

Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Canada



UKaid
from the British people

Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation

Authors:

Virginia Atkinson
Senior Global Inclusion Advisor

Meredith Applegate
Program Advisor for Ukraine

Rebecca Aaberg
Inclusion Specialist

Lead Editor:

Erica Shein
Director of the Center for Applied Research and Learning

Editors:

Chad Vickery
Vice President of Global Strategy and Technical Leadership

Angela Canterbury
Director of Strategic Communications and Advocacy

IFES COVID-19 Briefing Series: Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation
Copyright © 2020 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. All rights reserved.

Permission Statement: No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of IFES.

Requests for permission should include the following information:

- A description of the material for which permission to copy is desired.
- The purpose for which the copied material will be used and the manner in which it will be used.
- Your name, title, company or organization name, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and mailing address.

Please send all requests for permission to:

International Foundation for Electoral Systems
2011 Crystal Drive, Floor 10
Arlington, VA 22202
Email: media@ifes.org
Phone: 202.350.6701

This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as the Department for International Development (DFID) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The contents are the responsibility of IFES and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, DFID, GAC or the governments of the United States, United Kingdom or Canada.

Contents

- [Foreword](#)..... 1
- [Acknowledgments](#) 2
- [Executive Summary](#)..... 4
- [Introduction](#) 6
- [Major Findings](#)..... 8
 - [Women](#)..... 10
 - [People with Disabilities](#) 13
 - [Young People](#)..... 15
 - [Older People](#) 18
 - [Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees and Migrant Workers](#)..... 19
 - [LGBTQ People](#) 21
 - [Indigenous Peoples](#) 22
 - [Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities](#) 24
- [Recommendations](#) 26
- [Annex A: Barriers Chart](#) 29
- [Annex B: Summary of Findings](#) 31

Foreword

My parents were German Jewish refugees to the United States. I had polio in 1949 and have been unable to walk my entire life. My parents always drummed into my head that I had the same responsibilities as my brothers. I knew that I must vote and that my vote should be an informed one. Over the years, I have faced discrimination because of my disability. I was denied the right to go to school when I was 5 because I was a “fire hazard.” I lived in Brooklyn, but could not ride a bus or a train because they were not physically accessible. I was denied my first major job as a teacher because I couldn’t walk. After I successfully sued, I taught for three years.

When I was 18 years old, I went to vote. However, I couldn’t go by myself because our polling place was up four steps. My father had to pull my wheelchair up the steps and then had to help me in the voting booth. There was no one else who could help me and no provisions for me to vote on my own. At that point, there was a very small disability rights movement both in the U.S. and internationally. Hundreds of millions of people with all types of disabilities had been denied the opportunity to fully participate in our communities because of discrimination. Democracies were failing us. We had to come together at the local, national, regional and global level to remove the barriers to participation in political life.

Learning what other disenfranchised groups had been doing to obtain their rights was an example of what was possible globally. I learned from the civil rights movement that the right to vote was being denied to people because they were Black; and that women in the U.S. and countries around the world had been denied their right to vote. I also learned that laws had been passed to enable all people to participate in the political process. Learning about how other people had organized and the years it had taken for some groups to be granted the right to vote was an important lesson for me and others.

The birth of the global disability rights movement ultimately resulted in the introduction of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 29 of the treaty is focused on participation in political and public life and guarantees political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others. Progress has been made on implementing Article 29, including resulting in more people with various types of disabilities, living in rural and urban communities finally getting to participate in elections. The disability community has been working side by side with other marginalized groups in countries around the world. The growing acknowledgment by governments that all people have the right to participate in the planning of elections to ensure accessibility to voting and running for office has been critically important. We cannot allow this pandemic to be an excuse for rolling back participation.

Unfortunately, many people still see us as second-class citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing barriers. The authors of this paper have provided concrete recommendations for government and civil society to take in order to ensure everyone has access to the political process.

It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that we oppose efforts from governments to suppress the right of people to vote or participate in the political process. Together we will be vigilant and outspoken. We must not allow others to use the pandemic as an excuse to take away our rights.

[Judith Heumann](#),¹ International Disability Rights Advocate, Senior Fellow Ford Foundation (2017-2019), Special Advisor for International Disability Rights, U.S. Department of State (2010-2017)

Acknowledgments

The authors and editors would like to thank: Judith Heumann for providing a foreword to the paper and for her continuing advocacy for inclusive political participation; Vasu Mohan, Nicolas Kaczorowski, and Gina Chirillo for their thoughtful peer review of the draft paper; Hannah Roberts, Kyle Lemargie and Ashley Law for their contributions on internally displaced persons, Indigenous Peoples and young people, respectively; and Keaton Van Beveren and Janine Duffy for their copy editing and design work. The authors would also like to thank IFES country teams for their contributions to this paper and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Danida, Global Affairs Canada, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Department of State and the United Kingdom Department for International Development for their support of initiatives highlighted in this paper and continuing efforts to ensure all people have a voice in elections and political processes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo credits:

Page 19: #Khaanachahiye

Page 23: TATIANA DE NEVO / Contributor

All other photos are the property of IFES.



WHO WE ARE

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

1 in 5 women

are likely to experience disability
in their lifetime (and that number
becomes 46% for ages 60+) ¹

The poorest **20%**
(mostly women and older people)
have a higher prevalence of disability ³

15.6% of the population
15 years and older have a
disability ⁵

55.3% of migrants are between
the ages of **20-30** ⁷

Estimates suggest that
10-20%
of the world's
population belong
to minorities ⁹

Indigenous
persons
make up **5%**
of the world's
population ¹¹



In 2020, the world's population is:

50.4% men

49.6% women ²

3.22%-3.37%
of adults identify as
LGBTQ ⁴

In 2020 **41%**
of the world's population is
24 and under ⁶

27% of all people live as religious
minorities ⁸

There are
79.5
million

forcibly
displaced
persons
worldwide
with over 57%
internally
displaced ¹⁰

Explore the data in depth by visiting the full sources used in this graphic:

¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee's [Guidelines: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#)

^{2, 6} United Nations' [World Population Prospects 2019](#)

^{3, 5} World Health Organization's [World Report on Disability](#)

⁴ John E. Pachankis and Richard Branstrom's journal article, "[How many sexual minorities are hidden? Projecting the size of the global closet with implications for policy and public health](#)"

⁷ International Organization for Migration's [World Migration Report 2020](#)

⁸ Pew Research Center's article, "[The Global Religious Landscape](#)"

⁹ [United Nations Guide for Minorities](#)

¹⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019](#)

¹¹ The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs' [The Indigenous World 2020](#)

Executive Summary

Introduction

With cases of the COVID-19 virus confirmed in at least 200 countries and territories worldwide at the time of this writing,² enormous attention is being paid globally to managing the pandemic's impacts on public health and the economy. Less visible are the implications for the individuals and communities living with deeply entrenched and systemic discrimination who have been impacted the hardest. The pandemic has undoubtedly heightened existing inequalities, threatening both health and democratic freedoms and rights; and hastening political exclusion of many people already underrepresented in political life.

This paper provides an overview of the potential obstacles that a number of people face while exercising their political rights during a crisis such as COVID-19, as well as recommendations to improve access and inclusion. Specifically, this paper examines the experiences of women; people with disabilities; young people; older people; displaced people; migrant workers; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community (LGBTQ); Indigenous populations; and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. The paper also addresses conditions that are exacerbated by the pandemic and impact political participation, including severe economic inequality and poverty, insufficient educational opportunities, lower levels of literacy, lack of trust in government and limited access to technology.

Defining the Problem

The decisions made by governments in response to the pandemic have increased the political marginalization of some people. Measures meant to slow the spread of the virus often both physically and politically isolate people and communities who already face barriers to participation. A few autocratic political leaders are also using the pandemic as a pretext to curtail rights directly, taking advantage of the emergency to further weaken rule of law and democratic institutions.³ Efforts to undermine democratic rights disproportionately affect communities and individuals already facing discrimination and political exclusion, benefiting incumbents and those in power.

Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) explicitly states that, during times of emergency, states may not take measures that "involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin."⁴ Elections during a pandemic present a specific challenge to electoral decision-makers – they require careful planning, risk mitigation and significant operational adjustments. During a crisis such as COVID-19, it is even more essential that electoral and political decision-makers protect the integrity of the democratic process by taking steps to increase inclusivity and protect the democratic rights of marginalized communities.

Major Findings and Recommendations

While it is always best practice for electoral decision-makers and political leadership to closely consult with marginalized communities throughout the electoral process, it is even more essential during pandemics and other crises that will exacerbate inequalities. While governments and electoral leaders must make every effort to ensure that all electoral actors can participate safely in an election during a health crisis, electoral decision-makers must ensure that efforts to keep people safe do not further exclude and infringe upon the political rights of those already facing exclusion and discrimination. They also must

make sure that these efforts are well communicated to voters, particularly voters facing marginalization, so that they feel confident going to the polls and trust that the election management body (EMB) is doing everything it can to protect their health while they exercise their right to vote. This paper describes the major concerns related to the exercise of political rights for each of the groups mentioned above and makes recommendations to ensure that political and electoral processes remain inclusive during health crises. These findings are directed at EMBs, other elected and appointed officials, the international community and civil society organizations (CSOs), and include recommendations to:

- Acknowledge and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and other crises on marginalized populations and their ability to exercise their political and electoral rights.
- Recognize the critical role that civil society groups representing marginalized communities play in effective health responses and successful electoral events.
- Consult with representatives of marginalized communities and include a diversity of experiences and voices at all stages of assessment, planning and implementation of electoral processes and modifications during the pandemic.
- Put in place measures that will ensure that people can still participate in elections freely, independently and secretly.
- Design information campaigns to ensure that everyone can receive important electoral and political information in understandable and accessible formats.

While a pandemic undoubtedly creates obstacles to participation, it also presents opportunities to “build back better” for more inclusive societies, boost resilience before the next crisis and increase trust in the electoral process. This paper offers a detailed examination of both obstacles and opportunities.

Learn more by visiting the full collection of papers in the [IFES COVID-19 Briefing Series](#).⁶ Find more resources at IFES’ [COVID-19 Survival Guide for Democracies](#).⁷

“We have seen how the virus does not discriminate, but its impacts do – exposing deep weaknesses in the delivery of public services and structural inequalities that impede access to them ... We see the disproportionate effects on certain communities, the rise of hate speech, the targeting of vulnerable groups, and the risks of heavy-handed security responses undermining the health response.”

– António Guterres,
Secretary-General of the United Nations⁵

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened existing inequalities for all traditionally marginalized groups. Women; people with disabilities; young people; older people; internally displaced people (IDPs); refugees; migrant workers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people; Indigenous people; and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, are uniquely at risk during the pandemic and in its aftermath, facing economic inequalities, barriers to access to health care and discrimination. All of these outcomes in turn exacerbate existing barriers or create new challenges to equal participation in political life. Further, people who identify with more than one marginalized social group – such as Indigenous women with disabilities, minority youth or LGBTQ refugees – face additional intersectional barriers and compounded discrimination.

