, including:
 - a. legal (prior registration of the political organization, candidate registration, country of birth, signed statements, and so on).
 - b. financial (registration deposits, fees, financial declarations, and so on);
 - c. logistical (timelines, the location where registration can be done, and so on);
 - d. gender (including candidates of all genders in the candidacy lists) (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. The geographical and social representativeness and inclusiveness of political parties (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The number of incidents involving physical and psychological violence against prospective party candidates, disaggregated by gender, during primaries and the registration period (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

4. The number of successful party registrations/number of rejected registrations (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The number of small parties (e.g. satellite or briefcase parties) in coalition with the ruling party (or main opposition party) that dilute the electoral landscape and erode the opponents' potential for victory (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
6. The number of complaints, received and processed, related to party and candidate registration (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct an expert overview of the legal framework for registration of political parties and candidates and analyse its impact. Consider instances where party registration requirements may disqualify particular political, socio-economic or geographic groups, such as women and young people, from political competitions (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Review parties' and candidates' registration logs, records of registration-related appeals and the dynamics of case resolution (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Consider internal political party complaints submitted by candidates. Also, study the number of complaints between parties and their registration systems (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Collect data on violent incidents during primaries and throughout the registration process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographic and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

15. PROBLEMATIC ACCREDITATION OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Introduction

Domestic and international observers often confer accountability to an election and might safeguard against electoral fraud (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). It is widespread knowledge that the public places a great deal of confidence in their findings.

Problematic accreditation can be perceived as a part of preparations to rig the electoral results, which may contribute to increased tensions, rejection of the electoral results, or outbreaks of violence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). In the case of domestic observation, some political actors may resort to pressure and intimidation to influence their reporting. Moreover, authoritarian regimes will tend

to limit the number of international observers or deny registration to domestic observation groups (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network 2013).

Empirical cases

Mali

Mali has had a long history of election observation and deployment of domestic observers. But in Mali's new electoral law of 2022, the mandate of election observers is not clearly defined, nor are the stages at which their presence is permitted.

In the context of end of transition elections (2023–2024), the deteriorated relationship between the transitional authorities and international partners may restrict the scope of domestic observers and civil society intervention in the elections. In its second pre-electoral report released in April 2023, MODELE Mali (Mission d'Observation des Élections au Mali) invited the president of the AIGE to specify the scope of the observers' remit by mentioning their presence at all stages of the electoral process. Even though MODELE can be seen as a mitigation strategy supported by international partners, not clarifying the situation may fuel perceptions that question the integrity of the elections and their results.

Togo

According to CENI procedures, applications for accreditation of observer associations are sent to the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralisation and Local Government (MATDCL) to study their legality. Consequently, the CENI may find it difficult to go against a decision by the MATDCL (CEJP 2020).

During the 2020 presidential elections, the CENI refused to accredit observers from the Togolese Bishops' Conference. It also withdrew the accreditation of the Concertation Nationale de la Société Civile (CNSC-Togo), which intended to deploy 404 short-term observers. The NDI technical support partners from the United States that support CNSC-Togo have also been expelled (EISA 2020a). These situations will likely slow down efforts to make electoral processes more transparent as well as the implementation of civil society initiatives. In the context of the upcoming elections in the country, the situation could reduce the scope of domestic observers and civil society intervention in elections. It may continue fuelling perceptions against the integrity of elections and their results.

Problematic accreditation can be perceived as a part of preparations to rig the electoral results, which may contribute to increased tensions, rejection of the electoral results, or outbreaks of violence.

In the context of the upcoming elections in the country, the situation could reduce the scope of domestic observers and civil society intervention in elections. It may continue fuelling perceptions against the integrity of elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. The difficulty level associated with the accreditation of domestic and international observers.
2. The number of accreditations rejected and potential geographical focuses (data disaggregated by gender) (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The number of complaints related to rejected observations (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The number of incidents of intimidation reported by observers (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct a professional review of the legal framework for the accreditation of domestic and international observers.
- Identify groups and organizations that are denied access to observation (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Conduct interviews with national and international observer organizations regarding their views on the accreditation process.
- Obtain numbers of deployed observers, events observed and geographical coverage (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Identify potential gaps.
- Survey citizens in relation to the level of trust in different electoral observation groups (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

16. RESTRICTED POLITICAL PARTIES

Introduction

At the core of electoral processes are political parties and independent candidates who participate on equal terms irrespective of whether they are ruling or opposition parties. National legal frameworks for elections are required to provide all individuals and groups with the right to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties, or other political organizations with legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on the basis of equitable treatment before the law (Tuccinardi 2014: 82).

However, limiting political parties' chances, which can happen during the electoral race, may profoundly impact the integrity of electoral processes.

At the core of electoral processes are political parties and independent candidates who participate on equal terms irrespective of whether they are ruling or opposition parties.

For example, the EMB or constitutional court can prevent political parties from running in elections through various practices or arguments. When political parties are banned or cannot trust in a freely competitive environment, they can be weakened to the point that they cannot meaningfully participate in electoral processes. In such instances, electoral integrity is lost, and their supporters can fuel tension and violence.

Empirical case

Togo

In Togo, political parties exist and operate. However, while flexible in practice, the current regime is potentially restrictive in several of its provisions which should be corrected to ensure greater legal stability (EU EOM 2007). During the 2007 legislative elections, for example, several sources of information (election observation mission observers, political parties, candidates and CSOs) reported a partisan attitude of local authorities in several prefectures in favour of the ruling party (EU EOM 2007).

Opposition political parties are often banned from holding rallies for various reasons, including security and health (VOA Afrique 2022; RFI 2022c). Several demonstrations by opposition parties were repressed, resulting in injuries, deaths and property damage. At the same time, some supporters of the ruling party could organize public demonstrations of support (Agbenyo 2022).

