

THE PROTECTING ELECTIONS TRAINING CURRICULUM

An Overview



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INTRODUCTION

The Protecting Elections Training Curriculum comprises 19 customizable activities on the Integrated Framework for Protecting Elections (hereafter 'the Framework'), with an emphasis on electoral risk management, resilience-building and crisis management. It is a comprehensive and highly interactive capacity-development tool, designed for a two-day Protecting Elections Training Workshop (hereafter 'training workshop') to be run at the country, regional or global level.

The training workshop aims to inspire, enable and empower national stakeholders to protect the integrity of electoral processes by promoting informed decision making when dealing with electoral risks, threats and crises, in a collaborative and gender-sensitive way. Specific beneficiaries include national or senior local representatives from electoral management bodies (EMBs), government agencies, the media, civil society organizations, academia, as well as other organizations and individuals.

The curriculum methodology is designed for an in-person multi-stakeholder workshop environment. It is built on an 'active learning' approach, which uses participatory adult-education techniques, including group work, tabletop simulations and debriefings designed to convey clearly identified key understandings and learning outcomes. The tabletop activities are designed to offer a realistic election environment in which participants can apply key concepts, make strategic decisions and practise effective communication. The curriculum includes gender-sensitive activities based on knowledge resources and materials from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

The curriculum can be delivered as a stand-alone training workshop for professional development or as part of a broader capacity-development initiative. It is complemented by a Protecting Elections e-learning module (available in English, French and Spanish).

For enquiries about the Protecting Elections Training Curriculum, including access to the complete version, please contact International IDEA at protectingelections@idea.int.

The curriculum's activities revolve around four key understandings:

1. Credible elections are the foundation of democratic legitimacy and must be actively protected through electoral integrity safeguards.
2. Risk management, resilience-building and crisis management are distinct but interconnected management safeguards for dealing with negative occurrences.
3. Inter-agency cooperation, or a whole-of-society approach, is essential for effective election protection, enabling coordinated responses across sectors, institutions and society.
4. Election protection efforts must be gender-sensitive and inclusive to ensure that they are equitable, representative and truly effective.

This Overview includes:

- selected details for each activity—its name, its learning outcome(s), its key subtopics, a description, its learning methodology and the estimated time for running the activity; and
- a two-day model agenda.

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROTECTING ELECTIONS TRAINING WORKSHOP

Learning outcomes:

- Learners understand the workshop objectives, curriculum structure, key learning outcomes and how the agenda supports overall capacity development.

Key subtopics:

- Key understandings and learning outcomes

Description: This session introduces the objectives of the training workshop as well as the main topics tackled in the curriculum, including the key understandings and learning outcomes. This session also introduces the workshop agenda. The session concludes with a short recap of the e-learning module and an introduction to the tabletop exercise.

Learning methodology: lecture

Estimated duration: 20 minutes

ACTIVITY 2: KEY TERMINOLOGY AND CORE CONCEPTS FOR PROTECTING ELECTIONS

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to recognize key terms and foundational concepts related to protecting elections.

Key subtopics:

- The challenges to electoral integrity
- The Integrated Framework for Protecting Elections

Description: This session begins with participants openly reflecting on a series of images depicting various challenges to electoral integrity. When describing each challenge, participants are encouraged to use key terms and foundational concepts from the Protecting Elections e-learning module. Thereafter, to increase participants' familiarity with the key terms that will be used over the course of the workshop, a mix-and-match glossary exercise is conducted.

Learning methodology: reflective practice, mix-and-match

Estimated duration: 30–50 minutes

ACTIVITY 3: ELECTORAL INTEGRITY CHALLENGES AND SAFEGUARDS

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to identify key challenges to electoral integrity, with particular attention given to the needs of diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to distinguish between the three types of safeguards for protecting elections—legal safeguards, institutional safeguards and management safeguards.