Inclusion and democracy are symbiotic: A government that delivers for all facilitates meaningful participation in political and public life by those on the margins of society. Socioeconomic status is a cross-cutting issue impacting engagement in political life – people living in poverty, people with low or no literacy, limited access to transportation or who are unable to work remotely or have lost their job because of the pandemic might be less likely to have the time or resources to engage in politics. Some voters cannot afford the personal protective equipment (PPE) that is recommended to safely participate in a campaign event or cast a ballot. Political exclusion is compounded by the digital divide, which disproportionately impacts persons with marginalized social identities. Public health information related to the virus and voter education materials are often not produced in accessible formats or local languages. Older people and people who are displaced are less likely to have access to the internet. Additionally, in some cases, politicians have fed into stereotypes and inaccurate assumptions about individuals from certain marginalized groups as responsible for spreading the virus, potentially discouraging them from participating in political life. Early in the pandemic, for example, Indonesia's COVID-19 spokesperson said, "The rich protect the poor so that the poor can live decently, and the poor protect the rich by keeping the disease from spreading," incorrectly implying that poor people are more likely to be responsible for spreading the virus.⁸

The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all United Nations (UN) member states, commit governments to building inclusive democratic societies. There are also nearly a dozen international treaties that protect the political rights of specific groups. In addition to states' obligation to meet these international standards, domestic and international election observers assess inclusion in political life as part of their observation efforts. Protecting individual rights will likely be challenged in the current environment where elections are either being postponed or held under strict social-distancing measures, as outlined in the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) "Global Impact of COVID-19 on Elections."⁹ Countries are exploring options for how to hold elections while ensuring the safety of both voters and polling staff, and in some cases are examining legal frameworks for guidance on deadlines for postponement of elections.¹⁰ In addition to national laws, numerous international standards commit states to holding frequent and inclusive elections. Rooted in principles of nondiscrimination elaborated within Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to these rights "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,"¹¹ and Article 25 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to participate in elections and decision-making,¹² there has been increasing attention paid globally to the political rights of marginalized groups.

People who are marginalized because of their social identity face new and magnified challenges in a public health crisis. Barriers to political participation can have lasting ramifications, silencing diverse voices and stifling equality of opportunity. This paper will:

- Provide an overview of international frameworks protecting the political rights of women, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, older people, young people, IDPs, refugees, migrant workers, Indigenous people, and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities during the pandemic;
- Describe the main barriers to these groups' electoral and political engagement during the pandemic;
- Highlight good practices and recommendations for EMBs, civil society, legislators, local authorities, educational institutions, electoral justice actors, security actors and the international community on how to mitigate these barriers; and
- Identify opportunities for systemic change toward more inclusive political processes rather than restoring old practices after the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as opportunities to build resilience and trust in democracies.

Major Findings



We have a unique opportunity to design and implement more inclusive and accessible societies.”

– Antonio Guterres, UN secretary-general, UN COVID-19 Responses¹³

The political and electoral exclusion of people facing discrimination and marginalization threatens democracies around the world. During a pandemic such as COVID-19, groups with historically lower access to rights and resources may be the most impacted by the crisis, both directly through more exposure to the virus, higher levels of vulnerability and less access to health care, and indirectly in the form of unintended impacts of the measures taken to combat the virus. This paper provides an overview of barriers to political participation encountered by marginalized groups during the pandemic; a table of barriers is included in Annex A and a summary of key findings in Annex B. Lack of trust in government institutions, often already low among marginalized groups due to sustained experiences of discrimination and exclusion, may be magnified by the government’s response to the crisis and may lead some groups or individuals to ignore government advice.¹⁴

Despite the challenges of conducting elections in the COVID-19 context, changes made now can improve access of persons from marginalized groups to the political process, which may also provide unique insights of how to improve access for all. The COVID-19 pandemic has instigated societal shifts in how we communicate, plan, advocate, learn and operate, yet many of the innovations now in use build on the work of traditionally marginalized groups. Lessons learned from the experience can inform three key areas for reform: system change, resilience and public trust.

1. “Building Back Better” to Increase Access to Electoral Systems

When disasters impact a community, “building back better” entails identifying the parts of a system that can be renovated rather than restored, creating changes that last beyond the crisis.¹⁵ In response to the rapidly changing COVID-19 environment, elections can and should be designed to ensure universal suffrage, not just in name but in practice. As election commissions, political parties, CSOs and others look for alternatives to holding in-person activities, stakeholders can eliminate gaps that have resulted in barriers to marginalized groups.

In New Zealand, new opportunities for voters to use an online service are being considered for general elections in September 2020. The service, which has been previously used for overseas voters, includes telephone voting, which is often made available to voters with visual or physical disabilities.¹⁶ Internet voting, around which there is a significant debate,¹⁷ is not a panacea; continuing security concerns, issues of public trust and lack of auditability make

“While COVID is impacting minorities disproportionately, we should not see minorities only as victims. As an example, we have over two hundred Dalit women working as frontline workers during the pandemic, distributing rations and services in urban slums and neighborhoods in Delhi. We have created a WhatsApp group for these two hundred women and act as a central trusted node that broadcasts accurate information through this network.”

– Representative of the National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organizations, India¹⁸

it unlikely to replace in-person voting in the near future.¹⁹ However, other alternative voting methods developed now have the potential to support increased enfranchisement of voters living in underserved areas, such as displaced persons, Indigenous communities, voters with disabilities and others, in the long term. Expanding postal voting to all voters could not only limit the spread of COVID-19 in polling stations during this pandemic but could also reach people who may not otherwise be able to vote in person, such as migrant workers or university students who are living away from their permanent residences.

2. Building Resilience for the Next Crisis

Engaging traditionally marginalized populations brings new perspectives and innovative solutions. Marginalized groups, by necessity, have weathered past crises through ingenuity. Electoral stakeholders can learn a great deal about handling crises from these groups. Some marginalized groups have used lockdowns as an opportunity to connect in solidarity. For example, young persons who identify as LGBTQ have shared online mental health resources.²⁰

The COVID-19 crisis can lead to increased engagement of traditionally marginalized groups. Because the COVID-19 virus may impact groups who traditionally serve as poll workers, EMBs may focus recruitment on younger persons to expand the poll worker base. Organizations of marginalized groups can connect electoral stakeholders to new partners, which can help prepare EMBs and civil society for future crises. For example, in many countries, disabled people's organizations have established relationships with ministries of health and can serve as bridges for other CSO partners. By working closely with marginalized groups and learning from their lived experiences, government officials can both build trust in government and design more inclusive processes that will benefit all voters. Ensuring that all people have access to political life builds systems that are more agile and thus able to handle unforeseen circumstances.

3. Building Trust in Elections Strengthens Democracy

Persons from traditionally marginalized groups may be less likely to believe that participating in elections will improve their lives. Indigenous persons and marginalized minorities, for example, may distrust government authorities because of historic injustices. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has thrown into stark relief the gap in services experienced by marginalized persons and their peers, can be the impetus to engage those who have previously been excluded. Democracies are stronger when people participate in greater numbers and when the conversation includes multiple perspectives.

Consulting with CSOs, including those representing women, persons with disabilities, young people, older people, displaced persons, LGBTQ people, Indigenous persons and persons from ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, and acting upon their recommendations can begin the process of building trust. EMBs can respond to the barriers that marginalized persons are experiencing to participating in the electoral process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only does ensuring that all people have access to participate meaningfully increase the integrity of the electoral process, but through consultation and participation, persons from traditionally marginalized groups can become part of the solution to how we recover from the pandemic. Seeing ourselves reflected in the electoral process and as part of the solution can instill confidence. With the expectation that all voices contribute to decision-making, democracies can begin to deliver for all.

Women



I work in healthcare, I'm 17 weeks pregnant, I already feel guilty about possibly infecting my husband and my unborn child and now I should go out into the community and possibly expose more to vote?"

– Registered voter in Wisconsin, United States²¹

Throughout history, women have been underrepresented in elected office and largely excluded from political decision-making.²² While some studies indicate that the virus may be more fatal for men, with similar rates of infection across genders,²³ the pandemic also threatens to increase the inequalities that have kept many women from participating in political and electoral life. At the same time, women continue to carry out a high proportion of civic duties with the highest potential for in-person transmission.²⁴ Globally, women make up the majority of health workers²⁵ and, in a number of countries, they also make up the majority of polling station officials.

The political and electoral rights of women have been enshrined in a number of international and regional conventions and treaties, with increasing global attention over the past several decades, including in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which explicitly states that women have the right to participate in elections, government, policymaking and political life and that states must take all appropriate measures to ensure that women can participate politically on equal footing with men. Further support for the equal and full participation of women is elaborated in several international and regional commitments.²⁶ However, despite increases in public support by the international community and individual governments for the increased participation of women in political life, women have continued to face barriers to political and electoral participation, many of which are compounded by discrimination based on identity markers such as sexuality, disability, age, displacement, socioeconomic status or ethnicity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these inequalities have been even further exacerbated.

Violence against women is increasing dramatically during the pandemic, which will seriously impact women's political and electoral rights. In 2017, several years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization estimated that nearly a third of women worldwide had experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner.²⁸ During the pandemic, women's rights organizations, domestic violence hotlines and state agencies have sounded alarms over the sharp uptick in domestic violence.²⁹ This increase in domestic violence can and does directly impact women's ability to participate equally, freely and safely in political life. Violence against women during election periods generates not only physical harm toward women candidates, voters, election officials and others – it also discourages women from running for office, from freely expressing political opinions that differ from those within an abusive household or from casting a ballot at all.

"Violence against women in political life is any act of, or threat of, gender-based violence, resulting in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, that prevents them from exercising and realizing their political rights, whether in public or private spaces, including the right to vote and hold public office, to vote in secret and to freely campaign, to associate and assemble, and to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression. Such violence can be perpetrated by a family member, community member and or by the State."²⁷

The economic toll of COVID-19 will directly impact the political financing of campaigns as political aspirants, voters and members of political parties lose some or all of their livelihoods during the pandemic.

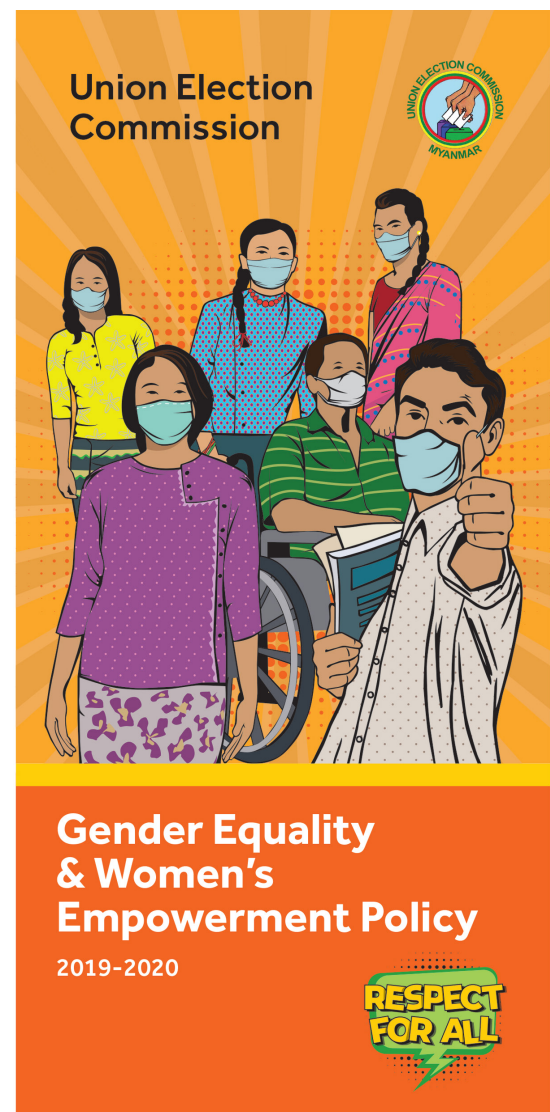
A 2018 IFES assessment of violence against women in elections in Zimbabwe indicated that violence against women in online spaces has been steadily increasing. With the pandemic forcing campaigning to move further into online spaces, consideration must be given to gendered online hate speech and violence.

