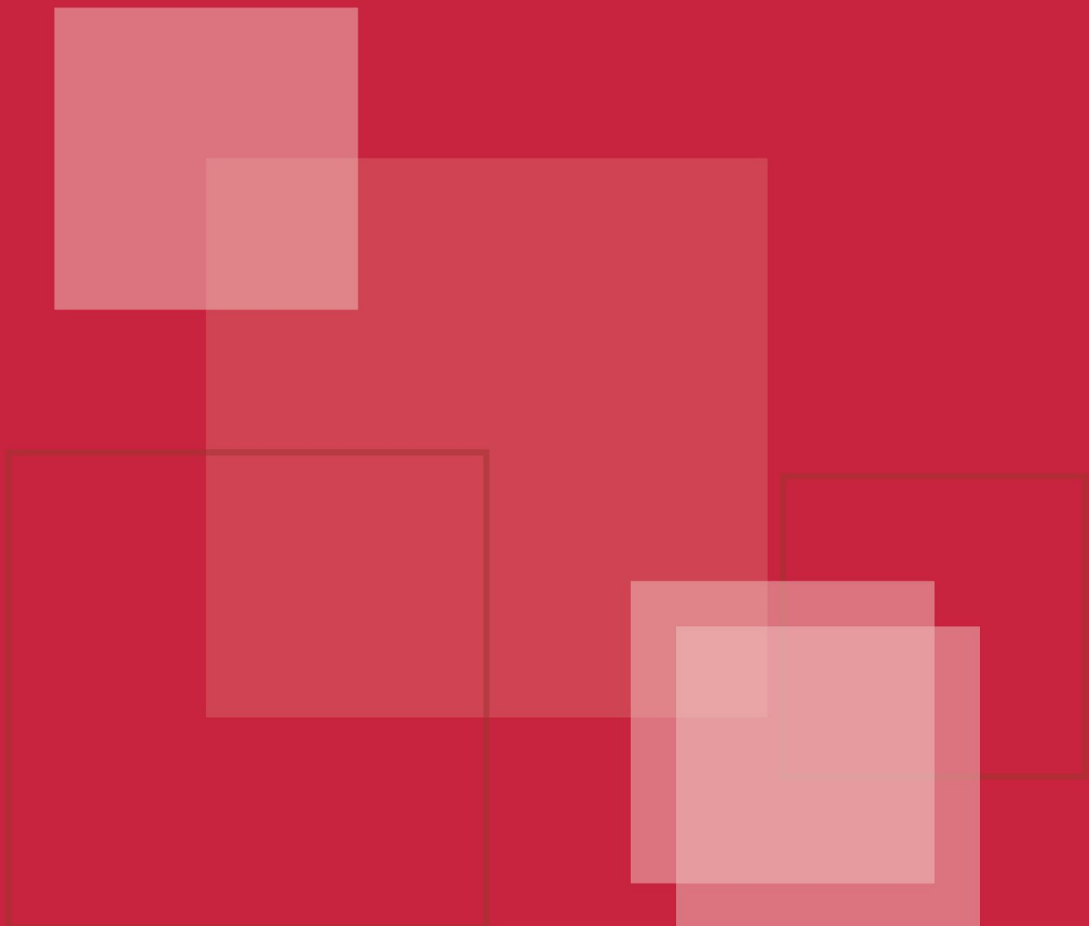




## Electoral Risk Management Tool: Overview





# **Electoral Risk Management Tool: Overview**

Sead Alihodžić

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# 1. Introduction

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Elections are complex undertakings. Regardless of where they take place, election management bodies (EMBs) face numerous risks in organizing them. Such risks are linked to the legal, operational, technical, political, security, and other aspects of electoral processes. When risks become certainties, the consequences can be serious in well-established as well as transitional democracies. Risk management has been endorsed by many professions for dealing with complex tasks, and is now emerging as an area of increased importance among EMBs, electoral assistance providers and democracy researchers (Alihodzic 2016:6).

International IDEA's Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool) is designed to enhance users' capacities to understand various risk factors, analyse risk data, and take action to prevent risks from materializing and mitigate negative effects they produce on the credibility of electoral processes. In conflict-affected societies, electoral risks that materialize can trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence. Therefore, the tool's support documents (Alihodzic and Asplund 2018a, 2018b and Alihodzic and Uribe Burcher 2018) are focused on describing the worst-case outcomes. This, however, does not imply that the ERM Tool and factors described are less relevant in contexts where consequences of electoral risks are less severe. The ERM Tool is integrated into a software application that provides three interactive modules (*learn–analyse–do*) which can be used in combination or as stand-alone resources.