In recent years, the political opposition in Togo has experienced several successive failures, including the split of the main opposition party, The Union of Forces for Change, in 2010 and the boycott of the 2018 legislative elections. For most Togolese, it is better to have opposition political parties, even if they are weak (Afrobarometer 2022b). This shows how an environment of restricted political parties can lead to tensions and violence and undermine the credibility of elections.

Observable indicators

1. The number of banned political parties.
2. The level of restrictive barriers imposed on political party creation.
3. The level of independence and autonomy of the opposition parties.
4. The effectiveness of multiparty politics in national elections.

An environment of restricted political parties can lead to tensions and violence and undermine the credibility of elections.

5. The extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena (competitiveness of participation).
6. The extent to which political parties are not banned and more than one political party is allowed to compete in local elections, which also provides for independent candidates.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Identify political parties and political organizations that are banned.
- Conduct an expert overview of the restrictive barriers imposed on political party formation.
- Conduct an expert overview of the independence and autonomy of the opposition parties from the ruling regime.
- Conduct an expert overview of the effectiveness of multiparty national elections.
- Survey citizens in relation to the competitiveness of participation.
- Conduct an expert overview of the effectiveness of multiparty local elections.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

Phase V

ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

During the electoral campaign period, political parties promote their ideology, programmes or projects. They challenge the political views of other political actors. Campaigning allows citizens to better understand the different political options and decide whom to vote for. During the campaign period, political parties will use different strategies to reach voters and seek their support and funds (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). They will organize political rallies and parades and display promotional materials and media advertisements to increase their profile and visibility (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Media appearances are particularly important as it is well established that media debates are important vehicles for winning popular support (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Social media platforms have become essential political campaigning and fundraising tools in the last decade.

However, unequal media access (especially between women and men and between ruling and opposition political parties); provocative media messages and appearances; and aggressive campaigning and actions have increased tensions and led to outbreaks of election-related violence, including gender-based violence in many contexts (International IDEA 2022). Also, abuse of social media platforms and cyberattacks are vehicles for malicious interference in elections. Such efforts are not directed against political competitors and EMBs (International IDEA 2022).

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Campaigning allows citizens to better understand the different political options and decide whom to vote for.

Abuse of social media platforms and cyberattacks are vehicles for malicious interference in elections.

17. UNEQUAL MEDIA ACCESS, PARTY VISIBILITY AND FAVOURITISM

Introduction

During electoral campaigns, political parties use different media to send out their messages and appeal for popular support and funds (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). While traditional media (i.e. radio, TV and print) maintain high importance in most countries, the role and importance of web-based social media have dramatically increased in recent years. As more people turn to the Internet to search for information on politics and elections, online media, especially social media, have become an important arena for political communications. Most politicians understand that they have to use its features as primary means of engaging the electorate, especially when in-person interaction is limited (International IDEA 2022).

Favouritism on the part of the state-owned media towards the incumbent candidates and parties—in terms of biased reporting, gender discrimination in the coverage and reporting, media coverage time, discrimination against political opponents, unethical reporting, and so on—is often a factor in raising tensions (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Private media may adopt the same practices to champion their favourite candidates and become political agitators instead of campaign facilitators (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Such a scenario can undermine the credibility of the electoral process, increase tensions and fuel election-related violence directed against political opponents and journalists (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Social media can also be monopolistic in terms of being owned and controlled by powerful companies and dominated by political parties who have resources and motivation.

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

Empirical cases

Ghana

The media landscape in Ghana is vibrant and diverse but also polarized (EU EOM n.d.).

The National Media Commission lacks adequate regulatory powers despite its mandate to promote media quality and to ensure the independence of state-owned media from the executive (EU EFM

2019). In addition, according to its monitoring findings, state-owned media failed to meet their obligation to provide equal coverage to all parties and candidates (EU EFM 2019). In fact, the Ghanaian 'media's major weakness lies in overcrowding of the airwaves with authorization that the market can no longer support and the increase of hate speech and un-sourced news in the electronic media, notably in vernacular language' (EU EFM 2019: 19).

In reaction, some stakeholders raised concerns about the increasing number of politicians and businessmen and women affiliated with certain political parties seeking ownership of traditional private media, including radio frequencies and TV stations (EISA 2020b). This facilitates radical polarization of the media environment, with partisan outlets feared to use inflammatory language or misinform the public (EISA 2020b). In the context of the upcoming elections in the country where fake news is still spreading, the situation could be used to fuel violence and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Liberia

In Liberia, the media remain largely unregulated in the context of elections. Public media is not required to provide free and equal access for candidates and political parties, nor offer equal terms to all parties for political advertising (Carter Center 2018b). During the 2017 elections, presidential candidates expressed concerns about unequal access to media (Carter Center 2018b).

The Press Union of Liberia raised several concerns about financial constraints in the media sectors, thus making most media houses reliant on paid political campaign adverts (EISA 2017). Several privately owned radio stations are owned by political actors, thus providing a platform for political propaganda in favour of such politicians and their parties (EISA 2017). These situations could negatively impact the professionalism of journalists and the credibility of such media outfits (EISA 2017).

In the campaign leading up to the 10 October 2017 elections, imbalanced coverage provided by the state-owned broadcaster and a media sector reliant on political sponsorship affected the right of access to media by candidates with less financial means (EU EOM 2017). During the campaign period for the rescheduled run-off, the state-owned radio demonstrated a more reasonable balance of airtime allocation between the two presidential candidates (EU EOM 2017).

This facilitates radical polarization of the media environment, with partisan outlets feared to use inflammatory language or misinform the public.