Even prior to the COVID-19 virus, there was broad recognition that the economic inequalities experienced by women created a barrier to being nominated as a candidate, campaigning and successfully running for office. Scholars have also cited “a growing recognition that politics dominated by money is, more often than not, politics dominated by men.”³⁰ During the pandemic, women are more likely to face more extreme economic repercussions than men due to a reduction or elimination of available working hours as care work responsibilities increase.³¹ This decrease in capital will lower the

ability of women candidates to purchase media time and develop campaign materials. The decrease in available time will impact their ability to conduct more individualized or grassroots outreach, should these cheaper campaign methods even be permitted due to health considerations.

While every effort must be made during a pandemic to keep voters, candidates and other electoral stakeholders safe, the decision to postpone or cancel elections can also benefit incumbents, the majority of whom are men: As of January 2020, women made up less than a quarter of elected members of national parliaments worldwide.³² The number of countries choosing to postpone or cancel elections continues to rise.³³ In turn, the possibility of improving gender balance in elected legislatures is also being delayed. Incumbent politicians now will have an extended term in office, with anticipated limitations on campaigning making it more difficult for challengers to compete. To be effective candidates, contestants must have the capital to make themselves visible in the media, which often takes financial resources that women candidates increasingly cannot afford.

As campaigning – out of necessity and safety during the pandemic – moves increasingly into online spaces that are underregulated in most countries and host to gendered abuse and hate speech, higher levels of violence and hate speech online against women in politics can be anticipated. Despite continued pledges by social media platforms to curb the spread of hate speech and harassment even prior to COVID-19, online harassment and violence against women in elections – particularly against women facing intersectional discrimination – has remained a pervasive issue globally.³⁴ Online violence and harassment against



Gender equality pamphlet, including COVID-19 awareness, developed by the Union Election Commission in Myanmar, with the support of IFES

women candidates not only affects women targeted by the violence; when it appears in public spaces it also sends a message to other women that politics is not for them.

The digital divide – the growing gulf in access to information technology knowledge and resources for women and other marginalized groups – needs to be considered carefully as EMBs plan to increase the use of online election operations for procedures like candidate and voter registration. Efforts must be made to ensure that women candidates and voters have the training, knowledge and equipment needed to participate in newly revised election operations.

As detailed in IFES' brief [Safeguarding Health and Elections](#),³⁵ the voter registration process may ordinarily involve in-person gatherings for active registration or in-person interaction to correct or update voter registration information. Regardless of whether these processes still occur in person or are moved online, it will be essential that election administrators examine registration data to ensure that women are included in representative numbers. At the polling station, election officials must work to ensure that voters are able to vote as safely as possible and consider the gendered dynamics of their individual countries. In some contexts, EMBs must consider as part of their health and safety measures whether women will be comfortable using the same sanitary and hand-washing facilities as men, allocating separate facilities for women as well as a separate unisex facility. As with women voters, women polling station staff need to have sufficient and, if the context calls for it, separate toilet and sanitary facilities that they are comfortable using throughout the day.

Given school closures, child care responsibilities should be considered in social distancing directives. With women disproportionately shouldering the increase in care work, women voters should be assured through direct messaging from the EMB that they will be able to safely bring their children with them to the polling station, that they will be given priority in queues or that there will be safe child care alternatives in place. Women voters should not feel as though they must stay home to watch their children while male family members are able to go to the polls. In many countries, women make up the majority of polling staff who will be expected to have the highest level of in-person interaction with voters on Election Day. In light of increased child care responsibilities and care work, the EMB could consider providing child care facilities for polling station staff. In addition, particular attention is needed to ensure that PPE fits women polling staff correctly. Additional guidance on safe electoral procedures can be found in [Safeguarding Health and Elections](#).³⁶ Historically, medical and safety equipment has been primarily designed for male bodies; gloves and masks, for example, need to be the correct size for women to be adequately protected.

If the EMB decides to increase the use of alternative voting methods, such as postal voting, these measures must be coupled with robust voter education efforts. These efforts should include messaging on the rights of individuals to cast their own votes, free from intimidation and from family voting. As was described in IFES' brief on [Preserving Electoral Integrity During an Infodemic](#),³⁷ familiar voting procedures to meet safety requirements. Depending on the country context, voter education efforts that previously reached women voters will have to be evaluated. If women were largely targeted in the past by in-person voter education efforts – for example, in markets – informational campaigns must examine ways to reach women voters through online messaging, broadcast television or radio, text messaging or mailings.

People with Disabilities



Last year I became a Women’s Equality Party candidate for the now-postponed London Assembly elections because I want to advance equality for everyone. But as I stay indoors, shielding, trying to deliver my UCL teaching from home, while also navigating my own daily health needs without the carer I usually depend on, I am becoming increasingly concerned that disabled people’s hard-won rights are going backwards.”

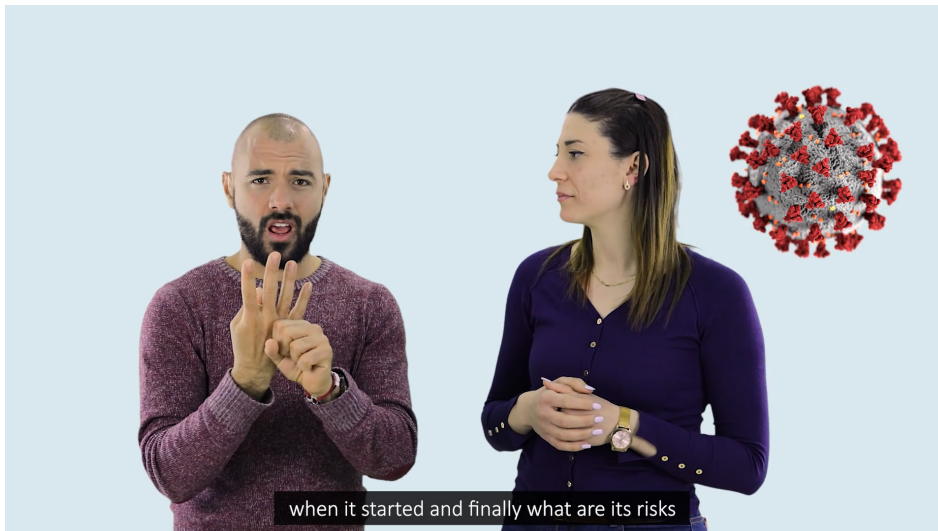
– Sarabajaya Kumar, University College London (UCL) professor³⁸

The world’s 1 billion people with disabilities have historically been excluded from decision-making processes, including elections.³⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened these existing inequalities.

People with disabilities may be immunocompromised, rely on personal assistance or live in low-income areas with poor access to health care.⁴⁰ Many COVID-19 containment measures were developed without consulting with people with disabilities or considering the way the measures might disproportionately impact them. Women with disabilities, for example, are up to 10 times more likely to experience sexual violence than women without disabilities, and global lockdowns have exacerbated this risk of violence.⁴¹

Movement restrictions imposed by governments to stop the spread of COVID-19 have made it difficult for persons with disabilities who use personal assistants to participate in daily activities, such as restrictions on driving personal vehicles in Georgia.⁴² Data on impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities are scarce; the International Disability Alliance recently launched a global survey to monitor access to rights during the pandemic, but political participation is not a focus of data collection.⁴³

To take advantage of an increased sense of solidarity in response to COVID-19 in Georgia, IFES developed a series of public service announcements featuring young women with different types of disabilities advocating for equal access to rights and inclusion in political and public life during the pandemic.



Screenshot from a video produced in Tunisian Sign Language to share information on COVID-19 with Deaf Tunisians as part of the *Icharti Sawti (My sign, My voice)* group

Alliance recently launched a global survey to monitor access to rights during the pandemic, but political participation is not a focus of data collection.⁴³

Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protects the rights of all people with auditory, intellectual, physical, psychosocial and visual disabilities to participate in elections and political life.⁴⁴ Article 11 of the treaty contains provisions

outlining states’ obligation to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of people with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. Regionally, the *ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*,⁴⁵ the *Protocol to the African*

*Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa*⁴⁶ and the *Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities*⁴⁷ all provide guidance to states on how to ensure people with disabilities are included fully in public life, including during emergencies.

“During this time of social distancing and stay-at-home orders, people with disabilities are at the greatest risk of human rights violation, being subjected to violence and hate speech. As we are to stay-at-home, I’m using social media, particularly Facebook, to advocate on behalf of young people with disabilities.”

– Nayem Molla, disability rights advocate with IFES’ Students Against Violence Everywhere program in Bangladesh⁵¹

Despite these international and regional commitments, people with disabilities – particularly those who also identify with another marginalized group, such as Indigenous women or displaced people – continue to face discrimination and barriers to equal participation in political life during the pandemic. For example, information about the virus,⁴⁸ voter education materials and decisions on election postponements⁴⁹ are often not produced in accessible formats such as sign language, braille or easy-to-read.⁵⁰

People with disabilities, particularly those with lower levels of education, experience a significant digital divide. In Poland, persons with disabilities with the

highest levels of education were 18 times more likely than those with basic education to have access to the internet.⁵² Disability and poverty are often connected, exacerbating unequal access to education, health care and other areas,⁵³ which further deepens the digital divide. As political parties and EMBs increasingly use virtual platforms, people with disabilities who lack access to the internet or assistive devices such as screen readers may be excluded from participating in campaign events, registering to vote and receiving voter education. For those who do have internet access, online hate speech against people with disabilities was rising even before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to researchers in the United Kingdom.⁵⁴ As more political conversations move online, people with disabilities are increasingly exposed to the COVID-19 “infodemic,” as well as ableist speech and hate speech.⁵⁵

Some people with disabilities have moved temporarily to the homes of friends or family as quarantine measures mean their usual assistants are unable to provide support.⁵⁶ Assistants, who may not live with the persons they support, may not be able or willing to travel during an election because of concerns they may contract COVID-19. Indeed, polling stations may be consolidated or moved out of residential institutions where people with disabilities live to buildings that may not be accessible or may not have been assessed for accessibility.