1. The *Knowledge Resources* module consists of a digital library that allows users to learn about different electoral risk factors.
2. The *Analytical Instruments* module allows users to upload and analyse different types of data, generate risk maps and alerts, and create and manage a risk and action register.
3. The *Prevention and Mitigation* module includes comparative prevention and mitigation actions presented throughout the electoral cycle.

To make the ERM Tool globally relevant and applicable, each module is designed to be customizable. This allows users to focus on what is relevant in a given country and electoral context.

The ERM Tool can accumulate and store large amounts of qualitative, quantitative and geospatial data that can grow from election to election. These data will enable the user to



enhance understanding of the critical electoral issues, conduct cross-election analysis, direct electoral reform efforts, and plan and implement successive electoral processes.

Finally, the software integrates an option which allows users to provide feedback. Such feedback will assist the further development of the ERM Tool and ensure that it becomes a truly global resource. International IDEA and its partner organizations will facilitate future development of the ERM Tool and users' exchanges.

## 2. The ERM Tool's users

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The ERM Tool is primarily intended for institutions that share responsibility for organizing credible and peaceful elections, namely EMBs and security sector agencies. Intended users of the ERM Tool also include those with an interest in supporting the organization of credible and peaceful elections, such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks, academia and international organizations.

The ERM Tool is a multi-purpose instrument and will be an asset to users who wish to use it as a knowledge resource or conflict early-warning and response tool. The ERM Tool can systematize and display data in different formats. This makes it a convenient platform for organizations which operate with sensitive data, as well as for those who work on informing the general public about electoral risks and violent incidents.

Above all, the ERM Tool is designed as a platform which encourages collaboration between different communities of practice (including elections, security and peace-building practitioners) and encourages cooperation across institutional and social divides.

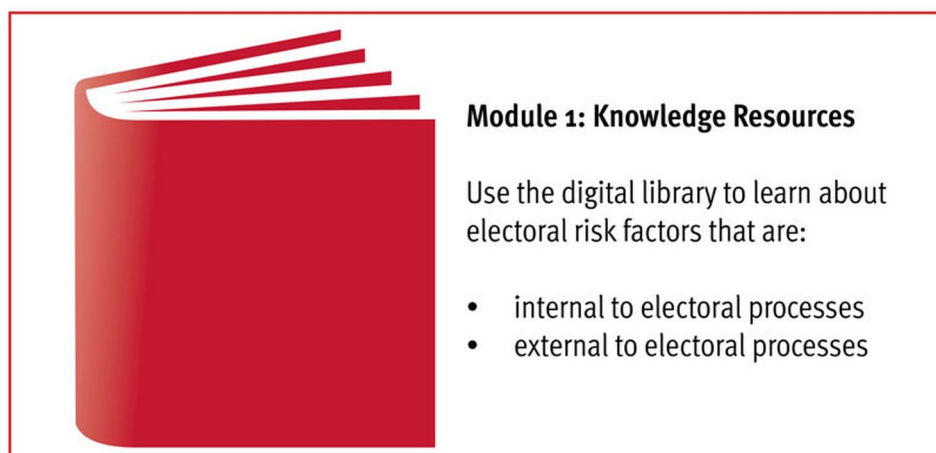
### 3. The structure of the ERM Tool

The ERM Tool consists of three modules:

1. Knowledge Resources;
2. Analytical Instruments; and
3. Prevention and Mitigation.

#### 3.1. Module 1: Knowledge Resources

Figure 1. Knowledge Resources



The Knowledge Resources module consists of a digital library that includes a wide-ranging list of electoral factors that constitute risks to elections and in the worst-case scenario can trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence. The concept distinguishes between two groups of factors: those which are internal and external to electoral processes. Factors presented in the Knowledge Resources module are compiled from different research papers, election reports and other relevant publications. Each source details the link between a particular factor and increased election-related tensions and/or outbreak of election-related violence (see Table 1).