The use of social media offered opportunities to disseminate false, misleading content, hate speech and violence, especially in the run-up to the 2023 elections (UNDP Liberia 2022). In the context of the upcoming elections in the country, the situation could be used to fuel violence and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Togo

During the 2020 presidential elections, confessional media were restricted or not authorized to cover the campaign. The High Authority for Audio-Visual and Communication had difficulties monitoring online media. The campaign activities of the outgoing president, who was running for his own re-election, received more airtime on Togolese National Television than did the other candidates (EISA 2020a). This set of situations—unequal airtime or media restrictions—undermines the principle of equal opportunity for political candidates. In the context of the upcoming elections in the country, the situation could be used to reduce the landscape for political competitors' expression and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results. Political competitors can use social media to circumvent restrictions and fuel tension and violence during elections.

This set of situations—unequal airtime or media restrictions—undermines the principle of equal opportunity for political candidates.

Observable indicators

1. The existence and the quality of provisions of the code of conduct for the media during electoral campaigning, both state and privately owned.
2. The operationalization of the provisions of the code of conduct for media.
3. The existence of mechanisms that ensure equal media access to political parties during the campaign period (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The level of gender sensitivity in media reporting and coverage (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The level of equality in terms of time allocated and the impartiality of reporting (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
6. The number of complaints received by EDR bodies relating to unequal media access and favouritism (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Identify all existing bodies and methodologies for monitoring the media, including from a gender perspective (International IDEA 2022). Examine potential gaps.

- Identify the relevant legal framework which regulates broader media conduct and specific documents or provisions that regulate media access during the campaign period (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Observe its implementation directly or in partnership with existing media monitoring bodies or organizations (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Review official complaints relating to equal access to the media not just across political parties but also between women and men as well as socio-demographic/minority groups (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

18. PROVOCATIVE USE OF MEDIA BY POLITICAL PARTIES

Introduction

Campaigning through media traditionally provides a unique space for different political options to confront their opponents' political views (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). In all contexts, including well-established and transitional democracies, political debates facilitated by the media have been essential in informing voters of policy options and winning voters' support (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Although it is envisaged as a platform for issues-based presentation and debate of political arguments, media campaigning often turns into a campaign of derogation and hate speech (International IDEA 2022). In many societies, insults towards women in politics tend to focus on undermining their capacity as leaders as opposed to men, who are assumed to be born leaders (International IDEA 2022). Political parties sometimes abuse campaign opportunities and access to the media to disseminate false statements and create imaginary threats and a feeling of insecurity to mobilize support (International IDEA 2022). Such campaigning has often seen negative outcomes.

Empirical cases

Ghana

During the 2020 election campaign, the tone was often confrontational and aggressive, with the two major parties

Campaigning through media traditionally provides a unique space for different political options to confront their opponents' political views.

Political parties sometimes abuse campaign opportunities and access to the media to disseminate false statements and create imaginary threats and a feeling of insecurity to mobilize support.

(New Patriotic Party (NPP) and NDC) accusing each other of mismanagement of the country.

The campaign rhetoric was sometimes antagonistic, with a few instances of violence reported during campaigns (African Union 2021). Electronic and social media campaigning gave rise to increased misinformation on social media platforms (African Union 2021). Indeed, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, parties mainly resorted to door-to-door, virtual campaigning, billboards, posters, flags, tweets, pictures, and videos on social media and networks (EISA 2020b). For the context of upcoming elections, politicians could continue to spread fake news to fuel tension and undermine the integrity of elections and their results.

Sierra Leone

During the 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, there was heightened political intolerance during both the unofficial and official campaign periods, especially in the party strongholds. Further, political parties and candidates complained that their opponents had defaced their posters. (EISA 2020c). The Commission was able to mitigate this threat by collaborating with the PPRC and political parties to ban all street rallies. This resulted to a peaceful campaigns and subsequently peaceful elections.

Observable indicators

1. The extent (geographical and frequency) of provocative media campaigning (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. The type of media where provocative campaigning is recorded (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The type of ownership of media where provocative campaigning is recorded (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The political actors involved in provocative media campaigning (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The content of provocative messages, including gender stereotypes and sexist messages (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Conduct extensive media monitoring or establish cooperation with media monitoring agencies and organizations to obtain data about provocative media campaigning by political parties (International IDEA 2022).
- Distinguish between actors engaged in provocative campaigning regarding their political affiliation, place in the party hierarchy, gender, and geographical influence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

- Assess the seriousness of incidents and distinguish them in terms of their capacity to increase the risks of election-related violence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Review the record of official appeals relating to inappropriate media campaigning by political parties (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Examine the efficiency and appropriateness of responses.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

19. PROVOCATIVE POLITICAL PARTY RALLYING

Introduction

Political parties and candidates organize rallies during the electoral campaign period to reinforce links between the political leadership, party activists and party supporters (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Electoral rallies also demonstrate strength, unity and power (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

In conflict-prone societies where political divides often correspond with social divides and gender discrimination, election rallies may represent high-risk events (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). The crowd's disposition, inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech can inspire violent action, whether it was the organizers' intention or not (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Additionally, actions taken to limit, obstruct or prevent competitors from holding political rallies may create perceptions of an unlevel playing field, trigger violent reactions and ultimately undermine the credibility of elections (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

In Liberia, the campaign period is a very delicate time and is often characterized by violence, abuse of power, hate speech and corruption (New Dawn 2022).

During the 2017 elections, the campaign messages often emphasized the heritage and ethnicity of the candidates (Carter Center 2018b). While these messages did not involve negative stereotypes or generalizations, they seemed aimed to mobilize communities along ethnic lines and sometimes raised concerns about the prospect for post-election ethnic divisions (Carter Center 2018b). However, compared to past elections in Liberia, the tensions

were noticeably lower (Carter Center 2018b). In addition, repeated clashes occurred between partisan supporters. Some opposition parties complained about limited access to certain public facilities and one party filed an official complaint with the NEC (Carter Center 2018b). There were also official and unofficial complaints regarding the destruction of billboards (NDI n.d.). In the context of the upcoming elections, the same situations could occur and fuel tension and undermine peaceful elections.