Electoral authorities have discussed alternative measures to avoid crowded polling stations, such as proxy voting, internet voting and postal ballots to mitigate public exposure to the virus.⁵⁷ Proxy voting, which entails entrusting another person with your vote, is seen by some disability rights advocates as undermining hard-won gains of disability rights advocates to live independently in the community.⁵⁸ People with disabilities have a long history of life choices made on their behalf, and there are no guarantees that a proxy voter will cast a ballot as charged. For many voters with disabilities, participating alongside their peers is a critical part of the democratic experience as it brings visibility to their inclusion in community life, but appropriate measures must be in place to protect electoral integrity. Some election organizers are exploring internet voting⁵⁹ as an alternative for voters with disabilities, but it comes with significant security concerns.⁶⁰ In the United States, several states announced pilots of online voting software so that voters with disabilities could independently mark a ballot at home and avoid exposure to the virus. However, New Jersey and Delaware canceled the pilots due to security

concerns.⁶¹ For some voters with disabilities, mail-in ballots can provide a viable alternative, although concerns remain for whether voters may be subject to intimidation at home, and absentee voting measures are not accessible to voters with all types of disabilities.⁶² Implementing such alternative voting methods without appropriate consultation and feasibility studies could undermine the trust of all voters, including people with disabilities.⁶³

When faced with a crisis, government officials and EMBs will have to decide how to use available resources. Six U.S. states, including the political battlegrounds of Pennsylvania and Ohio, are either already using or have announced their intention to use funds intended for election security for statewide COVID-19 response instead.⁶⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting global supply chains, making it more difficult to procure assistive devices that are typically available to voters, such as magnifying glasses or tactile ballot guides.⁶⁵ Additionally, EMBs may not have budgeted for PPE, hand sanitizer and other measures to counter the spread of COVID-19.

To collect information on the unique challenges women with disabilities and youth with disabilities face in the context of COVID-19, IFES, in partnership the Pacific Disability Forum, implemented a short survey to distribute to its regional networks in the Pacific via email and Facebook. Survey results indicated that nearly all participants are relying on technology, particularly smartphones and radio, to access information on COVID-19. The survey also revealed that people with disabilities are more likely to use social media apps to communicate than those without a disability. Survey findings are being used to facilitate the development of a support network among people with disabilities in the Pacific and to strengthen avenues for women with disabilities and youth with disabilities to voice their concerns with decision-makers.

After a major event such as a pandemic, trauma is likely to be widespread, which may mean that more voters, candidates, observers and election officials have acquired psychosocial disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other physical or sensory disabilities. Post-COVID-19, the public is likely to have ongoing concerns about gathering in large groups or using devices that require touch, such as electronic voting machines or tactile ballot guides. Persons with disabilities in particular may decide not to participate in elections if they have concerns about their safety.

Young People

“COVID 19 has resulted in many challenges to youth political participation. It has brought severe restrictions for mobility disrupting conventional and physical participatory spaces. Reach and visibility is limited to mass media platforms which are expensive and limited to more established and known political actors. The pandemic has also allowed authorities to enforce constraints on public gatherings curbing certain democratic processes.”

– Darshatha Gamage, co-founder of Impact Voices, Sri Lanka⁶⁶

There are nearly 1.2 billion young people in the world today,⁶⁷ with approximately 90 percent living in the “global south.”⁶⁸ International and national definitions of “youth” vary, with different definitions encompassing both children and younger adults in the age range of 10 to 40. Young people’s civic engagement, political participation and role in the economy are important globally, but particularly in regions with a high proportion of young citizens. For example, in Africa, 70 percent of the population is under 30 years old.⁶⁹ The political rights of young people are enshrined in multiple international

mechanisms. The political rights of young adults who have reached the age of majority, for example, are protected by the ICCPR, while the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the equal rights of children.⁷⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2250 calls upon states to actively include youth in political dialogue, in particular as a way to prevent radicalization of young people.⁷¹ However, although consultation and inclusion in decision-making are key obligations of states, young people may not have access to vote, run for office or otherwise participate in the political process.

Although this section focuses on civic and political participation of young people, the pandemic has had important economic ramifications that impact their prospects. Fragile states, which are less likely to have the resources to effectively handle the pandemic, have a higher percentage of young people compared to stable democracies.⁷³ The pandemic has exacerbated existing gaps in employment – young people were three times more likely to be unemployed before the pandemic – hindered access to education and destabilized young people’s financial prospects.⁷⁴ Nine out of 10 young entrepreneurs in Asia-Pacific, for example, have seen declines in their businesses due to the coronavirus pandemic.⁷⁵

Global election postponements due to the pandemic may uniquely impact some young people,⁷¹ including in voter registration.⁷⁷ Young people who were not old enough to vote on the original Election

IFES is supporting educators to continue education for democracy online during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Libya, IFES and educators are adapting civic education courses, training educators online before the new school year starts. In Ukraine, IFES launched a series of webinars called *Is the impossible possible? How to teach the interactive Democracy: From Theory to Practice course online*.⁷² IFES has engaged 70 university-level educators throughout Ukraine to discuss the challenges of e-learning.

Day but will reach the age of enfranchisement on the rescheduled Election Day will need to ensure they are registered to vote. In countries that use a passive voter registration process, new voters are automatically enrolled when they reach the age of majority. In countries where voters must actively register, EMBs should reopen the registration process or consider alternatives such as same-day registration to ensure all people who have reached the age of enfranchisement by the new election date are able to vote.

IFES has partnered with the Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) to train young Nigerian volunteers to track incidents of human rights violations and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and during the 2019 general elections. Through Zoom and a WhatsApp group, KDI trained young volunteers to use a checklist for collating and documenting incidents. KDI leaders intend to use the data collected to bring policymakers’ attention to the increased gender-based violence and human rights violations during the pandemic and call on authorities to address these incidents.

There are also multiple opportunities for creating longer-term habits of political engagement during the pandemic. Some election administrators, including those in the U.S. state of Kansas and the city of Milwaukee,⁷⁸ are proactively recruiting younger people to serve as poll workers as they are less likely

to suffer adverse effects from the virus.⁷⁹ If more people serve as poll workers from a young age, it has the potential to create habits of political engagement that could last a lifetime.

This is especially relevant as young people in many countries around the world experienced high levels of political apathy before the pandemic.⁸⁰ There is a growing sense among young people that politicians have not adequately responded to the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, thus entrenching

potential patterns of nonengagement in political life.⁸¹ That said, the pandemic has provided opportunities for young people to leverage their social media savvy to contribute to positive change during the pandemic.

A recent UNICEF report found that “many of today’s youth take to digital spaces to develop their civic identities and express political stances in creative ways, claiming agency that may not be afforded to them in traditional civic spaces.”⁸² As civic space, at least temporarily, is increasingly moved online, young people have turned to digital activism to support their communities and each other. Young people are already mobilizing in numerous ways, including in Kyrgyzstan, where, with IFES support, young people have held a series of Instagram Live sessions focused on how to deal with the isolation and anxiety brought on by the global lockdown as well as hygiene measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These initiatives have been developed inclusively, with sign language interpreters and representation from young men and women. In South Sudan, young people are using the hashtag #COVID19SS to identify misinformation about the virus. A young Peruvian activist created a subscription-based service that shares verified information, as well as a website with best practices for marginalized communities to protect themselves from the virus.⁸³



Drawing by a young Bangladeshi woman that encourages social distancing during COVID-19



A young Kyrgyz woman participates in an Instagram Live session

approaches⁸⁴ In Bangladesh, young leaders have taken individual action to promote safety messages on good hand-washing techniques and videos on how to identify disinformation through social media platforms, while others have created leaflets and face masks to safely distribute to community members.⁸⁵

Of great concern is the fact that more than 60 percent of the world’s students have been impacted by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁶ As schools are closed, young people may not have access to formalized civic education, leading to a democratic learning gap. Despite these challenges, some schools have created new opportunities for participation through distance learning. The Ministry of Education in Moldova, with support from the Council of Europe, conducted

consultations with 150 students and 80 civic education teachers to assess a new online curriculum.⁸⁷ This good practice includes perspectives from both students and teachers in curriculum development. These kinds of interventions are critical to reduce the learning gap on democratic participation.

Older People

“ I have voted all my life, so I hope to do the same this week, but I’m afraid about going out these days. The number of infections is falling, but the mortality rate among older people is still worrying so I’m not sure if I should risk it.”

– Lee Yong-joo, 79-year-old voter, South Korea⁸⁸

According to the *UN World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision*, by 2050 16 percent of the world’s population will be over 65 and the number of people over 80 years old will have tripled.⁸⁹ Older people are not specifically mentioned in most international human rights treaties, though Article 5 of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing notes that as people age, they should have equal access to political life. However, the plan does not engender the same implementation and enforcement commitments as international treaties. For this reason, advocates have been pushing for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.⁹⁰

Older people, particularly those living in areas with weak health care systems, often serve as caregivers, with older women more likely to have caretaking duties.⁹¹ People over 60 years old have higher fatality rates from the virus,⁹² and violence against older persons is also on the rise during the pandemic.⁹³ Older people might also live in group homes or other types of institutions where the virus spreads faster, leading to strict quarantine measures. In many countries, mobile ballot boxes would routinely have been available for voters living in retirement or nursing



An older woman casts her ballot in Ukraine during the 2019 parliamentary elections

“COVID-19 has exposed the global nature of ageism and the systematic and persistent denial of older persons’ human rights. These challenges are not confined to a single country or region, they are universal and more urgent than ever.”

– Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People⁹⁶

elections globally, mobile ballot box teams should be provided with guidance on how to strictly adhere to PPE guidelines. Neglecting to follow PPE guidelines causes a particular risk when mobile ballot box teams come into direct contact with voters in groups at high risk of adverse effects from COVID-19.

homes or those temporarily in a hospital. In the current context, it remains unclear if mobile ballot boxes will be used. In the South Korean elections in April, older voters were allowed to cast their ballots from home or in hospitals,⁹⁴ where voting booths were set up outside.⁹⁵ Serbia, which held parliamentary elections amid the pandemic in June 2020, offered mobile ballot boxes so that older voters and voters with disabilities could vote from home. In future

In some countries, a majority of poll workers are over 60 years old.⁹⁷ Some EMBs have automatically released older poll workers from their commitment to serve – an ageist approach that removes agency from older people. A better alternative would be to provide informational materials about the risks and mitigation measures and allow all poll workers, regardless of age, to be excused from their duties, should they so choose. The Union Election Commission (UEC) in Myanmar, for example, has consulted the Ministry of Health and Sports to seek advice on introducing health and safety measures for the voter list display, the campaign period and polling stations, which will be added to training and voter education materials. The UEC is also considering how best to allow older voters, voters with disabilities and voters in care facilities or hospitals to vote safely in advance without having to risk queuing at the polling station and to reduce the number of voters on Election Day.

“We need to broaden our partnership with civil society and others and consult older persons to harness their knowledge and ensure their full inclusion in shaping the policies that affect their lives.”

– UN Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons⁹⁸

More political activities are moving online to avoid potentially spreading COVID-19. Older people are less likely to have access to the internet or be fluent in the myriad social media options available for dissemination of voter education information.⁹⁹ Additionally, recent studies have shown that older people are more likely to share fake news associated with politics and that they have closed social media “bubbles” – i.e., they are reading and sharing content with likeminded people. To ensure older people are included in political life, alternative voting procedures, voter education dissemination methods and any other formal or informal measures should always be developed in consultation with older people.

Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees and Migrant Workers



In these uncertain times, ... meaningful IDP participation in decisions affecting them, are as relevant as ever.”