Table 1. List of factors internal and external to electoral processes

Internal factors	External factors
<b>Legal and institutional framework</b> 1. Contested electoral law 2. Unfit electoral system 3. Inadequate electoral administrative rules <b>Planning and implementation</b> 4. Poor performance of the electoral management bodies 5. An inadequate system for the resolution of electoral disputes 6. Inadequate operational planning 7. Inadequate funding, financing and budgeting 8. Inadequate electoral security arrangements <b>Training and education</b> 9. Poor training for electoral officials 10. Lack of training for political parties and media 11. Lack of training of security sector agencies 12. A poor voter information campaign <b>Registration</b> 13. Problematic voter registration 14. Problematic registration of political parties and candidates 15. Problematic accreditation of domestic and international observers <b>Electoral campaign</b> 16. Unequal media access and favouritism 17. Provocative use of media by political parties 18. Provocative party rallying 19. Provocative and violent actions by political parties <b>Voting operations and election day</b> 20. Insufficiency, destruction and loss of sensitive and non-sensitive materials 21. Lack of transparency of special and external voting 22. Problematic election-day operations 23. Problematic ballot counting and result tallying <b>Verification of results</b> 24. Poor management of election results 25. Poor management of the final round of electoral appeals 26. Rejection of election results	1. Poor socio-economic conditions 2. Social and political exclusion 3. Conflict relating to changing power dynamics 4. Gender-based discrimination and violence 5. The presence of non-state armed actors 6. The presence of organized crime groups 7. Grievances relating to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes 8. Human rights violations 9. Environmental hazards 10. Unethical media reporting

**Internal (endogenous or process)** factors include 26 election-specific factors divided into seven electoral phases. These are exclusive to the electoral context and are defined in the *Electoral Risk Management Tool: Internal Factors Guide* (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). The eighth phase of the electoral cycle, post-election, is not included. Although there is a possibility that violence occurring after the implementation of election results is linked to the elections, the risk factors underlying such violence may not be process-related. Instead, the incident should be examined in the context of structural risk factors.

**External (exogenous or structural)** factors covers structural factors that relate to the context in which elections take place. These include existing violence, latent conflicts and other structural factors (e.g. unemployment, corruption, poverty and so on). These risk factors originate and exist outside of electoral context, but intensify during elections, and are

defined in the *Electoral Risk Management Tool: External Factors Guide* (Alihodžić and Uribe Burcher 2018).

The Knowledge Resources module is organized as an electronic library. Each factor is defined in four sections:

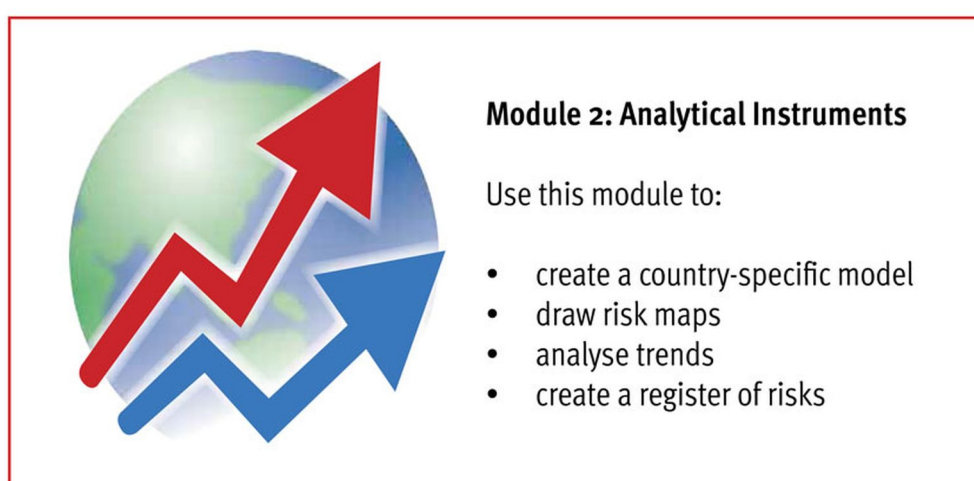
1. The introduction section provides a general definition and explanation of the context in which a given factor can in the worst-case scenario trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence.
2. The empirical cases and interrelated factors section illustrates particular countries and electoral contexts in which a particular factor was identified as a trigger or a factor which contributed to triggering election-related violence. Interrelated factors point to the context in which violence took place.
3. The observable indicators section points to the observable properties of the different factors.
4. The data collection and analysis section suggests data sources, collection techniques and analysis methods. The software includes pre-packed but editable survey questionnaires which will further assist the user(s) with the data collection.