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, most political violence is driven by political competition, such as elections. The country has four dominant forms of political violence: (a) communal violence; (b) violence targeting civilians by state security forces; (c) riots and protests over national issues; and (d) violence accompanying political competition (ACLED 2020). The latter two forms include violence around national elections, by-elections, informal elections, and inter- and intra-party violence (ACLED 2020).

During the 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, there was heightened political intolerance during both the unofficial and official campaign periods, especially in the party strongholds. Some political parties and candidates complained that their opponents had defaced their posters (EISA 2020). For the upcoming 2023 general elections, the National Elections Threat Assessment/District Risk Mapping findings show that the politicization of colour—green, red, blue, etc.—contributes to threats (IESPEC and ONS 2022). In the context of the upcoming elections, this politicization of colour could fuel more violence and undermine peaceful elections.

Togo

During the 2020 presidential election, some media outlets and the opposition observed that opposition candidates sometimes had difficulty campaigning in areas and localities favoured by the government. Trucks blocking the main roads leading to the venues of opposition rallies or groups of young activists reportedly were used sometimes to prevent the holding of opposition election meetings. The tone of the election campaign was also violent on social networks, where opposition and ruling party activists clearly used inflammatory language to undermine the generally peaceful atmosphere during the election campaign (EISA 2020a). In the context of the upcoming elections and in the absence of efficient planning of rallies, the same situation could occur and fuel tensions and violence. Along with other factors, it will undermine the integrity

of the elections by creating more inequality against opposition candidates.

Observable indicators

1. The scope of political party rallying (parties, events, locations frequency) (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. The number of prohibitions of party rallies by the relevant authorities (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The effectiveness of security arrangements put in place to prevent campaign-related violence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The extent of use of inflammatory language, gender stereotyping and hate speech (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The number of violent incidents or clashes following political rallies (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
6. The political options involved.
7. The number of victims with data disaggregated by gender.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Collect data about planned and scheduled political party rallies from the authorities responsible for approving them at different levels (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). Cross-check with the data from the respective political actors (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
- Obtain and analyse information on the security sector arrangements surrounding political party rallying (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Assess whether the size of the security deployment corresponds with the size of the event and whether it sufficiently reflects the risks associated with it (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Monitor or liaise with monitoring networks to obtain records of inflammatory rhetoric, gender stereotyping and hate speech at party rallies (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Record incidents linked to political party campaigning, during or after party rallies, including perpetrators and information about the victims, broken down by gender. Obtain official police reports and media reports, deploy fact-finding, establish hotlines and utilize crowdsourcing platforms (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

20. PROVOCATIVE AND VIOLENT ACTIONS BY POLITICAL PARTIES

In some contexts, political actors resort to different forms of psychological and physical violence to ensure their electoral success is secured before election day.

Introduction

Electoral processes are supposed to offer political parties a playing field where the quality of their electoral manifesto will determine their chances of success (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). In reality, election campaigning and party actions can go beyond political rhetoric (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). In some contexts, political actors resort to different forms of psychological and physical violence to ensure their electoral success is secured before election day (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Such actions mostly take place during the electoral campaign period (International IDEA 2018). They involve aggressive party activists, recruited thugs, or members of party militias who commit acts of harassment, intimidation, assaults, violence against women and girls, destruction of property, political assassinations and other unlawful acts (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Actions are directed against political opponents, their supporters, journalists and others (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). These scenarios are particularly dangerous as a single provocative or violent action may trigger responses and start a vicious circle (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Ghana

During the 2020 elections, the Ghanaian Police Service recorded 61 election-related cases of violence. Twenty-one of the cases are true cases of electoral violence, six of which involved gunshots resulting in the death of five people (Deutsche Welle 2020). The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), with support from the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), has tracked the status of electoral cases of violence recorded during the 2020 elections in 11 constituencies in 6 out of the 16 administrative regions in Ghana. A total of 12 cases from 11 constituencies were validated with the Criminal Investigations Department at the police headquarters (CDD-Ghana 2022). In almost all the cases tracked, the victims and/or families made no official reports to the police (CDD-Ghana 2022). But actions were taken by the security officers present when the incidents occurred, and, in a few cases, official reports were made by their political party leaders (CDD-Ghana 2022). Some of the victims do not trust that the judicial system will deliver justice on their behalf. Instead, they are willing to seek revenge when their party regains political power (CDD-Ghana 2022). In the context of

the upcoming elections in the country, the strong sense of impunity resulting from not prosecuting election violence perpetrators could fuel further tension and violence and undermine peaceful elections.

Sierra Leone

Combined data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Clingendael and WANEP-Sierra Leone, shows that political violence in Sierra Leone is increasing (ACLED 2020). Since 2014/15, a slow increase in political violence has been recorded. Violence peaked around the 2018 elections and has remained at high levels since (ACLED 2020). For the 2023 general elections, the National Elections Threat Assessment/District Risk Mapping findings show impunity resulting from non-prosecution of election violence perpetrators. It also shows the use of secret societies to intimidate opponents, the destruction of campaign or electoral materials, and the use of retributive vows or minors to provoke violence (IESPEC and ONS 2022). Therefore, in the context of the upcoming elections in the country, each of these situations could be repeated. This could fuel further tension and violence and undermine peaceful elections.

Observable indicators

1. Incidents of intimidation, threats, destruction of property, physical harm, kidnappings, assassinations and other violent acts committed against electoral actors, journalists, registrants and voters (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. Psychological and physical violence directed against vulnerable social groups such as women, children, ethnic and religious minorities, and so on during the election period (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The extent to which the perpetrators of violence, associated with political parties, are prosecuted (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Obtain official information about incidents of election-related violence (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Target reports from police, media and civil society networks for collecting cases; engage in fact-finding; establish hotlines; and utilize crowdsourcing technology. Distinguish between the perpetrators and victims, including victim subgroups (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Obtain information on the number of judicial processes against individuals or groups associated with political parties who committed provocative and violent actions (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Compare this with the number of incidents obtained from

the police, human rights activists, observer networks and the media. Indicate any discrepancies.

- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

Phase VI

VOTING OPERATIONS

Voting operations will, in most cases, include logistical preparations for election day, the conduct of special and regular voting, the vote counting and the tallying of the result (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Critical aspects of voting operations will include logistics and security related to the handling of electoral materials, the integrity and transparency of special and external (out-of-country) voting, real or perceived problems with the integrity of voting on election day, and the technical accuracy and credibility of the counting and result tallying (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

If technical operations are executed poorly or in a way that can create perceptions that there has been manipulation and rigging of the result, reactions can be violent and the credibility of electoral processes and the results they yield can be undermined (International IDEA 2022).

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

Introduction

The EMBs are responsible for ensuring that election day goes without complications (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). One of the important conditions for successful voting is proper logistical preparations. These will include the timely and sufficient provision of sensitive and non-sensitive materials to all polling locations and ensuring that these materials are protected at all times (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

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

One of the important conditions for successful voting is proper logistical preparations.

Failures or delays in supplying essential electoral materials, poor handling, security and lack of transparency before or after voting and counting can negatively impact perceptions about the credibility and integrity of the process and lead to the rejection of election results (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Mali

The legislative elections held in March 2020 were tainted by kidnappings, the disruption of polling stations and roadside bomb attacks (Al Jazeera 2020). The local election observer group, the Coalition for Citizen Election Observation in Mali (COCEM), recorded the kidnapping of electoral officials and observers in some areas. In other areas, voters were stopped from voting because the ballot boxes were taken away (Mules 2020).

On 19 April 2020, the second round of the legislative elections was disrupted by jihadist violence and Covid-19 in the centre and the north that prevented voters from casting their ballots (France 24 2020). For the upcoming 2023 and 2024 elections, the contexts of transitional exit as well as active violent extremism could breed violence and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Sierra Leone

In 2018, the late announcement of the election date impacted some electoral processes, including the printing of voter cards and ballot procurement by limiting the allocated timeline.

During the 2018 presidential, parliamentary and local elections in Sierra Leone, voting in several constituencies, wards, and municipalities was not held due to printing errors on ballot papers, including missing names and pictures of candidates. For example, the parliamentary election for Constituency 123 in Western Area Urban district was cancelled (EISA 2018). This shows how delays can impact the implementation of election activities and undermine an election's integrity and results. In the context of the upcoming 2023 general elections in Sierra Leone, the same situation could happen and fuel electoral tensions.

Observable indicators

1. The sufficiency of the quantities of electoral materials produced.
2. The appropriateness of timing for disseminating non-sensitive and sensitive materials.

3. The degree of security of transport and storage premises.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Verify the feasibility of the plans for producing and disseminating electoral materials as set by the EMBs (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Consider the appropriateness of designated resources and timelines.
- Survey the confidence level in logistical preparations for voting operations among political actors, CSOs and the broad electorate (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Assess and evaluate the preparedness and performance of the security agency responsible for securing electoral materials (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Map locations, such as EMB offices and storage facilities, where security was provided or not provided (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Review relevant appeal records for associated complaints.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

22. PROBLEMATIC SPECIAL VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

Introduction

Special voting arrangements (SVAs) and out-of-country voting are options for voters who cannot attend regular polling stations on election day (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Such voters may be institutionalized or housebound, refugees, diplomatic or military personnel, and diasporas (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Arrangements are made to allow them to vote on a special day or series of days prior to voting day at special locations, or at mobile polling stations on election day (Ellis et al. 2007). Votes can be cast in person or by post (Ellis et al. 2007).

Organizing voting for external populations is more complex than organizing in-country polling (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Taking on this logistical and financial burden in a challenging environment, especially in a post-conflict election, is rarely without risks (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). A large external population could change the outcome of an election, which may not be politically acceptable in-country (Goldsmith n.d.). Moreover, due to complexities associated with special and external voting, political actors or independent observers may not be able to independently verify the integrity of the

special and external voting (International IDEA 2022). All these issues can lead to disputes in a closely contested election (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

There is a huge population of Liberians living abroad aspiring to participate in elections to elect their leaders in the country. Under the Liberian Constitution, they have the right to absentee voting.

The new electoral law has been amended to allow that, but the mechanics involved have not been disclosed (Sonpon 2022).

Ahead of the 2023 general and presidential elections, several Liberians residing in the diaspora filed a petition to the NEC seeking to register while overseas and vote as absentees in the upcoming elections (Johnson 2022). In the context of the 2023 elections in the country, the diaspora's vote could reinforce the inclusivity of the elections, but the required effort to get there can also create delays and undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Ghana

During the elections for the President of the Republic and the members of parliament in 2008, special voting for journalists, security agents, election officials and other people who will be on official duties on election day was held on 2 December. It was marked by reports of polling officials indiscriminately accepting voters not registered for special voting (Carter Center 2008). These voters' names were allegedly not vetted from the election day voters' register as having already voted (Carter Center 2008). That led to fears of possible multiple voting. Finally, the special voting day tallies show a significant increase from the numbers observed in the 7 December election, which can be attributed to several factors (Carter Center 2008). There was a lack of safeguards in place due to the absence of a special voter list at polling stations (EU EOM 2009). Therefore, hundreds of opposition party supporters besieged the headquarters of the Electoral Commission, protesting against a special voting exercise (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). The protesters argued that the special voting process in the Ashanti region was marked by widespread irregularities (Joy Online 2008). In the context of the upcoming general election in the country, there is a need to continue applying the good practices learned from this case to avoid tension and violence.