– UN Global Protection Cluster, April 2020¹⁰⁰

Displaced people, including internally displaced persons, refugees and migrant workers, are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are at risk of being excluded from policy decisions that impact their lives. According to the International Organization for Migration, there are 272 million migrants globally (approximately 3.5 percent of the world’s population), of which 86.1 percent are of voting age.¹⁰¹ In 2018, it was estimated that about 25.9 million people were refugees.¹⁰² Forced displacement from conflict and climate change is increasing; there were more than 33.4 million new internal displacements in 2019 alone, across 145 countries.¹⁰³

Multiple international agreements commit states to protecting the rights of these groups. For example, the ICCPR and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, endorsed by the 2005 UN World Summit, guarantee political rights of internally displaced persons; IDPs shall have “the right to vote and to participate in governmental and public affairs, including the right to have access to the means necessary to exercise this right.”¹⁰⁴ The 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration encourages migrants to be able to take part in home country elections.¹⁰⁵ The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families protects the right to vote for and be elected in a person’s country of origin.



Migrants in India wait in line to take transportation home amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Public transportation was strictly curtailed to limit the spread of the virus, leaving many migrants unable to get home.

Despite these protections, there are numerous barriers to political participation for displaced persons and migrants, and the pandemic throws many of them into sharp relief. Displaced persons, who often live in crowded living conditions with limited access to health care and financial resources, face additional risk of exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the fear and tensions around the pandemic have resulted in increased levels of discrimination and abuse against the displaced.¹⁰⁷ Government policies also have wide-ranging intentional and unintentional consequences for migrants.¹⁰⁸ The economic impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns may also leave displaced people in a highly precarious position in regard to health, income and position in society, which can impact their access to opportunities for

political participation. Political participation of these groups is crucial for preventing marginalization, promoting reconciliation and making governments more responsive and accountable, including with respect to solutions for IDPs. Securing IDPs' electoral rights in their area of origin or in their current location, for example, is a key component of a durable IDP settlement solution.

International and regional migrant workers who would otherwise return home to vote may not be able to do so because of movement restrictions, resulting both in exposure to COVID-19 and in barriers to electoral participation. In Singapore, for example, workers from countries such as Bangladesh and India were forced to stay in crowded dormitories to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, as a result, the virus spread within the migrant community.¹⁰⁹ In India, the government provided only four hours' notice before instituting stringent stay-at-home orders, which stranded millions of migrant workers thousands of miles away from home and severely limited transportation, creating a large-scale migration crisis.¹¹⁰ Because many migrant workers in India are members of marginalized castes, such as Dalits, they experience additional discrimination. For migrants, the concept of "social distancing" can also perpetuate caste-based discrimination and violence. While it is unclear how this situation will impact the political rights of migrants in the long term, it is clear that this mistreatment will emerge as a polarizing political issue in future elections and an advocacy priority for civil society.

The logistics of IDP electoral participation were complex before the pandemic and have been exacerbated by the crisis. Participating in elections can increase the visibility of issues important to displaced persons. The risks of disenfranchising individuals and intensifying the exclusion of marginalized populations are high, including on issues such as COVID-19 response and recovery.

Politics and elections are important forums for consultation with displaced persons on the issues they encounter during the pandemic and any proposed solutions. However, IDPs encounter a number of

In Ukraine, IFES supported the EMB to develop new regulations to broaden the definition of who can register online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, voters were required to cast their ballots in the district for which they were voting. Since many IDPs cannot travel as a result of movement restrictions, the legislation, adopted in June 2020, has enfranchised 1.2 million displaced Ukrainians, who will now be eligible to vote in local elections.¹¹¹

barriers to political participation because, in many cases, they are forced to leave their homes with little warning. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, IDPs may not have had access to the official documentation necessary for voter registration or voting. As a result, EMBs may not have updated records with locations of IDPs and migrants.¹¹² As a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, IDPs may have had their movement further restricted while away from home. Displaced persons' increased risk of contracting COVID-19, the discrimination they face and resulting risks of violence also may make it more difficult – or even dangerous – for them to run as candidates or to vote.

EMBs can take measures to increase participation of displaced persons, such as amending legal frameworks to ensure displaced persons can vote either for candidates in their constituencies of origin or current constituencies. To counter potential discrimination against displaced persons, election organizers can sensitize the public to inclusion of migrant communities. In Armenia, “sincere talk,” a UN campaign to reduce COVID-19 discrimination against migrant communities that uses storytelling techniques, builds on previous anti-hate speech campaigns, which aimed to reduce discrimination against persons who are HIV-positive.¹¹³ Additionally, it is critical that information be made widely available in the languages used by displaced persons. EMBs can also consider other special polling arrangements that may be needed, including absentee voting and additional polling stations to ensure all eligible voters are included. Additional security provisions may also be needed since displaced communities may be at risk of violence from their peers. In Lebanon, for example, cases of violence against refugee women and girls doubled in March as the disease spread to these communities.¹¹⁴ Displaced women should be consulted and have a role in sharing critical information about violence prevention with their communities.¹¹⁵

LGBTQ People



[A religious leader] said that COVID-19 was a punishment for same-sex marriages, which sets people towards a more homophobic attitude. This reaffirms the importance of combating anti-LGBT propaganda.”

– LGBTQ rights activist, Ukraine¹¹⁶

As has been documented by rights organizations globally, the pandemic is taking a devastating toll on the LGBTQ community,¹¹⁷ which already faces extreme stigma, violence, economic inequality and limited or no access to justice in many countries.¹¹⁸ UN treaty bodies have confirmed that sexual orientation is covered by international human rights treaties as protected from discrimination, such as under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.¹¹⁹ Despite this, there are relatively few openly LGBTQ politicians and elected officials around the world, with civic activism by the LGBTQ community – such as public campaigns or Pride events – consistently coming under both verbal and physical attack in many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened violence against the LGBTQ community, increased misinformation and isolated individuals from political and public life.

Due to the pandemic, civic and political life is increasingly moving to online spaces. While this does present some opportunities – for example, for youth who identify as LGBTQ to connect with their communities while under lockdown – a number of LGBTQ rights activists have noted an increase in disinformation about LGBTQ people linked to the COVID-19 crisis.¹²⁰ Not only does this disinformation and hate speech impact the personal safety of LGBTQ individuals, it can skew electoral results in favor of those running on anti-LGBTQ platforms, leading to the formation or maintenance of exclusionary policies and legislation by future elected representatives.

IFES has supported Ukrainian LGBTQ rights organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic to pivot toward using digital formats for online consultations on political and electoral rights, sharing research on the political participation of the LGBTQ community and its allies with political actors to raise awareness.

In countries where LGBTQ people are targeted and same-sex relationships are criminalized, LGBTQ people experiencing COVID-19 symptoms may be reluctant to seek treatment or identify themselves due to fear of violence or arrest.¹²¹ This has led to further isolation by individuals who are either immunocompromised or unable to seek medical assistance due to stigma. They may also not be receiving critical political and electoral information during this time if there is inadequate online information or a lack of access to technology. LGBTQ

individuals are also far more likely to live in poverty, with economic inequalities likely to further increase during the pandemic.¹²² As discussed in the section on women, economic inequalities significantly impact not only an individual's ability to run as a candidate but also their ability to provide support for candidates they believe represent their interests, which could also lead to less funding for individuals running on pro-LGBTQ rights agendas.

At the polling station, voters openly identifying as LGBTQ can face intimidation, harassment and violence, particularly in light of COVID-19 disinformation or hate speech that may blame the cause or spread of the virus on LGBTQ individuals. This type of scapegoating, in which the LGBTQ community has been blamed for causing or spreading the virus, has been reported in Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Liberia, Russia, Uganda, Ukraine, the United States and Zimbabwe.¹²³ Particularly in light of social distancing requirements, it is essential that security staff and electoral justice arbiters are fully briefed on the rights of the LGBTQ community to participate as well as strategies to adequately protect these individuals at the polling station, should violence or harassment occur. As should be the case with or without a pandemic, threats and violence against LGBTQ individuals in elections and politics should be prosecuted.

Indigenous Peoples



We have seen the COVID-19 pandemic lay bare the inequities that we experience across Indian Country. Our people deserve to be seen and heard and valued and counted at the ballot box.”

– Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan,
a citizen of the White Earth Nation¹²⁴

The rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples, who make up approximately 5 percent of the world's population,¹²⁵ have frequently been disregarded or actively undermined by nonindigenous governance structures. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples protects the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples to participate both in the political life of the country, and, as peoples, to maintain and strengthen their own distinct governance institutions (Article 5). It also calls for states to include Indigenous Peoples as participants in decision-making that impacts their rights (Article 18).¹²⁶ International Labor Organization Convention No. 169, an international treaty, calls on signatory states to ensure access of Indigenous Peoples to “decision-making in elective institutions” and policymaking that impacts them.¹²⁷ Despite the rights outlined in these international frameworks, Indigenous Peoples continue to endure significant discrimination and marginalization from political decisions that affect their lives. As a result, Indigenous persons in many countries may harbor a deep distrust of non-Indigenous governments.

Indigenous Peoples within a particular country are often diverse – representing many languages and cultures. For example, Guatemala, a country of 2.2 million people – more than half of whom self-identify as Indigenous – has 21 recognized Indigenous languages.¹²⁸ Information about the pandemic, which provides key information on voter safety, may not be available in Indigenous languages. When it is provided, difficulty accessing this information is compounded by technical terms used for elections and health crises that are less known among the community. Without political information in their languages, Indigenous persons experience significant barriers not only to knowing when, where and how to vote but also to researching candidates’ policy positions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted Indigenous communities.¹³⁰ The Navajo Nation (Diné), which includes 173,000 people, has counted more than 6,500 COVID-19 cases and 300 related deaths as of June 2020.¹³¹ Some Indigenous Peoples have applied their own solutions to stop the spread of the virus, such as *besesandingon* quarantines in Indonesia, during which members of the group who return from outside the village are required to build a hut in a separate area, away from their peers, for at least one week.¹³² In Brazil, for example, COVID-19 is a direct threat to the survival of 103 Indigenous groups in the Amazon, who do not have the resources to combat the virus. The Brazilian government has cut budgets of government agencies responsible for protecting rights of Indigenous Peoples and has been accused of promoting invasion of traditional lands by outsiders.¹³³

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated barriers to meaningful participation in political life, especially elections. Elections are a unique opportunity to express opinions on policies and representatives, including around critical COVID-19 response, yet governments may need to convince Indigenous

“Imagine those who are illiterate, they don’t know what social distance means, or sanitizer, let alone COVID-19 and the impact of the virus. ...This is a direct violation of the right to accessible information in one’s mother tongue”

– Pratima Gurung, National Indigenous Disabled Women’s Association Nepal¹²⁹



A Colombian Huitoto man sails on a raft along the Takana river in Colombia during the coronavirus pandemic. Indigenous people often have long journeys to the closest polling station.

persons that voting or running for office will increase their inclusion in policymaking and provide real benefits for their communities. The historical relationship of Indigenous Peoples to voting and elections in many cases is fraught, and government efforts to increase political participation should reflect an awareness of this history.

Enfranchisement, such as the expansion of political rights to Indigenous Peoples under Bolivia’s first Indigenous president,¹³⁴ and empowerment, including the election of Native candidates in the United States,¹³⁵ can have lasting impacts on the inclusion of Indigenous persons. At the same time, non-Indigenous

governments must respect the rights to self-determination held by Indigenous Peoples, who retain the right to participate fully, *if they so choose*, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state. Choice here is important, as globally, Indigenous Peoples have struggled to gain recognition and affirmation of their identities as distinct peoples with their own lifestyles and social, cultural and political systems. Government messaging on political inclusion and inclusion in policy development, including

for COVID-19 response, that fails to acknowledge and respect Indigenous Peoples' choice to opt in or opt out can be dismissed by stakeholders as a continuation of assimilationist policy.