The users of the ERM Tool can modify and add new factors and factor descriptions. Factors included in the Knowledge Resources library are considered when analytical models, country- and elections-specific, are created.

### 3.2. Module 2: Analytical Instruments

The Analytical Instruments module allows users to upload and analyse data by drawing risk maps or charting risk trends. Furthermore, users can generate and maintain a risk and action register that details risk alerts issued and actions taken.

Figure 2. Analytical instruments





Customization features include:

1. the mapping manager which allows the user to upload or draw geographical maps (SHP and DB files); and
2. model customization which makes it possible to create country- and election-specific analytical models.

The analytical component includes:

1. data entry interfaces which make it possible to put in entries for selected factors, regions and dates;
2. data presentation interfaces which make it possible to display data in the form of (a) colour-coded geographical areas, (b) numerical values displayed on a geographical map, (c) georeferenced static markers, and (d) trend charts. Data can be viewed for selected regions, dates and factors; and
3. the risk and action register which allows the user to generate alerts and recommend prevention and mitigation actions. Individual alerts form the database.

The ERM Tool allows the user to export, import or delete analytical models. Maps can be saved within the model and exported as high-resolution pictures or KML files that are compatible with Google Earth.

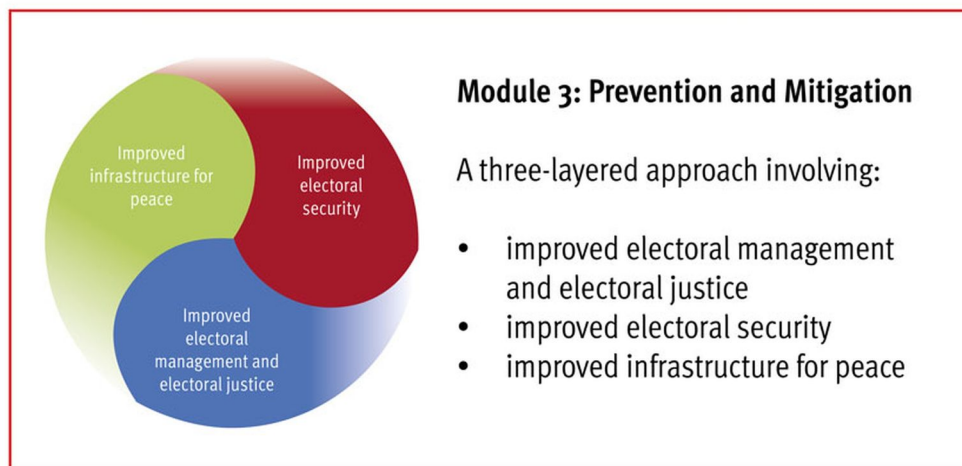
Outputs generated by analytical instruments can present complex and multi-layered risk data in a simple and user-friendly format.

### **3.3. Module 3: Prevention and Mitigation**

The Prevention and Mitigation module includes about 100 comparative action points for the prevention and mitigation of election-related violence. These are detailed in *The Prevention and Mitigation of Election-related Violence: An Action Guide* (Alihodžić and Asplund 2018). The action points present possible approaches, based on empirical cases, that can be taken to prevent and mitigate election-related violence throughout the eight phases of the electoral cycle, namely:

1. Legal and institutional framework
2. Planning and implementation
3. Training and education
4. Registration
5. Electoral campaign
6. Voting operations and election day
7. Verification of results
8. Post-election phase

Figure 3. A three-layered approach to the prevention and mitigation of election-related violence



Within each of these phases, three different clusters of prevention and mitigation actions are explored:

- *improved electoral management and justice*—specific measures which relate to electoral planning, implementation, coordination and dispute resolution that can be undertaken to avoid controversies and technical flaws in order to minimize the potential for outbreaks of violence;
- *improved electoral security*—specific electoral security measures that can be undertaken by security sector agencies throughout the electoral cycle to protect electoral actors, events, facilities and materials from violence; and
- *improved infrastructure for peace*—different activities that can be implemented by various state and non-state actors to mobilize and coordinate government agencies, CSOs, traditional and religious leaders, reputable individuals and other organizations and individuals with capacity to contribute in defusing and mitigating election-related tensions and violence.