Key subtopics:

- Challenges to electoral integrity
- The Global Election Monitor
- Case studies
- Legal, institutional and management safeguards

Description: This session builds on the concept of electoral challenges and presents the eight key challenges to electoral integrity as described by the Framework. The session also points to the global scope of challenges to electoral integrity, by showcasing International IDEA's [Global Election Monitor](#) (GEM) and its original case study series. Participants engage in a 'perception walk' exercise in order to deepen their understanding of the challenges and the ways in which they relate to a specific country and electoral context. To conclude, participants are introduced to the electoral integrity safeguards and reflect on how different electoral challenges in their respective countries can be addressed through legal, institutional and management safeguards.

Learning methodology: lecture, perception walk

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 4: MANAGEMENT PROCESSES FOR PROTECTING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to recognize and distinguish between the three key management processes for protecting electoral integrity—risk management, resilience-building and crisis management.

Key subtopics:

- Risk management
- Resilience-building
- Crisis management

Description: This session introduces the three key management processes applied to protect electoral integrity. Specifically, the focus is on the key components (or stages) that make up the risk-management, resilience-building and crisis-management process. Using a gallery-walk method, the activity invites participants to identify and sequence components of management safeguards through guided facilitation. Illustrative posters of the three management safeguards support visual learning and engagement throughout the exercise.

Learning methodology: gallery walk

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 5: RISK, THREAT OR CRISIS?

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to recognize the differences between an electoral risk, a threat and a crisis.

Key subtopics:

- Electoral risks, threats and crises

Description: In this session, participants are shown a set of statements that describe various electoral scenarios. Through categorization, learners determine whether each scenario represents an electoral risk, a threat or a crisis. Next, the relationship between risks, threats and crises is illustrated with examples of how certain risks can escalate into becoming threats or points of crisis.

Learning methodology: active categorization

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

ACTIVITY 6: RISK IDENTIFICATION: WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to describe the significance of risk identification as a critical component of the risk-management process, with attention given to diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to explain risk identification, by recognizing risks as situations that may negatively impact electoral integrity, and by distinguishing between the internal and external risk factors that may contribute to overall risk.

Key subtopics:

- Internal (endogenous) risk factors
- External (exogenous) risk factors

Description: This session examines the first of five components that comprise a typical risk-management process—risk identification. Participants answer the questions ‘What can go wrong?’ (during an electoral cycle) and ‘What can cause or contribute to it going wrong?’ In addition, the difference between internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) risk factors and observable indicators are explained.

Learning methodology: lecture, think-pair-share

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 7: RISK ASSESSMENT: HOW LIKELY IS IT TO HAPPEN?

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to describe the significance of risk assessment as a critical component of the risk-management process, with attention given to diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to perform risk assessment by classifying identified risks based on their perception of the likelihood and potential impact of those risks.

Key subtopics:

- Likelihood
- Impact
- Risk heat map

Description: In this session, participants explore the second component of risk management—risk assessment. Participants learn how risk assessment can help ascertain the likelihood and impact of specific risks by answering two simple questions: (1) How likely is the risk? (2) How severe can its impact be? Considerations are made for different groups, based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity and other characteristics. This session makes use of risk heat maps as visual aids to prompt further discussion among participants.

Learning methodology: lecture, think-pair-share

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 8: RISK ANALYSIS: HOW DO WE KNOW?

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to describe the significance of risk analysis as a critical component of the risk-management process, with attention given to diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to recognize the key steps involved in risk analysis—defining the observable indicators of risk factors, designing data-collection methods, collecting data, summarizing and analysing data, and assessing validity. Learners consider social diversity in applying these steps.

Key subtopics:

- Observable indicators
- Data-gathering and data-analysis methodologies (and related software)

Description: This session discusses the third component of risk-management—risk analysis, or ‘How do we know?’ Participants learn about the importance of observable indicators and inclusive data-gathering and data-analysis methodologies that consider the differential experiences of diverse groups to improve situational awareness. In addition, participants are introduced to the [Electoral Risk Management Tool](#) (ERM Tool), which facilitates risk analysis by generating maps and trend charts relating to specific risks.

Learning methodology: lecture, experience sharing using video

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 9: RISK COMMUNICATION: HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to describe the significance of risk communication as a critical component of the risk-management process, with attention given to diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to recognize the key elements of risk communication, including identifying internal and external stakeholders, determining essential messages and establishing effective communication methods that are gender-sensitive and inclusive.