Observable indicators

1. The number (proportion) of special and external voters registered.
2. The effectiveness of the systems in place to manage external voting (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The number (proportion) of special voters voting in person and by mail.
4. The number of political, civil society and international observers accredited to observe special and external voting (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The testing or piloting of SVAs that have been modified or introduced.
6. The level of confidence of citizens and observers in special and external voting.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Verify the existence of petitions requesting vote arrangements for residents abroad.
- Verify voter registration for figures relating to numbers of special voters, including external voters who vote in person and those voting by post (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Map places and countries where external voting is organized. Indicate countries where observers are accredited to observe these processes (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Conduct expert analysis to understand the extent to which external votes may influence the country's power distribution (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Identify geographic regions where some or all of the activities associated with special and external voting are not independently verifiable (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Survey the confidence and general views of political actors and citizens relating to special and external voting (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Disaggregate the views of women and men.
- Obtain information about special and mobile voting. Map locations visited and travel routes. Consider whether increased security risks will disturb these events.
- Analyse the geographic and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

23. PROBLEMATIC ELECTION DAY OPERATIONS

Introduction

Election day operations are designed to facilitate the process for all eligible voters to cast their ballot (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). The level of participation and time constraints make election day operations very complex (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). In many West African countries, more than half of the population will exercise its democratic right on election day (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). This process is to be managed by electoral management officials and staff and supported by the security sector agencies' personnel (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Political parties, civil society groups and international organizations provide a presence in electoral facilities across the country to scrutinize and testify to the integrity of the voting process (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Problems and irregularities which take place on election day have effects that are difficult to repair afterwards (International IDEA 2022). If the margins for victory are expected to be narrow, even the smallest irregularity or perception of irregularity may create tensions and spark conflict and violent reactions (International IDEA 2022). Due to the short time in which voting takes place, election day problems can culminate in the days following the actual voting and undermine electoral credibility beyond recovery (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

During the first round of the 2017 general election, the main factor delaying balloting was caused by the final registration roll (FRR) as it was hard and time-consuming for voters to find their assigned polling place, and polling officials using the FRR faced problems in finding and directing voters (EU EOM 2017). This increased tension in some polling stations on election day. After the first round, it ended with complaints filed by two political parties. In response to the complaints, the Supreme Court decision required the NEC to fulfil several conditions to address problems that occurred in the first round (Carter Center 2018b). In the context of the 2023 general election, where biometric voter registration will be used for the first time, similar situations could occur and fuel tension. This could also undermine the integrity of the elections and their results.

Ghana

Ghana held the first round of its 2008 presidential and legislative elections on 7 December 2008. During the electoral process, the Tain district (Brong-Ahafo region) election materials were discovered to be short by 1,800 ballots during a reconciliation of materials prior to distribution (Carter Center 2008). As a result, the political parties agreed to suspend the voting process in Tain (Carter Center 2008).

On 12 December 2008, the Tain Electoral Commission office was destroyed by arson causing the loss of electoral records from the first round and creating additional difficulties for the district's allocation of materials (Carter Center 2008). As a result, approximately 54,000 voters in the Tain district had to be provided an opportunity to cast ballots (Carter Center 2008). The run-off was held on 28 December 2008 without Tain district.

On the announcement of the results, the Electoral Commission concluded that because the difference between the two candidates in the run-off was only 23,055 votes, and therefore technically the 53,890 registered voters in Tain constituency could have affected the final results, the presidential run-off election would have to take place in Tain district (EU EOM 2009). The election in Tain was subsequently held on 2 January 2009 under a huge security presence (EU EOM 2009). This shows how election day operation problems can lead to tension and violence and undermine the integrity of elections and their results.

This shows how election day operation problems can lead to tension and violence and undermine the integrity of elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. The timely opening of polling stations across all geographical units (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. Waiting time at the polling stations.
3. The number of complaints relating to the voting process with data disaggregated by genre (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The number of interventions by EMBs.
5. The number of interventions by security sector agencies (SSAs).
6. The number of violent incidents with the data disaggregated by gender.

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Obtain information about all polling stations in the country.
- Continuously obtain close-to-real-time data from polling stations through the electoral officials or election observers (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Make a record of polling stations that experience

problems opening or with their work (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).

- Establish hotlines (SMS data crowdsourcing) to obtain information about incidents and irregularities.
- Maintain communication with political actors.
- Obtain figures on complaints filed at the polling stations and with the relevant appeal authorities (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

24. PROBLEMATIC BALLOT COUNTING AND RESULT TALLYING

Introduction

Counting votes and tallying results are particularly sensitive activities and vulnerable to misuse and manipulation (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). They usually occur immediately after the polling stations close (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Vote counting and result tallying are very complex processes and thus prone to human error (International IDEA 2022). In most cases, errors in vote counting and tabulation will disadvantage some parties more than others and it may be hard to establish whether the error is a consequence of an honest human mistake or a deliberate act (International IDEA 2022). If political actors, civil society and international observers are obstructed in their work, suspicions will arise to the point where this can undermine the legitimacy of results (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

During the 2017 elections, tabulation procedures were developed late in the process, and training for election staff was insufficient. The political parties did not have time to adequately train their party agents (Carter Center 2018b).

Some political parties raised concerns about the layout and design of the results forms, which they insisted must have provision for results to be entered in both words and figures. Parties also did not seem to have clarity on the results management process, especially the proposed electronic transmission of results from polling places

If political actors, civil society and international observers are obstructed in their work, suspicions will arise to the point where this can undermine the legitimacy of results.

on a secure network to the district and national tally centres (EISA 2017). Therefore, in several areas, the tabulation procedures were implemented inconsistently, with variations in procedures across counties. The NEC received 89 complaints about the results following the elections. Two of them were submitted at the national level, with the remaining being filed at the level of county magistrates (Carter Center 2018b). This shows how disputes in the adoption and management of counting and calculation procedures can breed tension and undermine the integrity of elections and their results by limiting the understanding of the election stakeholders.

