

Transcribed - Sead Alihodzic - Electoral Risk Management

00:00

Q (Erik): Welcome to International IDEA's session on budgeting and financing of elections. My name is Erik Asplund, Senior Programme Officer at the Electoral Processes Team at International IDEA. Today I have Sead Alihodzic with me here at International IDEA. Sead, could you please describe why electoral risk management is an important element both in operational and strategic planning?

00:26

A (Sead): Hello Erik and hello to the viewers. Indeed, that is an important question that we should start asking ourselves more and more. As you well know, elections are very complex undertaking and many things can go wrong. Risk management systems are methodologies that can be deployed by Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) to make sure that they are less exposed to these risks if they materialize. Now, risks can be of different natures. They may be technical, political, legal, security, reputational and so on. It's therefore critical for EMBs to understand (to start looking into) these risks already during the face of operational planning. Because that will not only inform the quality of the planning processes but will also help establish the system which will be able to monitor, analyze and assess risks in order for EMBs to initiate time and effective prevention and mitigation action.

01:51

Q (Erik): Thank you Sead. Based on your experience, what approaches do EMBs have in terms of institutionalizing risk management?

02:02

A (Sead): We have asked ourselves the same question a few years back and in 2014 we developed a global survey, which has covered (only) 87 countries. We have learnt that most EMBs did not so far dedicate sufficient attention to systematic risk management. Some of them do not have any of such systems in place. However, those that do have that such systems take two different approaches. One approach is to put specific measures in place to prevent specific risks. These processes are very often done in isolation from one another. Some EMBs are trying to address this problem holistically. So, therefore in our policy paper on this topic we have distinguished between *incremental approaches*: where EMBs are slowly building on their risk management system, and *comprehensive approaches*: where policy makers and the EMB understand the importance of this system and initiate reform so that risk management covers all aspects of their work.

03:34

Q (Erik): Thank you. Could you provide some examples of countries that have taken an incremental or comprehensive approach to electoral risk management?

03:44

A (Sead): Indeed we have been able to see based on this survey and also from our experiences with working with EMBs around the world, how both approaches function. For example we have seen that the incremental approach is working in countries such as Nepal and Nigeria- where risk management was adopted with a specific purpose to prevent and mitigate security risks. But then EMBs have understood the value of this

methodology in monitoring and addressing other risks to electoral processes. There are some countries which do have comprehensive risk management systems. We have seen experiences from (for example): Canada, Australia and more recently we have also been in a position to coordinate and to learn from the Electoral Commission of India that have initiated a comprehensive risk management system there. Maybe (it is) also interesting to mention in this process, they have identified 191 risks that is faced by electoral administrators when implementing these processes.

05:19

Q (Erik): Thank you. What impact does adoption or the institutionalization of electoral risk management have on the EMB's budgets do you think?

05:28

A (Sead): Although it's hard to see (very initially) the positive impacts, I would say that introduction of risk management does initially require resources meaning staff and some funds. But they should not ever be seen as a cost, but more as *investment*. Because well-functioning risk management system is the best tool that EMBs can adopt to make sure that what they are investing in other faces and events of the electoral cycle are well protected.

06:14

Q (Erik): How is adoption of the risk management in elections financed do you think?

06:22

A (Sead): What we are seeing is actually that risk management is finding its way more and more into bureaucratic organizations. Looking from a distance, we have seen that some sectors such as the banking, medical and security sector have understood the benefits of systematic risk management and it has been standardized there. Now there are more and more governmental agencies and ministries which are institutionalizing risk management because that's the governmental standard. So, in my view, funds and financing the introduction of risk management within an organization is something that needs to be part of the budget as any other activity.

07:13

Erik: Thank you very much Sead and thank you for watching.

This transcript has been lightly edited to enhance readability and clarity without changing the sense of the points made by the discussants.

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