Key subtopics:

- Risk communication (stakeholders, content and method)

Description: In this session, participants examine how to communicate risk. The three key questions of risk communication are: (1) Who are the relevant internal and external stakeholders? (2) What is the content of the message? (3) How should the message be delivered? The activity allows participants, in groups, to adapt the framework to specific risk factors based on their own country, election and cultural context, by considering how risk communication may affect various groups differently.

Learning methodology: world café

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 10: RISK TREATMENT: HOW DO WE PREVENT OR MITIGATE RISK?

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to describe the significance of risk treatment as a critical component of the risk-management process, with attention given to diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to recognize the difference between prevention and mitigation, and to consider the appropriateness of each as a part of risk treatment.

Key subtopics:

- Risk prevention
- Threat and crisis mitigation

Description: This session is dedicated to risk treatment. Participants gain familiarity with the concepts of prevention and mitigation. They consider whether the increased likelihood and impact of risks will require focused efforts to prevent risks from materializing and/or resilience-building, and/or crisis-management efforts. The session also looks at the escalation of risk as per the International IDEA electoral risk heat maps.

Learning methodology: lecture

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

ACTIVITY 11: THE RISK-MANAGEMENT CYCLE: FROM IDENTIFICATION TO TREATMENT

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to apply all the main steps of the risk-management process—including risk identification, assessment, analysis, communication and treatment—to a specific risk factor, while considering diverse and marginalized groups.

Key subtopics:

- Risk-management process

Description: In this session, participants revisit the five components of the risk-management process (identification, assessment, analysis, communication and treatment) in relation to five (internal and external) risk factors deemed highly relevant to their own country and election context, while considering a gender-sensitive approach throughout. Overall findings are shared with the entire group as part of a debriefing designed to further the understanding of the risk-management process as the foundation of an integrated approach to protecting elections.

Learning methodology: world café

Estimated duration: 60 minutes

ACTIVITY 12: INTRODUCTION TO TABLETOP EXERCISE

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to understand a fictional setting, election framework and assigned roles in order to engage effectively in a tabletop exercise designed to build skills for operating in challenging electoral environments.

Key subtopics:

- Tabletop exercise

Description: In this session, participants are introduced to a tabletop exercise set in a fictional country. Through video, storytelling and a compendium of key documents, participants become familiar with the demographic and geographical characteristics of the fictional county, along with its election commission and electoral system. Each participant is assigned a role within an election commission at the central or district level.

Learning methodology: lecture, video-based learning, storytelling

Estimated duration: 45 minutes

ACTIVITY 13: RISK MANAGEMENT TABLETOP EXERCISE

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively, inclusively and accessibly with team members under stressful conditions.
- Learners improve their ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their risk-management approach, focusing on risk assessment, analysis, communication and treatment.
- Learners improve their ability to recognize the role of risk management within a broader election-protection framework and describe common challenges and success factors in its implementation.
- Learners improve their ability to integrate gender sensitivity and inclusivity across all aspects of risk management and election protection.

Key subtopics:

- Risk management

Description: In this session, a tabletop exercise simulates a situation in which elections are six months away and participants are made aware of specific risks that may escalate into threats or crisis. Various news alerts, social media posts, emails and verbal notes are introduced to challenge participants to assess, analyse, communicate and treat significant risks in a close-to-real-life setting, while considering the potential impacts on—and perspectives of—diverse groups. Once the tabletop exercise is concluded, a debriefing allows all participants to reflect on the exercise and identify the key takeaways. This discussion is complemented by key takeaways on the main challenges of risk management and the keys to success.

Learning methodology: tabletop exercise, debriefing

Estimated duration: 60 minutes

ACTIVITY 14: RESILIENCE-BUILDING IN ELECTIONS

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to explain the role of resilience-building within a broader election-protection framework, and they evaluate how it can be used to address and mitigate electoral threats, with particular attention given to the needs of diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to distinguish between resisting, adapting and transforming as resilience-building strategies, and they explain how each can be applied to different challenges to electoral integrity.