Sierra Leone

For the 2018 elections, some presiding officers had difficulties completing the results protocols due to deficiencies in the training of polling staff.

During the results tallying, contrary to the procedures, some tamper evident envelopes (TEEs) were delivered, having never been sealed. Some of the TEEs did not contain the full set of four results protocols (one for each election). Other irregularities, such as incompletely filled out results protocols or missing identification data, were encountered. During the six days of tallying presidential results, several hundred results protocols required verification of additional documents or electoral materials. The most common deficiencies included missing or incomplete supplementary voter lists, incomplete results, reconciliation data or unreadable figures (EU EOM 2018b).

During the process, the main political parties, disappointed by their worse than expected results, began to allege widespread fraud on election day (EU EOM 2018b). Some ballot boxes were recounted at the request of political parties (EU EOM 2018b). In the vast majority of these cases, the recounts either confirmed the original results or clarified some missing data, confirming the credibility of the elections process. The integrity of the tallying was enhanced by the deployment of one international tallying advisor contracted by development partners (EU EOM 2018b). Finally, on 13 March, the National Elections Commission announced the final results and declared also that 221 polling stations had been excluded from the tally due to over-voting but did not reveal any details. Shortly after the first round of the elections, some National Elections Commission's staff were arrested (EU EOM 2018b). This shows how results counting and tallying are sensitive and can raise concerns about the integrity of the results.

This shows how results counting and tallying are sensitive and can raise concerns about the integrity of the results.

Observable indicators

1. The number and locations of the delayed counting process.
2. The number and type of challenges to the vote counting and result tallying (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The number of discrepancies between the number of voters who voted and the number of ballot papers counted (International IDEA 2022).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Obtain close-to-real-time reports from the counting locations through the electoral officials or election observers (International IDEA 2022). Consider counting progress and record delays. Distinguish between regular and disputed counting operations.
- Maintain contacts with political party liaison officers and observer groups (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Establish hotlines (use SMS data crowdsourcing platforms).
- Collect data about formal challenges relating to vote counting and tallying (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Collect data relating to different election-related incidents that do not occur at the counting locations.
- Analyse the geographical and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

Phase VII

VERIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS

The body responsible for the conduct of elections is usually responsible for announcing the final election results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Preliminary results are a good indication of the electoral outcomes and the distribution of political power for the next political term of office.

Admitting defeat and handing over political power to opponents is difficult for incumbents that do not win (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Political leaders who are disappointed with the initial figures will therefore feel strong incentives to use all available mechanisms to challenge the election results and change them in their favour (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Inconsistencies, delays and a lack of transparency on the part of the bodies in charge of the management of electoral appeals and results will create more incentives for such challenges (International IDEA 2022). Where elections are zero-sum competitions, political parties may pursue political gains by resorting to manipulations of violent means (International IDEA 2022).

Where elections are zero-sum competitions, political parties may pursue political gains by resorting to manipulations of violent means.

25. POOR MANAGEMENT OF ELECTION RESULTS

Introduction

EMBs are responsible for the compilation of election results from the field, reconciliation of results at the electoral district and central levels, announcement of the preliminary election results and, in some cases, announcement of the final election results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Whether real or perceived, biased processing of election results will increase the likelihood of challenges of failed elections.

The imperative is to minimize the time lapse between election day and the announcement of the final election results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Any unnecessary or unexplained delay, be it ICT related or not, will feed suspicions about the integrity of the results processing (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Whether real or perceived, biased processing of election results will increase the likelihood of challenges of failed elections (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Mali

According to the 2022 electoral law (articles 150, 151, 165 and 172), commissions will be set up to tally the results of the presidential and legislative elections. Only representatives of the AIGE and political parties can attend. The provisional results are planned to be announced five days after the election and published by polling stations on the AIGE website. However, the electoral law does not provide for a deadline for that online publication, whereas releasing it before the legal start of the litigation could help to avoid conflicts and ease tensions (MODELE Mali n.d.). One of the concerns is that the law does not clearly allow the presence of national and international observers. In the context of the upcoming end of transition elections in the country, this can limit the openness of the results tallying process and breed tension within political parties and the AIGE.

Observable indicators

1. The testing and piloting of the electronic result system before election day (including access to telecommunication networks and the Internet throughout the country and the electricity for all result announcement equipment at polling stations and tabulation centres).
2. The timing of delays in the announcement of the election results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. The number of delays and geographic location of regions experiencing delays (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The reasons for the delays.
5. The level of trust among political actors in election result management (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
6. The level of transparency of the result management at different levels (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
7. The existence of mechanisms for relaying visible, accurate and transparent results to the general public (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Use official and observer data to map regions, municipalities and polling stations for which election results are delayed (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
- Obtain the official reasons for delays and cross-check with independent observers (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
- Interview relevant political actors, both women and men, about their perceptions of delays in the announcement of the election results (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). Observe increased risks resulting from increased dissatisfaction or distrust in the process (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
- Assess the transparency of the management of the election results independently and through the collection of observer data (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Obtain data on numbers and types of complaints relating to the management of the election results (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).
- Analyse the geographic and gender distribution of issues and consider historical trends.

26. POOR MANAGEMENT OF THE FINAL ROUND OF ELECTORAL APPEALS

Introduction

In most cases, the EDR process includes the EMBs, administrative bodies and judicial institutions (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Their mandate and hierarchy may differ across different electoral systems (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020).

Any appeal that is not dealt with and adequately remedied may create discontent and seriously contribute to the deepening or aggravation of conflicts. In an already tense situation, unresolved issues could become a trigger for conflict, rejection of results and an excuse for violence (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Liberia

One of the important challenges faced by Liberia's judiciary is the training of lawyers. It remains a key issue for the efficient functioning of judicial institutions (EU EOM 2017). In many instances,

This case points out how the lack of preparedness and specific training for lawyers can breed problematic decisions or increase the submitted complaints to the Supreme Court.

proceedings at first instance were saddled with excessive formality resulting in some delays and confusion (EU EOM 2017).