## 4. How to use the ERM Tool



The way in which the ERM Tool is used will be contingent on the user's mandate, capacity and needs. However, proper use will always entail a preparatory phase, an implementation phase and a post-election analysis phase.

### 4.1. The preparatory phase

The preparatory phase includes activities relating to (a) context overview, (b) ERM Tool customization and (c) operational design.

#### 4.1.1. Context overview

A proper context overview is critical to ensuring that the ERM Tool is customized to allow the user to focus on the most important risks during the implementation phase. This process entails an analysis of the history and dynamics of electoral challenges and social conflicts and, in this respect, an assessment of the potential risks to the forthcoming elections. The context overview will identify (a) geographical regions that face increased risks, (b) relevant risk factors, (c) those phases of the electoral cycle that face increased risk, and (d) possible strategies to prevent risks from materializing and mitigate their negative effects.

This exercise should be designed to include and capture the views of different stakeholders including, but not limited to:

- communities of practice (elections, security, peacebuilding);
- institutions and organizations (government, academia, CSOs);
- geographical regions (national/subnational/local); and
- social groups (sex, age, ethnic, religious).

Useful methodologies to facilitate the inclusion of different perspectives may include expert workshops, focus group discussions, public opinion surveys, consultations, written contributions and so on. The factors elaborated in the Knowledge Resources module should be used as reference materials when conducting the risk assessment.

#### 4.1.2. Customization of the ERM Tool

The user should summarize the results of the context overview exercise in a baseline assessment document. This document should describe each factor through three focused sections: (a) introduction, (b) observable indicators and (c) data collection and analysis



methodologies. The content and format of the ERM Tool's Knowledge Resources module should be used as a guidance and inspiration. This document will be used to customize the ERM Tool's knowledge resources and also to inform operational planning.

The customization is completed with the creation of an analytical model. This is a technical exercise whereby the software-based analytical model is generated by setting four parameters:

1. the name of the model;
2. the geographical scope of the analysis (regions, countries or different administrative levels);
3. risk factors included in the model (a default tick-box list reflects the factors defined in the Knowledge Resources module); and
4. factors' properties (values of interval scale, weight, display options and so on).

#### 4.1.3. Operational design

Operational design will draw on the baseline assessment document and will further operationalize details relating to (a) data collection and (b) building human and technical resources.

##### 4.1.3.1. Data collection

For each factor, the user will first identify whether data exist (e.g. it may already be collected internally or by external organizations such as security agencies, CSOs and so on) or do not exist. Accordingly, the data collection methodology will define:

- how to obtain data (e.g. access official records, conduct interviews or surveys, engage in fact finding, monitor the media, and establish lines for citizens' reporting);
- who is collecting/providing data (i.e. internal staff, external partner agencies, contracted agencies, or others); and
- how often data are collected (e.g. daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, one time only and so on). The data collection methodology and the amount of data that needs to be collected and analysed will be indicative of the resources needed. If the user does not have the capacity to collect all the data that are needed, prioritization will be necessary.

##### 4.1.3.2. Resources

The implementation of the ERM Tool will require the establishment of an analytical hub which will process the collected data in order to provide the situation analysis and risk alerts.

Basic human and organizational capacities include:

- a hub manager (coordinates internal and external data collection and exchange efforts, directs analysis, drafts and presents reports and risk alerts, shares alerts with relevant decision-making bodies and partners);
- data analyst(s) (analyse data in order to generate risk maps and trend charts; generate alerts and draft reports); and
- data entry clerk(s) (compile and consolidate data and make data entries; provide analytical outputs for the given regions/factors/periods as requested).



The ERM Tool is developed as a desktop software application that can work without Internet access or computer networks. The technical demands for the application include a single PC station with a Windows 7 or higher operating system. The ERM Tool can also be installed on a central server from which it can be accessed through a local computer network. For the presentation of results, the user may need a printer or projection capacities. Also, geospatial data can be exported in a format compatible with the Google Earth application.

Training could be implemented at several levels, including the following.