Key subtopics:

- Resilience-building (resistance, adaptation, transformation)

Description: This session focuses on the notion of resilience-building as part of systemic efforts to uphold electoral integrity. Participants experience the ways in which electoral institutions employ different strategies—whether to resist, adapt or transform—in order to withstand threats to electoral integrity. Real-life examples are used to demonstrate resilience-building in practice. The activity concludes with an exercise designed to test participants’ understanding of the type of threats that require resistance, those that can be addressed through short-term adaptation and those that demand transformation.

Learning methodology: lecture, video-based learning

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 15: INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF RESILIENCE-BUILDING IN ELECTIONS

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to recognize the benefits and challenges of inter-agency collaboration in protecting elections, and the ways in which they can assess those benefits and challenges.
- Learners improve their ability to recognize and differentiate between a whole-of-government approach and a whole-of-society approach, and they explain the role that each approach plays in strengthening electoral integrity.

Key subtopics:

- Whole-of-government approach
- Whole-of-society approach

Description: This session focuses on the collaboration between different actors and institutions in protecting electoral integrity. Participants are introduced to whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, and they discuss the benefits and challenges entailed. In addition, there is an option—if time allows—for one (or more) of the participating organizations to hold a presentation on how inter-agency collaboration has strengthened its resilience-building efforts.

Learning methodology: lecture and group exercise

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 16: RESILIENCE-BUILDING TABLETOP EXERCISE

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to prioritize resilience-building measures based on local contexts and assessments of electoral risk, justify their selections within budget constraints and apply persuasive communication to build consensus within a simulated EMB setting.
- Learners improve their ability to evaluate the strategic trade-offs between measures designed to resist, adapt or transform in the face of threats, and reflect on barriers (legal, institutional and time-related) and on how the choices may affect different groups.

Key subtopics:

- Resilience-building
- Strategic trade-offs in decision making
- Inter-agency collaboration

Description: In this session, participants—in their designated roles—are tasked with identifying resilience-building measures while facing limited resources. Participants must consider whether measures are inclusive and gender-sensitive. The tabletop exercise showcases the benefits of increased inter-agency collaboration. Finally, a debriefing allows all participants to reflect on the exercise and identify the key takeaways.

Learning methodology: tabletop exercise, debriefing

Estimated duration: 90 minutes

ACTIVITY 17: CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN ELECTIONS

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to explain the role of crisis management within a broader election-protection framework and evaluate how it can be used to respond to, and recover from, electoral crises, with particular attention given to the needs of diverse and marginalized groups.
- Learners improve their ability to identify preparedness, response, recovery and learning as key components of crisis management, and they explain how contingency planning, crisis leadership and crisis communication can be designed and implemented in gender-sensitive and inclusive ways to contribute to restoring electoral continuity.

Key subtopics:

- Crisis management (preparedness, response, recovery and learning)
- Contingency planning
- Crisis leadership
- Crisis communication

Description: This session discusses the role of crisis management within the Integrated Framework for Protecting Elections and introduces participants to the three essential elements of the crisis-management process—preparedness, crisis response, and recovery and learning. The session demonstrates that timely, well-prepared and gender-sensitive contingency plans contribute to mitigating crisis situations and protecting vulnerable groups. In addition, participants reflect on the best practices for crisis communication in order to draft an appropriate, inclusive and accessible holding statement with help from AI. Participants also engage in discussion focusing on contingency response, based on various election-day crisis scenarios at the polling station, district electoral commission and headquarters levels..

Learning methodology: crisis communication lab, crisis cards

Estimated duration: 60 minutes

ACTIVITY 18: CRISIS-MANAGEMENT TABLETOP EXERCISE

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to analyse a simulated scenario and identify potential risks and emergency situations.
- Learners improve their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively and inclusively with team members during a crisis scenario.
- Learners improve their ability to evaluate the effectiveness, inclusiveness and accessibility of communication and decision making during an emergency situation.
- Learners improve their ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their crisis-management approach, focusing on preparedness, response and recovery, as well as gender sensitivity and inclusivity.

