How to keep trust in Elections: The role of EMBs

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UN ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE TO MEMBER STATES

- Only at specific request of Member State, or Security Council/General Assembly mandate

- Technical assistance by far the main form of assistance

- Other types of assistance (observation, certification, supervision and organization/conduct) require a Security Council or General Assembly mandate

- On average, UN EAD receives 25 requests from Member States for electoral assistance, each year

- Currently, 52 Member States are receiving UN electoral assistance in both mission and non-mission settings: 8 of these are under a Security Council mandate*

- UN good offices (at request of Member States)

Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. Note: SCR 2254 mandates UN supervision of future Syrian elections pursuant to a political agreement but no current electoral assistance.

UN ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK

- <u>USG-DPPA: mandated by UN General Assembly as focal point for electoral assistance</u>

  - o Coherence and coordination

  - o Internal policies

  - o Assessment of all Member State requests; decisions on requests

  - o Roster and Institutional Memory

- <u>Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) supports the focal point in her role</u>

- UNDP is the main implementer of UN electoral assistance

- Multiple other UN actors can be involved: DPPA, DPO, UNDP, UNOPS, UN Women, OHCHR, UNESCO, UN Volunteers, UNHCR, UNDEF, PBSO, IOM.

UN ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE – some core principles

- Respect for national sovereignty

- Objective, impartial, neutral and independent

- No single model of democracy

- Respect for Human Rights; norm-based but not prescriptive

- Sustainability and cost-effectiveness

- Conflict prevention perspective and contributing to longer-term stability

- Promote inclusiveness, including the participation of women and marginalized groups

UN ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE – some key features

- Political perspective: conflict management, contribute to longer-term stability

- Combine technical electoral assistance with political engagement and good offices, as requested,

- "The true measure of an election: whether it engenders broad public confidence in the process and trust in the outcome"

- Citizens must have trust that an outcome reflects their will, and building this trust from the beginning is a key priority and focus of United Nations advice

TECHNICAL QUALITY AND ACCEPTANCE

- Election quality as necessary and/or sufficient condition?

- UN experience: this is important, but not a straightforward relationship

- Confidence also shaped by broader political context, macro-level factors

- "Process important but not an end in itself"

- EMBs play a role in building trust, but focus should also be on political leaders and candidates:

  o Role model in encouraging peaceful acceptance in loss, magnanimity in victory

ROLE OF EMBs IN BUILDING TRUST

- Systematic communication with stakeholders and their involvement from the start of the process

- Targeted communication for women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups to address their concerns and ensure their participation

- EMBs could use both traditional and modern means of communication

- The use of technology by EMBs - opportunities and challenges

- Internet and social media - opportunities and challenges

- There is no one size fits all that would work for all groups in a specific society or for all countries. But in many cases a combination of traditional mechanisms (using religious, traditional, community leaders, radio and TV) and more modern tools (social media, etc.)

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ELECTIONS

- Internet and social media as key tools of communication
  - Challenges of disinformation and manipulation

- Digital tools to support participation in or conduct of an election
  - Challenges of cyber threats and cyber attacks

- Develop a clear media strategy to inform voters and stakeholders and also counter misinformation

- Cooperation with social media companies

- Develop partnerships other state and non-state actors

EMBs COMMUNICATION DURING COVID-19

- COVID-19 pandemic presents socio-economic and political challenges globally

- EMBs to communicate not only how they would improve integrity of elections but also how they would ensure safety for voters and poll workers

- EMBs to coordinate and communicate with healthcare professionals/authorities

- EMBs to communicate new procedures in light of COVID-19

Conclusion

- Building trust in an electoral process is central to UN's support to its Member States

- Building trust in an electoral process is key to ensuring legitimacy of an electoral process and it's results thereof.

- Various actors can contribute to building trust in an electoral process, including EMBs, but also political leaders and candidates

- EMBs can utilize a combination of both traditional and modern forms of communication to inform their electorate and counter misinformation

- Internet and social media can be both an enabler for participation and tools for spreading disinformation and hate speech in an electoral process