- The leadership of the prospective user organization can benefit from an exchange with the leadership and technical personnel of the organization who are already experienced in using the tool.
- The technical staff can learn about how to use the ERM Tool from the support materials and tutorials. In this respect, the ERM Tool is no different from other user-friendly software applications. However, it may be important to create teams that combine electoral risk/conflict and IT skills. Technical personnel would always benefit from the exchanges with, or receiving training from, their peers who are already experienced in using the ERM Tool.
- Training for the data collection staff (surveyors) should be organized by the technical staff to ensure that the 'new data' collection effort is consistent and standardized across the country.

Human and technical resources, training needs and costs of data collection will determine the financial resources needed. This project will ideally help the user organization to implement its mandate, and as such will not be considered an extra cost.

## 4.2. The implementation phase

The implementation phase entails continuous:

- data collection (as per the data collection methodology);
- data entry;
- data analysis;
- generating situation analysis and risk alerts with recommendations on possible prevention and mitigation actions;
- sharing risk alerts and maps internally and externally;
- generating a risk and action register; and
- monitoring the results of specific actions.

Outputs generated by the analytical instruments can present complex and multi-layered risk data in a simple and user-friendly format. This may enable the user to establish situational awareness, and take preventive and mitigation measures, more quickly. A risk and action register will allow the user to understand the effectiveness of actions undertaken.

It is recommended that the user facilitates periodical revisions of the model and ensures that the data collection and analysis are focused on the most prominent and emerging risks.



### 4.3. Post-election analysis

The ERM Tool has the capacity to accumulate and store large amounts of qualitative, quantitative and geo-spatial data. If the ERM Tool is used for successive elections, the amount of data will increase over time. This will:

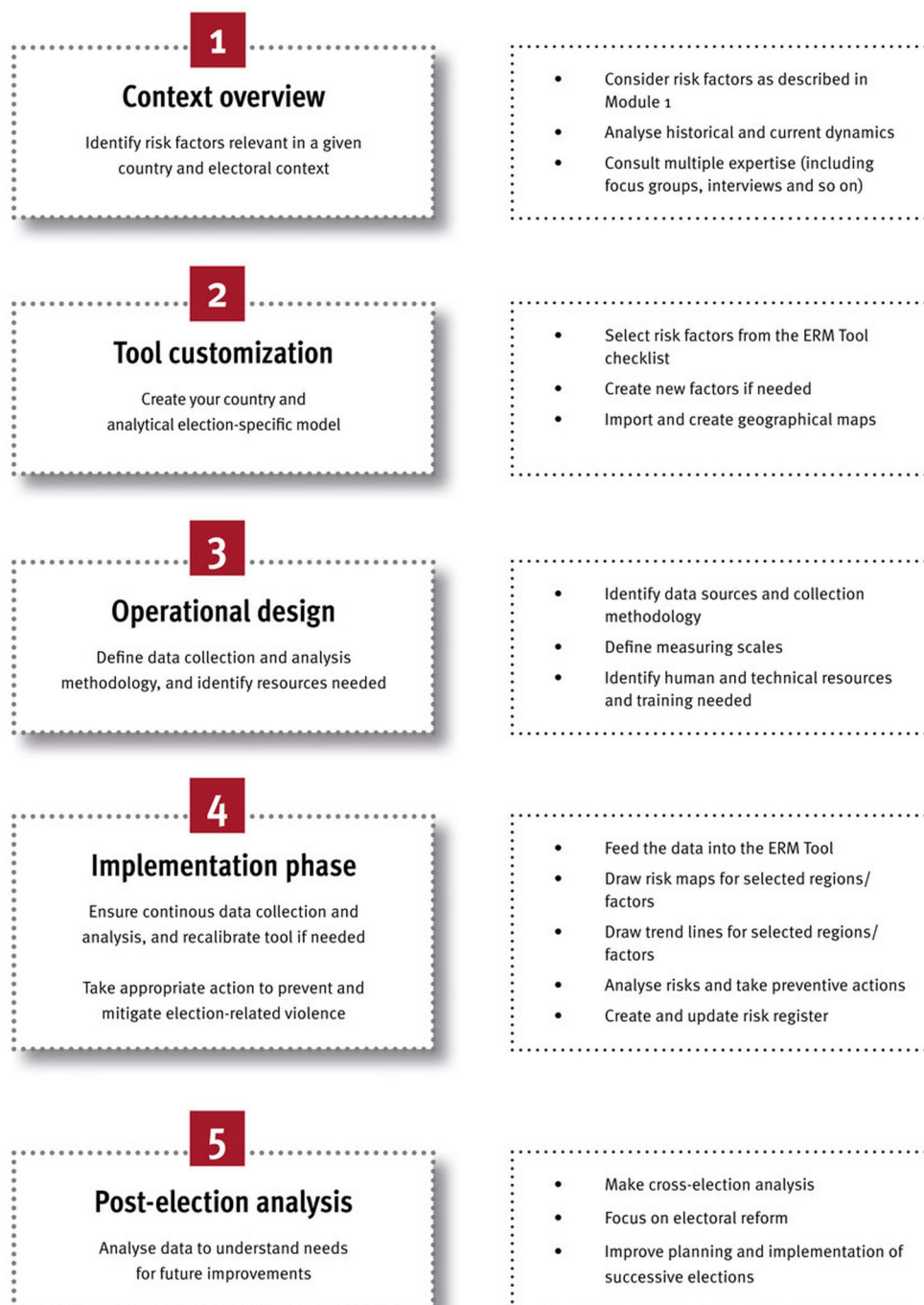
1. allow cross-election analysis;
2. inform and focus electoral reform processes; and
3. assist the planning and implementation of successive electoral processes.