Key subtopics:

- Crisis management
- Crisis leadership
- Crisis communication
- Contingency planning

Description: During this session, participants take part in an exercise simulating election day in a fictional country while acting in their designated role within the EMB. Throughout the simulation, risks, threats and points of crisis emerge. Participants need to react to breaking news and address these challenges by applying crisis-management methods, including crisis leadership and communication techniques. Participants are encouraged to consider gender sensitivity and inclusion when applying the methods. Finally, a debriefing allows all participants to reflect on the exercise and formulate the key takeaways.

Learning methodology: tabletop exercise, debriefing

Estimated duration: 60 minutes

ACTIVITY 19: INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING ELECTIONS

Learning outcomes:

- Learners improve their ability to explain how risk management, resilience-building and crisis management collectively form the foundation of an integrated framework for protecting elections in a gender-sensitive and inclusive way.

Key subtopics:

- Legal, institutional and management safeguards
- Integrated Framework for Protecting Elections

Description: This session summarizes the overarching Framework and the aims of the training workshop. This provides participants with an opportunity to, once again, reflect on what they have learned and on the ways in which gender-sensitive and inclusive risk management, resilience-building and crisis management all work together to strengthen electoral integrity.

Learning methodology: lecture

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

Model agenda (2 days)

Day 1

08:30–09:00	Arrival
09:00–09:25	(1) Introduction to the Protecting Elections Training Workshop
09:25–10:15	(2) Key terminology and core concepts for protecting elections
10:15–10:45	Break
10:45–11:15	(3) Electoral integrity challenges and safeguards
11:15–11:45	(4) Management processes for protecting electoral integrity
11:45–12:00	(5) Risk, threat or crisis?
12:00–13:00	Lunch
13:00–13:30	(6) Risk identification: What can go wrong?
13:30–14:00	(7) Risk assessment: How likely is it to happen?
14:00–14:30	(8) Risk analysis: How do we know?
14:30–15:00	(9) Risk communication: How do we communicate?
15:00–15:15	(10) Risk treatment: How do we prevent or mitigate risk?
15:15–16:15	(11) The risk-management cycle: From identification to treatment
16:15–16:30	Break
16:30–17:15	(12) Introduction to tabletop exercise

Day 2

09:00–09:10	(12, recap) Introduction to tabletop exercise
09:10–10:15	(13) Risk-management tabletop exercise
10:15–10:30	Break
10:30–11:00	(14) Resilience-building in elections
11:00–11:30	(15) Inter-agency collaboration as an integral part of resilience-building in elections
11:30–13:00	(16) Resilience-building tabletop exercise
13:00–14:00	Lunch
14:00–15:00	(17) Crisis management in elections
15:00–16:00	(18) Crisis-management tabletop exercise
16:00–16.15	Break
16:15–16:30	(19) Integrated Framework for Protecting Elections
16:30–17:00	Closing remarks, certificates and evaluation

About International IDEA

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

WHAT WE DO

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

We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

We bring states and non-state actors together for dialogues and lesson sharing. We stand up and speak out to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

WHERE WE WORK

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

OUR PUBLICATIONS AND DATABASES

We have a catalogue with more than 1,000 publications and over 25 databases on our website. Most of our publications can be downloaded free of charge.

<<https://www.idea.int>>

‘Personally, it has helped me to reinforce and deepen significant concepts about how to comprehensively address threats and crises to the integrity of the electoral process and share with others. This exchange has also helped us to deepen our knowledge. So, it has been a wonderful experience.’

—Carlos Díaz Díaz, Electoral Tribunal of Panama

‘One of the main understandings that I have gained from this workshop is the importance of planning and assessing risk well before and that this is the way to implement best practices. When going back to work, the first thing I will do is to try to get management on board to understand the importance of risk management.’

—Jean Yann Babet, Mauritius Independent Broadcasting Authority

‘The most interesting thing that we have learned here is the overall risk management plans. It has surprised me how concrete and how grassroot level they are. It has given me a lot of tools to work on my job at the Central Election Board in Joensuu.’

—Anne Lipponen, Central Election Board, City of Joensuu, Finland

‘The workshop has been an excellent tool for learning about electoral risk management and how to work together with the Electoral Tribunal and other civil society organizations to improve our electoral system.’

—Betim Morán, Electoral Prosecutor’s Office, Panama