Indigenous persons may live in remote areas, left unserved by post or official government offices. Even accessing official identification presents a huge barrier to Indigenous persons, who may not have birth certificates or other documentation because registration sites are difficult to access and because of historic distrust of government. In Australia, researchers found that up to 18 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children did not have birth certificates.¹³⁶ This can present significant barriers to registering to vote, particularly when government offices are closed or open only limited hours due to the pandemic. As one report on barriers to voting for Indigenous Peoples in the United States identified: "Among those who were registered to vote, 10 percent stated that it was difficult for them to travel to register. Among [those] ... not registered, a whopping 34 percent said that it would be difficult for them to travel to a place to register ... But travel distance was also identified by the respondents as a major factor that inhibited voting."¹³⁷ Polling locations outside of Indigenous communities also increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 into the community, yet polling stations may not be open within their borders. As Ahtza Dawn Chavez, a member of Kewa Pueblo, described: "Some communities had requested early voting sites, but the law says that any registered voter can vote at those sites [off the reservation]. These are sovereign nations. If they close their borders off, they close them [to the outside]. Now we're trying to figure out where these community members can vote."¹³⁸

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that more voters will use postal voting to avoid going to polling stations where they are more likely to be exposed to the virus. Many EMBs are considering alternative voting methods such as mail-in ballots and online voting. For Indigenous Peoples who live in less densely populated regions, not only are polling stations for in-person voting difficult to reach, but post offices can be distant, and many Indigenous persons do not have conventional mailing addresses.¹³⁹ For these reasons, mail-in ballots are not on their own an effective means of enfranchising Indigenous persons. In the United States, a law restricting who could post a marked ballot was temporarily overturned to ensure that Native voters in Montana could use third-party organizations to transport their ballots.¹⁴⁰ There is no single approach that guarantees access for Indigenous voters; EMBs must consult with Indigenous Peoples to ensure that available in-person polling and alternative options, used alone or in combination, increase opportunities to vote.

Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

“ Reports of violence, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin and religion all over the world paint a grim picture ... Reports have also laid bare the meaning and persistence of structural racism – everywhere in the world, racial, ethnic and national minorities are hardest hit by the pandemic.”

– E. Tendayi Achiume, UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance¹⁴¹

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination guarantees the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, color, or national or ethnic origin, to participate in elections.¹⁴² The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities notes that the “promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute(s) to the political stability of States in which they live.”¹⁴³ Despite these international commitments, with few exceptions, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in most countries are more likely to be more marginalized, poorer and have

less access to education and health care than majority communities.¹⁴⁴ Structural, systemic and multigenerational discrimination, often originating from and reinforcing the notion that they are outside of the “mainstream,” make minorities more vulnerable to COVID-19.¹⁴⁵ This structural discrimination has led to a lack of economic and education opportunities, poor access to health care and reliance on jobs that put them on the front lines of the pandemic. Even in high-income countries such as the United States, data shows that racial and ethnic minorities face a disproportionate burden of illness and death from COVID-19.¹⁴⁶ Further complicating matters, in many countries, religious institutions are closed due to quarantine measures, leaving religious minorities without the sense of community that they derive from collective worship.

In Myanmar, IFES and its local partners developed comic books, including one on countering disinformation and hate speech and one on inclusive political participation. They have been printed in three languages, including two minority ethnic languages – Kachin and Kayin – and in braille. IFES partners are in the process of distributing these civic education awareness materials, along with Ministry of Health pamphlets on the virus and disposable masks and hand sanitizers, in their target communities.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that “the pandemic continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scare-mongering.”¹⁴⁷ He urged states to “strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate.” As discussed in more depth in [Preserving Electoral Integrity During an Infodemic](#), for example, attacks on Asians and people of Asian descent have increased globally during the pandemic.¹⁴⁸

In countries where political leaders use discriminatory language and hate speech to divide and rule, minorities face another layer of imminent danger as they find themselves blamed for the spread of the virus. Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Christians, Chinese, East Asians and numerous other groups have been scapegoated and targeted as being vectors of the disease in countries where they are minorities.¹⁴⁹ In a number of European countries, Roma are subjected to draconian lockdowns and overpolicing. In Bulgaria and Slovakia, there have been more soldiers and police in Roma communities than medical professionals.¹⁵⁰ In Italy, Spain and Romania, some political parties are using social media to spread false claims that Roma are responsible for spreading the virus.¹⁵¹ Disinformation and hate speech campaigns that blame specific communities for the spread of the disease threaten the physical and mental safety of their targets and may also have implications for electoral and political participation. Disinformation campaigns further deepen the alienation and perception of “otherness,” thus entrenching negative assumptions that they are not qualified to represent or lead their broader communities.

Linguistic inclusiveness, long acknowledged to be crucial in health care settings, is also key to effective crisis communication and political engagement. Campaigning and political activity in minority areas may not follow health and safety regulations due to a lack of information in minority languages and/or access to sufficient resources to procure PPE. A lack of information on COVID-19 in minority languages has been reported by advocates around the world, including in Nepal, India and Papua New Guinea.¹⁵² In Bolivia, IFES is supporting the EMB ahead of the 2020 elections to develop 21 animated training and public awareness videos of polling processes in Spanish with sign language and in three Indigenous languages: Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní. In addition, IFES is working with the EMB to translate public-facing electoral guides into Quechua, Aymara, Guaraní, Tacana, T’simane and Bésiro. In Georgia, IFES is working with representatives from local Azerbaijani, Kist and Armenian ethnic communities to produce nationally recognized public service announcements, which help magnify the inequality these communities have faced during the pandemic and rally for “One Georgia” ahead of the October 2020 elections.

Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has engendered additional roadblocks to inclusive political participation, but it also presents opportunities to “build back better,” create more resilient institutions and establish higher levels of trust in the electoral process. With these three principles in mind, recommendations for election management, legislators, civil society and other electoral stakeholders are provided below.

| Recommendations | Actors |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Legal Framework | |
| 1. In consultation with representatives from marginalized communities, consider introducing temporary special measures and affirmative actions to improve representation in elected and appointed bodies, such as increased public funding for campaigns and additional representation in political parties, EMBs and as polling officials. If within the mandate of the EMB, make these changes at the regulatory level for expedience. If not within the EMB’s mandate, consider legal amendments. | EMB, legislators, civil society |
| 2. Strengthen anti-hate speech, disinformation and misinformation regulations or codes of conduct regarding the campaign, particularly speech that targets and/or endangers marginalized populations. These measures should be crafted in ways that do not disproportionately threaten freedoms of expression and the press or open the door to selective enforcement against political opponents. | EMB, legislators |
| 3. Ensure that the legal framework requires electoral and political information to be in an accessible format (e.g., sign-language, captioned, easy-to-read, translated into relevant Indigenous and/or minority languages), including information posted online. | EMB, legislators |
| 4. Strengthen oversight of both in-person and virtual campaign activities and expenditures and ensure equal and publicly funded access to media for political contestants. This could include measures such as eliminating candidate fees for those facing increased economic inequality due to COVID-19, increasing access to free media time for candidates and ensuring that all adhere to campaign spending limits. | EMB, legislators |
| Planning and Implementation | |
| 5. During the planning, risk assessment and implementation phases for elections during the pandemic, include not only health representatives but also representatives from rights-based organizations and marginalized communities to ensure that response measures respect international standards. In particular, consult with representatives of groups facing discrimination or underrepresentation to hear their suggestions for ensuring turnout and political participation for their communities during the pandemic. ¹⁵³ Prior to finalizing and implementing a COVID-19 mitigation plan, conduct focus groups to ensure these perspectives are sufficiently addressed. | EMB, international community |
| 6. Should the country context require, ensure that adequate resources are budgeted for separate sanitary and hand-washing facilities for women voters, polling staff and other electoral actors, including a unisex option. | EMB, legislators |

| Recommendations | Actors |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 7. Recognizing that women will likely be tasked with increased care work, allocate resources for safe child care facilities for polling staff, voters and/or other electoral stakeholders. | EMB |
| 8. Should postal voting be expanded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If in-person voting is still being staged, ensure that postal voting is an option rather than a requirement for groups particularly at risk of infection, such as voters with disabilities and older voters. • Ensure that information is provided in easy-to-understand and accessible formats. | EMB, CSOs |
| 9. If public transportation is unavailable due to the pandemic, ensure that there are nonpartisan, accessible, free or low-cost options for people to travel to their polling station. Alternatively, ensure that there are sufficient polling stations to serve all communities without need for public transport. | EMB, local authorities |
| 10. Gather feedback from individuals in the communities they represent or serve as they participate in each stage of the electoral process (e.g., voter registration) during the COVID-19 pandemic to evaluate the measures taken so far. Share this information with electoral decision-makers to inform their approach going forward. | CSOs |
| 11. If moving activities and events online, ensure that content and delivery is adapted to be accessible in online formats. ¹⁵⁴ | CSOs |
| 12. Coordinate advocacy efforts and build coalitions across different identity-rights groups to raise awareness of the political rights of marginalized populations during a pandemic in an intersectional manner. | CSOs |
| Training and Education | |
| 13. Ensure that voter education messaging includes information about the secrecy and independence of individual votes, particularly if postal voting is expanded. | EMB, CSOs |
| 14. Target dissemination of voter education messages to individuals who may be self-isolating due to disability or age. | EMB, CSOs |
| 15. Ensure polling staff are adequately trained to assist voters with disabilities while complying with health and safety measures. | EMB |
| 16. Design voter education messages for online and broadcast media outlets that include diversity in representation and language, as a lack of in-person messaging may make it more difficult for ethnic or linguistic minorities or those with low or no literacy to access information. | EMB, CSOs |
| 17. Increase voter and civic education messaging, particularly targeting young people and first-time voters who may no longer have access to formalized civic education courses if schools are closed. After the crisis, expand civic education efforts to include information on human rights and political rights and how inequalities are exacerbated during times of crises, including pandemics. | EMB, CSOs, educational institutions |
| 18. Train educators and facilitators on accessible and inclusive online facilitation techniques. | EMB, CSOs, educational institutions |

| Recommendations | Actors |
|---|--|
| 19. Launch public outreach campaigns that promote pluralism, tolerance, coexistence and inclusive national identities and counter disinformation and hate speech. | EMB, CSOs |
| <i>Voter and Candidate Registration</i> | |
| 20. Ensure that registration procedures are streamlined, simplified and accessible, particularly for: young people who may come of age prior to a rescheduled election; people who are displaced or become displaced during the registration period; people who are unable to travel due to quarantine measures; and other groups who may face additional obstacles to registering. | EMB, legislators |
| 21. Ensure that, as electoral procedures are moved online, they are accessible (e.g., translated into local languages and follow best practice for online disability access). | EMB, CSOs |
| 22. Consider waiving registration fees for candidates who are facing increased economic hardship due to the pandemic. | EMB, legislators |
| <i>Electoral Campaign</i> | |
| 23. Monitor, expose and sanction online behavior by electoral contestants that uses hate speech or knowingly spreads disinformation. | EMB, CSOs, journalists, electoral justice actors |
| <i>Voting Operations and Election Day</i> | |
| 24. If there is a need to limit the number of polling stations used during the pandemic, ensure that the polling stations that remain open are still accessible for people with disabilities and that communities (e.g., Indigenous or ethnic minority) still have an adequate number of polling stations locally. | EMB |
| 25. Collect and analyze gender, age, disability and relevant identity-based disaggregated data on voter registration and voter turnout throughout the electoral process and apply this data to adapt measures being taken to ensure inclusion. | EMB, CSOs |
| 26. Ensure that PPE distributed for use in polling stations fits women electoral actors correctly. | EMB |
| 27. Consider using masks with a clear section in the front to allow for lip reading. Alternatively, consider providing a white board to allow polling station workers to communicate in writing with voters as needed. | EMB |
| 28. Sanitize tactile ballot guides and any other high-touch assistive devices after each use. ¹⁵⁵ | EMB |
| 29. As harassment and identity-based violence may increase during a pandemic, ensure that security personnel are adequately trained and in place to safely de-escalate and assist voters facing harassment and/or violence at the polling station, while respecting health and safety measures. | EMB, security actors |
| <i>Results</i> | |
| 30. Ensure that the results and tabulation process, as well as the results themselves, are accessible for voters and observers with disabilities and adequately translated and posted online in relevant languages. | EMB |
| 31. Conduct a thorough lessons-learned exercise on COVID-19 measures, with a particular focus on the impact of these measures on marginalized populations. | EMB, CSOs, international community |