In particular, review of the risk and action register will help understanding any gaps in data collection and analysis, and ensure effectiveness in issuing and acting upon risk alerts.





Figure 4. ERM Tool Overview flow chart



## 5. Towards a global framework

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The ERM Tool also allows users to provide ‘one-click’ feedback to international IDEA. Feedback can relate to:

- proposals for the inclusion of new factors or a rearrangement of those that exist;
- suggestions for new ERM Tool functionalities;
- personal experiences relating to preventive actions and strategies;
- reporting of technical errors in the software; or
- general impressions and experiences.

Users’ feedback will assist in the further development of the ERM Tool and will ensure that it becomes a true global resource.

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## About the author

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**Sead Alihodžić** is a Senior Programme Officer in International IDEA's Electoral Processes Programme. His research and work focuses on elections and conflict, with a special emphasis on prevention and mitigation of election-related violence and risk management in elections, and timing and sequencing of transitional elections. He led the design and development of International IDEA's Electoral Risk Management Tool. In addition to his International IDEA publications, he has published several journal articles on electoral violence, early warning and democracy promotion.

Prior to joining International IDEA in 2008, Alihodžić gained extensive experience in dealing with elections, post-conflict democratization, and security issues through 11 years with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina where he performed Programme Officer and Head of Field Office duties. In 2007, he was awarded the British Government's Chevening scholarship. He also received two awards for achievements and service in the OSCE. He holds a master's degree in European Integrations from the University of Essex, United Kingdom.

## About the ERM Tool

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Understanding and explaining outbreaks of election-related violence is a complex task; predicting whether forthcoming elections will turn violent, which factors may underlie or trigger violence, and what can be done to prevent violence is even more difficult. One way to address the problem is to empower those who have immediate responsibility to prevent and mitigate election-related violence, such as electoral management bodies, security sector agencies and other state and non-state agencies.

The Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool) is designed to empower people to ensure peaceful and credible elections. The software aims to build the capacities of users to understand, analyse and mitigate electoral risks. Specifically, the ERM Tool can build users' capacity to understand electoral risk factors; collect and analyse risk data; design prevention and mitigation strategies; and record the results of actions.

### Modules

The ERM Tool consists of three integrated modules. First, a knowledge library describes in detail 36 electoral risk factors, both internal and external to electoral processes. Second, an analytical instruments section allows users to create analytical models specific to a country or election, upload data to generate risk maps and trend charts, and create a register of risks and actions. Third, the prevention module consists of a digital library with approximately 100 action points intended to inspire user in designing strategies to prevent and mitigate electoral risks, including election-related violence, at the different phases of the electoral cycle. The software is accompanied by three Guides and an Overview.

### Download

To obtain a copy of the ERM Tool, please register via the International IDEA website. Genuine non-for-profit organizations will be granted a download key free of charge.

<<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/electoral-risk-management-tool>>

## About International IDEA

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The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

### What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work.

International IDEA provides analysis of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge of good international democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

### Where do we work?

Our headquarters are located in Stockholm, with regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-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.

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

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The software is accompanied by three Guides. This Overview provides basic information about the users of the ERM Tool; the structure of the software; and the phases in which the ERM Tool should be used.