During the 2017 run-off election, some 40 complaints were raised by various parties and candidates touching upon matters related to qualification of candidates, eligibility of political parties and NEC decision-making processes (EU EOM 2017). Several cases reached the Supreme Court and provided an opportunity for the Supreme Court to clarify certain matters of law, but also drew early attention to issues of legal practice, including the lack of preparedness of lawyers acting in cases coming before the court (EU EOM 2017). This case points out how the lack of preparedness and specific training for lawyers can breed problematic decisions or increase the submitted complaints to the Supreme Court. It can also contribute to undermining the integrity of the elections and their results.

Observable indicators

1. The number of appeals pending ruling after election day.
2. The number of appeals filed concerning election day, the counting processes and the election results management.
3. The number of appeals effectively resolved by the relevant EDR bodies after elections (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The level of satisfaction among the political parties in relation to the performance of the EDR bodies (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Obtain official records of appeals submitted during or after election day. Distinguish between different categories.
- Obtain official records on appeal management and resolution and observe geographical regions and bodies which fail to process appeals in a timely manner (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
- Interview political actors in relation to their satisfaction with the performance and the composition of the EDR bodies (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

27. REJECTION OF THE ELECTION RESULTS

Introduction

The rejection of the electoral results is an extreme act that may result from a real or perceived lack of integrity in the electoral process and its outcome (International IDEA 2022). In very broad terms, rejection of the result by a particular party may result in self-exclusion

from participation in other democratic processes and institutions (International IDEA 2022). Actions may include demonstrations that could lead to acts of violence involving demonstrators or security sector agencies (International IDEA 2022).

Empirical cases

Mali

According to articles 151, 165 and 172 of the new electoral law, the provisional results of the presidential and legislative elections are proclaimed and published by polling stations on the AIGE website five days after the election. According to Articles 151, 165, and 172 of the new electoral law, the provisional results of the presidential and legislative elections are proclaimed five days after the election and published by polling stations on the AIGE website. However, the law does not specify the deadline for this publication on the AIGE website. This situation is likely to be tense considering Mali's past experience with results management.

Indeed, the day after the publication of the provisional results, which gave 43 seats out of the 147 in the Assembly to the Rally for Mali (RPM) party of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, the Constitutional Court granted 51 seats to the party then in power. This triggered the anger of part of the opposition, soon joined by civil society. The cycle of protests continued to grow, culminating in the formation of the 5 June Movement—Rally of Patriotic Forces [Rassemblement des forces patriotiques]. As a result, Keïta, unable to quell the anger on the streets, was forced to resign in a military coup led by Colonel Goïta and his supporters (Laplace 2021). This shows how the rejection of elections results, as a manifestation of a loss of trust in the integrity of the elections, can breed violence and lead to long-term instability in a country.

Ghana

During the 2020 general election, the opposition NDC's presidential candidate rejected the outcome of the election, claiming that the elections were manipulated in favour of the ruling government (Lartey 2020). In fact, the mistrust that followed the Electoral Commission into office for the 2020 general elections already made for crisis conditions, which then coincided with the pandemic (Agbele and Saibu 2021).

Finally, on 4 March 2021, Ghana's Supreme Court upheld Nana Akufo-Addo's election victory through a ruling grudgingly accepted by John

The rejection of the electoral results is an extreme act that may result from a real or perceived lack of integrity in the electoral process and its outcome.

Dramani Mahama, who maintained the legitimacy of his challenge over alleged irregularities in the results (Reuters 2021). This shows how electoral disputes or grievances against the integrity of an election can be resolved when competitors have confidence in the required court and its adjudications.

Observable indicators

1. The number of cases of rejection, or threats of rejection, of the election results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
2. The number and the content of statements about the course of action following the rejection of the results (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
3. Number of events related to the rejection (protests and other gatherings) and the number of participants (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
4. The number of incidents of violence perpetrated by protesters (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
5. The number of incidents of violence perpetrated by SSAs (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).
6. The number of victims, their demographic details and the level of destruction of property (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018).

Methodology for data gathering and analysis

- Obtain data through media monitoring and interviews with political actors relating to the circumstances surrounding the rejection of the results (Alihodžić, Enguélégué and Hassan 2020). Note inflammatory language and threats of violent outcomes.
- Monitor media and deploy, or use existing networks and crowdsourcing platforms to obtain close-to-real-time reports about non-violent and violent protests and related events across the country (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). Capture and project basic data, including the size of the event and political patronage.
- Obtain data on violent incidents following protests, including the gender of perpetrators and victims.

This shows how electoral disputes or grievances against the integrity of an election can be resolved when competitors have confidence in the required court and its adjudications.

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The management of elections is a complex task because electoral integrity can be challenged across the electoral cycle. Therefore, organizations with mandates or interests to protect electoral integrity should be well-versed in managing risks to electoral integrity.

This Guide draws on the methodology devised by International IDEA's 2018 *Electoral Risk Management Tool: Internal Factors Guide* to outline key internal (process-related or endogenous) risk factors to electoral processes in West Africa. The focus is on five case countries: Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo. They highlight 28 internal factors clustered into different chapters reflecting seven phases of the electoral cycle. The author provides an introduction and empirical cases from the region for each factor. Next, they propose observable indicators and methodology for data gathering and analysis. Optimally, this Guide should be used with the *Guide on External Risk Factors to Electoral Processes in West Africa (2023–2024)*, which covers external (context-related or exogenous) risk factors. Both Guides are part of a broader International IDEA's Electoral Management Tool (ERM Tool) package.

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