Annex A: Barriers Chart

This chart describes how some peoples' political participation is uniquely impacted by COVID-19 because of their identity. Once identified, there is an opportunity for different marginalized groups to engage in collective advocacy to address common barriers. Detailed analysis of barriers to each group identified as a result of COVID-19 and recommendations for mitigating those barriers are further analyzed in the paper.

| Common Barriers to Political Participation During COVID-19 Pandemic | Women | Persons with disabilities | Young persons | Older persons | IDPs, refugees and migrant workers | LGBTQ people | Indigenous persons | Ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities |
|---|-------|--|--|--|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---|
| Discrimination | x | x *may be restricted from participating because of high risk levels | x | x *may be restricted from participating as poll workers because of high risk levels | x | x | x | x |
| Information on postponements/ ballots not available in appropriate languages | | x *Deaf communities and other sign language users | | | x | | x | x |
| No official address to receive voter information or mail-in ballot | | | x | x *temporarily in hospital | x | | x | x |
| Living away from official address due to COVID-19 movement restrictions | | x | x | x | x | x | | |
| Less attention from informational campaigns, including on COVID-19 policy response | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Disinformation implies their participation is spreading COVID-19 | | x | x *e.g. not adhering to stay-at-home orders | | x | x | | x |

| Common Barriers to Political Participation During COVID-19 Pandemic | Women | Persons with disabilities | Young persons | Older persons | IDPs, refugees and migrant workers | LGBTQ people | Indigenous persons | Ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities |
|--|----------------------------|--|---------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Cannot get official ID because government offices may be closed due to COVID-19 pandemic | | x *registration location inaccessible, stigma | x | | x | x *incorrect gender on ID and/or ID includes deadname | x *historic distrust of government, may not register at birth | x |
| Cannot register or vote because government offices and polling stations may be open with limited hours due to COVID-19 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Polling places moved to less accessible locations due to COVID-19 concerns | x *limited time to vote | x *polling stations moved from assisted living facilities | | x *polling stations moved from retirement communities | x *polling station moved to more distant locations | | x *polling stations moved to more distant locations | |
| Increased caretaker responsibilities or lack of access to caretakers | x | x | x | x | | | | |
| Increased levels of violence and/or neglect | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Digital divide impacts ability of population to use online tools and access online information | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x |

Annex B: Summary of Findings

| Barriers and Challenges | Summary Findings |
|---|---|
| <p>Risk of infection</p> | <p>Older people are at high risk of serious infection during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also historically making up the majority of poll workers in some countries. Quarantine, shelter-in-place and shutdown measures can isolate people with disabilities from political information and participation, particularly due to the high risk of severe infection for many people with disabilities. Displaced persons and migrant workers may not be able to adequately follow social distancing guidelines because they live in cramped quarters. Individuals who are HIV-positive or otherwise immunocompromised in the LGBTQ community may be further isolated from political participation due to the need to shelter in place and quarantine to stay safe. Women often make up the majority of both health and polling station workers in many countries.</p> |
| <p>Lack of trust in government</p> | <p>Indigenous persons and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities may distrust the government because of historic injustices, leading to skepticism regarding the government's efforts to keep these populations safe while participating in political life during a pandemic. In countries where the public perceives the government's handling of the pandemic to be poor, lack of trust could be increased. This dynamic could lead to long-term disengagement from young people, who are at the stage in life in which they are forming their opinions on the utility of engagement in politics.</p> |
| <p>Digital divide</p> | <p>While political campaigns, voter registration drives, voter education and other activities, such as office work, move online because of COVID-19, many people from marginalized groups experience additional barriers to participating as a result of the digital divide. Older persons may be less comfortable than others using the internet. Online events may not be accessible to persons with disabilities or they might not have assistive devices, such as screen reading software or adapted keyboards at home. Internet penetration may be low where displaced persons, Indigenous persons and ethnic minority groups live as well as others who live in rural areas. Women may not have access to the internet if they do not have the resources to purchase devices or data, or if mobile phones and other devices are controlled by men in their households.</p> |
| <p>Lack of information and civic and voter education in accessible format and minority languages</p> | <p>A lack of accessible formats, including insufficient translation into relevant languages, could keep voters from minority groups, including ethnic and linguistic minorities, persons with disabilities who are sign language users, Indigenous persons, IDPs, refugees and migrant workers, from receiving critical electoral information. People with low literacy, who are often members of these identity groups, may not have access to easy-to-read or wordless materials. With schools and universities closed, young people may not have the same access to civic education, voter education or registration drives as in the past.</p> |

| Barriers and Challenges | Summary Findings |
|---|---|
| <p>Stigma and discrimination</p> | <p>Women – particularly women facing intersectional discrimination due to disability, socioeconomic status, age or race – will face further obstacles to their political participation due to increases in socioeconomic inequalities. Ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities as well as Indigenous populations, women and the LGBTQ community may disproportionately experience both in-person and online hate speech and violence during the pandemic, particularly during political campaigns. The LGBTQ community, who already face extreme economic precarity, stigma and violence across the globe, now face further threats to their political rights. Disinformation surrounding the pandemic fuels homophobia and bigotry, making it even more difficult for the LGBTQ community to vote and politically participate safely and fully. Because of increased risk of contracting the virus, older persons and persons with disabilities may face additional stigma and discrimination when participating in public life. Because of misinformation on COVID-19, IDPs, refugees and migrant workers may be assumed to be spreaders of the virus, which causes discrimination.</p> |
| <p>Poverty</p> | <p>Persons with disabilities, Indigenous persons, young people, migrant workers and displaced persons are less likely to have access to financial resources, which increases the chances of contracting COVID-19 and compounds barriers to political access – from not having enough money to buy the necessary PPE to safely visit a polling station to lack of resources for running for office. This will be described in further detail in sections below.</p> |
| <p>Inaccessible transportation</p> | <p>Internally displaced persons, refugees and migrant workers may not be able to travel due to conflict or socioeconomic circumstances that may be compounded by quarantine measures. This may impact their ability to vote where they are registered. If migrant workers lose their jobs due to the economic downturn, they may need to return home despite the risks, facing numerous challenges that could leave them impoverished, discriminated against as potential carriers of COVID-19, traumatized or dead. Restrictions on transportation separate people with disabilities from assistants and sign-language interpreters, and – due to economic injustice – people with disabilities are less likely to have the financial resources to procure private transportation. Each of these challenges undermines their right and ability to campaign, participate and vote.</p> |

| Barriers and Challenges | Summary Findings |
|---|---|
| Risk of violence | <p>During the pandemic, women, LGBTQ persons, persons with disabilities and older persons, who may have less independence because of limited access to economic opportunities and/or increased domestic care work, may be subjected to increased domestic violence. This has a direct impact on the ability of these identity groups to vote freely, access resources to campaign for office or to have the time to participate politically. Persons who are part of ethnic minority groups and/or migrant workers, particularly persons of Asian descent, may experience additional discrimination and violence because of disinformation about how COVID-19 spreads. With schools and community centers closed, young people are spending more time online and their economic prospects may be dwindling, leading to a higher risk of radicalization or recruitment by criminal networks.</p> |
| Traditional roles | <p>Young people may be expected to care for persons in their families who are older or ill, which can limit availability to go out to vote. Women also may experience disproportionately increased care duties due to school closures and quarantines, limiting their time for political and electoral engagement. Men might be expected to find ways to make money or otherwise support the family rather than engaging in politics.</p> |
| Conflict-affected areas, displacement and/or group home living | <p>For older people and people with disabilities who live in institutions, general lockdowns and quarantines in these institutions (as well as limits to public transport) may make it impossible for them to vote in person or access a mobile ballot box. Travel may be greatly restricted in locations impacted by conflict, including where IDPs and refugees live, because of concerns the virus will spread.</p> |
| Impacts of government office closures | <p>If elections are postponed due to the pandemic, some young people may come of age after the originally scheduled election and would need to be added to voter registration lists through appropriate processes. Government offices may have limited operating hours as a result of COVID-19, which can make it difficult for LGBTQ people and IDPs to update their registration. EMB offices may close or have limited staff working, which could impact sections that focus on marginalized groups, particularly women and persons with disabilities.</p> |

Endnotes

- 1 Heumann, J. *The Heumann Perspective with Judith Heumann*. Retrieved July 23, 2020, from <https://www.facebook.com/TheHeumannPerspective>
- 2 NBC News. (2020, July 13). Coronavirus map: Confirmed COVID-19 cases, per country. Retrieved July 15, 2020, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/coronavirus-map-confirmed-cases-2020-n1120686>
- 3 Ellena, K. & E. Shein, *Emergency Powers and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Protecting Democratic Guardrails*, IFES (2020, March 30). Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/emergency-powers-and-covid-19-pandemic-protecting-democratic-guardrails>
- 4 United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, art. 4, 999 U.N.T.S. 171. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- 5 United Nations. 2020, April 23. *We are all in this Together: Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery*. Retrieved May 20, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and>
- 6 IFES, COVID-19 Briefing Series, <https://www.ifes.org/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series>, (last visited July 22, 2020).
- 7 IFES, COVID-19: A Survival Guide for Democracies, <https://www.ifes.org/covid-19>, (last visited July 22, 2020).
- 8 Yudhistira, B. (2020, April 3). *The Rich Man, the Poor Man: In the Mind of the Spokesperson for the COVID-19 Task Force*. Independent Observer. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://observerid.com/the-rich-man-the-poor-man-in-the-mind-of-the-spokesperson-for-the-covid-19-task-force/>
- 9 IFES, *Elections Postponed Due to COVID-19* (2020). Retrieved June 2, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/global-impact-covid-19-elections>
- 10 Ellena, K. (2020, April 14). *The Legal Quagmire of Postponing or Modifying Elections*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/legal-quagmire-postponing-or-modifying-elections>
- 11 United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
- 12 United Nations (1966). *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights*. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- 13 Guterres, A. (2020, May 6). *We Have a Unique Opportunity to Design and Implement more Inclusive and Accessible Societies*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/we-have-unique-opportunity-design-and-implement-more-inclusive-and-accessible-societies>
- 14 Dreher, C., & Brown, A. (2020). *COVID-19 Corruption: Key Risks to Democratic Institutions*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/covid-19-corruption-key-risks-democratic-institutions>
- 15 "The use of the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster to increase the resilience of nations and communities through integrating disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems, and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies and the environment." Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.preventionweb.net/terminology/view/51750>
- 16 International IDEA. (2020, March 18). *Global Overview of COVID-19: Impact on Elections*. Retrieved from June 21, 2020 from <https://www.idea.int/news-media/multimedia-reports/global-overview-covid-19-impact-elections>
- 17 Parks, M. (2020, May 11). *Fed Warns States that Online Voting Experiments are 'High Risk'*. NPR. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/11/853759878/feds-warn-states-that-online-voting-experiments-are-high-risk>

- 18 National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organizations, India (personal communication, May 29, 2020).
- 19 For more information on internet voting, please see https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/considerations_on_internet_voting_an_overview_for_electoral_decision-makers.pdf
- 20 The Trevor Project. *Implications of COVID-19 for LGBTQ Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention*. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2020/04/03/implications-of-covid-19-for-lgbtq-youth-mental-health-and-suicide-prevention/>
- 21 Carpenter, M. (2020). *Wisconsin Voter Unable to Vote in Spring Election Because of Coronavirus*. Spectrum News. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/madison/politics/2020/04/07/wisconsin-voter-unable-to-vote-in-election-because-of-coronavirus>
- 22 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2019). *Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation*. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>
- 23 Reeves, R. V., Ford, T. (2020, May 15). *COVID-19 much more fatal for men, especially taking age into account*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/05/15/covid-19-much-more-fatal-for-men-especially-taking-age-into-account/>
- 24 Applegate, M. (2020). *How to Protect Gender Equality in Elections During COVID-19*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/how-protect-gender-equality-elections-during-covid-19>
- 25 Pozzan, E., & Cattaneo, U. (2020). *Women health workers: Working relentlessly in hospitals and at home*. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from: http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_741060/lang--en/index.htm
- 26 For example, the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action encourages governments and institutions to commit to increasing the number of women participating in political life. United Nations (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>. There are also regional standards set by bodies such as the Council of Europe, the Venice Commission, the League of Arab States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that either explicitly call for the increase of women in elected or further reaffirm principles of nondiscrimination on the basis of gender or sex in politics and elections. Council of Europe Venice Commission (2002). *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters: Adopted Guidelines and Draft Explanatory Report*, ¶ Section 2.5. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://rm.coe.int/090000168092af01>.
- 27 Ballington, J. (2017). *Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/11/preventing-violence-against-women-in-elections>
- 28 World Health Organization. (2017). *Violence against Women*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>
- 29 Taub, A. (2020, April 06). *A New Covid-19 Crisis: Domestic Abuse Rises Worldwide*. New York Times. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domestic-violence.html>
- 30 Casas-Zamora, K. & Falguera, E (2016). *Political Finance and the Equal Participation of Women in Colombia: A Situation Analysis*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/political-finance-and-equal-participation-of-women-in-colombia.pdf>
- 31 World Bank Group (2020). *Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/618731587147227244/pdf/Gender-Dimensions-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>
- 32 Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.). *Women in Parliament: Global and Regional Averages*. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=1&year=2020&op=Show+averages&form_build_id=form-AXBV01gYWWAGPbwPFAYm6p4eAA-GKeFTR-TOLoY6_6w&form_id=ipu__women_averages_filter_form
- 33 IFES. (2020) *Elections Postponed Due to COVID-19*. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/global-impact-covid-19-elections>

- 34 IFES (2019). *Online Harassment and Violence Against Women in Elections: How Do Online Threats of Violence Impact Women's Electoral Participation?* Retrieved June 11, 2020, from https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/vawe_online_one_pager_december_2019.pdf
- 35 IFES (2020). *Safeguarding Health and Elections*. COVID-19 Briefing Series. Retrieved June 11, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series-safeguarding-health-and-elections>
- 36 IFES, *Safeguarding Health and Elections*. COVID-19 Briefing Series. Retrieved May 26, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series-safeguarding-health-and-elections>
- 37 Reppell, L., Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz & Vasu Mohan. (2020, June 24). *Preserving Electoral Integrity During an Infodemic*. IFES. Retrieved June 24, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series-preserving-electoral-integrity-during-infodemic>
- 38 Kumar, S. (2020, March 4). *The Coronavirus Act 2020 is Extremely Dangerous for Disabled People Like Me*. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved June 26, 2020 from https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/coronavirus-disabled-people-act-2020_uk_5e872e86c5b6a94918351e9c
- 39 Atkinson, V. & Rebecca Aaberg. (2018, September). *Election Access Observation Toolkit*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/election-access-observation-toolkit>
- 40 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2020, April 29). *COVID-19 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Guidance*. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/COVID-19_and_The_Rights_of_Persons_with_Disabilities.pdf
- 41 Koistinen, M., Charlotte McClain-Nlapo, Diana J. Arango & Camilla Gandini. (2019, December 5). *Five Facts to Know about Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Girls*. World Bank Blogs. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/sustainablecities/five-facts-know-about-violence-against-women-and-girls-disabilities>
- 42 Antidze, M. (2020, April 16). *Georgia Bans Private Traffic until April 21, Tightening Coronavirus Lockdown*. Reuters. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-georgia/georgia-bans-private-traffic-until-april-21-tightening-coronavirus-lockdown-idUSKBN21Y39O>
- 43 International Disability Alliance. (2020, April 17). *Disability Rights during the Coronavirus Pandemic: Launch of the COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor*. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid-drm>
- 44 United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*. Retrieved June 21, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/convention-rights-persons-disabilities-and-optional-protocol>
- 45 Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2018, November 15). *ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://asean.org/asean-enabling-masterplan-2025-mainstreaming-rights-persons-disabilities/>
- 46 African Union. (2019). *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36440-treaty-protocol_to_the_achpr_on_the_rights_of_persons_with_disabilities_in_africa_e.pdf
- 47 Organization of American States. (1999). *Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <http://oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-65.html>
- 48 Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. (2020). *ZBC, Govt Sued over Lack of Accessible Information on Coronavirus in Format Friendly to Visually Impaired and Deaf People*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.zlhr.org.zw/?p=2006>
- 49 Ellena, K. (2020, April 14). *The Legal Quagmire of Postponing or Modifying Elections*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/legal-quagmire-postponing-or-modifying-elections>
- 50 IFES. (2020, April 17). *Advocacy for Disability-Inclusive Responses to COVID-19 in Southeast Asia*. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/advocacy-success-disability-inclusive-responses-covid-19-southeast-asia>

- 51 IFES. (2020, June 14). *Q&A With Nayem Molla, a Young Leader and Disability Rights Advocate in Bangladesh*. Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/qa-nayem-molla-young-leader-and-disability-rights-advocate-bangladesh>
- 52 Duplaga, M., (2017, January 29). *Digital Divide among People with Disabilities: Analysis of Data from a Nationwide Study for Determinants of Internet Use and Activities Performed Online*. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5491040/>
- 53 World Bank. Disability Inclusion. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability>
- 54 Walker, A. (2019, May 10). *Online Hate Crime against Disabled People Rises by a Third*. The Guardian. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/may/10/online-hate-against-disabled-people-rises-by-a-third>
- 55 Reppell, L., Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz & Vasu Mohan. (2020, June 24). *Preserving Electoral Integrity during an Infodemic*. IFES. Retrieved June 24, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series-preserving-electoral-integrity-during-infodemic>
- 56 Abrams, A. (2020, April 24). *'This is Really Life or Death.'* For People with Disabilities, Coronavirus is making it Harder than ever to Receive Care. TIME. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from <https://time.com/5826098/coronavirus-people-with-disabilities/>
- 57 IFES. (2020, May 27). *Elections Held and Mitigating Measures Taken During COVID-19*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/global-impact-covid-19-elections>
- 58 Coulmont, B., Joel Gambin & Arthur Charpentier. (2014, February 19). *You can Vote Twice! The Many Political Appeals of Proxy Votes in France*. Washington Post. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/19/you-can-vote-twice-the-many-political-appeals-of-proxy-votes-in-france/>
- 59 Applegate, M., Thomas Chanussot & Vladlen Basysty. (2020, April 7). *Considerations on Internet Voting: An Overview for Electoral Decision-makers*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/considerations-internet-voting-overview-electoral-decision-makers>
- 60 Parks., M. (2020, May 11). *Feds Warn States that Online Voting Experiments are 'High Risk.'* NPR. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/11/853759878/feds-warn-states-that-online-voting-experiments-are-high-risk>
- 61 Schmidt, S. (2020, June 18). *Delaware Quietly Fielded an Online Voting System but now is Backing Away*. NPR. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/18/879210099/delaware-quietly-fielded-an-online-voting-system-but-now-is-backing-away>
- 62 Slatin, P. (2020, May 27). *Disability Equals Disenfranchisement, Lawsuit Says*. Forbes. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/peterslatin/2020/05/27/disability-equals-disenfranchisement-lawsuit-says/#3cc9cb654f5a>
- 63 Atkinson, V. and Aaberg, R. (2020, July 14). *How to Ensure People with Disabilities Are Included in Political Life During COVID-19*. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/how-ensure-people-disabilities-are-included-political-life-during-covid-19>
- 64 Vann, M. (2020, April 6). *Some Cash-strapped States Turn to Election Security Funds to Fight COVID-19*. ABC News. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/cash-strapped-states-turn-election-security-funds-fight/story?id=69940136>
- 65 Diament, M. (2020, April 3). *Amazon Urged to Prioritize Food Delivery to Group Homes*. Disability Scoop. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2020/04/03/amazon-urged-to-prioritize-food-deliveries-to-group-homes/28102/>
- 66 D. Gamage (personal communication, June 12, 2020).
- 67 United Nations. (2018). *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-youth-report/wyr2018.html>

- 68 United Nations Population Fund. (2014). *State of the World Population: The Power of 1.8 Billion*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.unfpa.org/swop-2014>
- 69 Worldometer. (2020). *Africa Population Live*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/>
- 70 United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- 71 United Nations Security Council. (2015, December 9). *Resolution 2250*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250(2015))
- 72 IFES. (2020, April 29). *Ukrainian Educators E-Learning during COVID-19*. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/ukrainian-educators-e-learning-during-covid-19>
- 73 UNDP. (2016, November 22). *Practice Note: Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/practice-note--young-people-s-participation-in-peacebuilding.html>
- 74 UNDESA. (2020, May 8). *Protecting and mobilizing youth in COVID-19 responses*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/news/2020/05/covid-19/>
- 75 United Nations Development Programme. (2020, March 31). *9 out of 10 Young Entrepreneurs in Asia-Pacific Report that Coronavirus has Negatively Impacted their Businesses*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/youth-co-lab-survey-reveals-how-covid-19-is-affecting-youth-led-.html>
- 76 IFES. (2020) *Elections Postponed Due to COVID-19*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/global-impact-covid-19-elections>
- 77 Garrison, J. (2020, June 11). *US Voter Registration Plummet, during Coronavirus Pandemic, Challenging Both Parties*. USA Today. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/06/11/voter-registration-plummet-during-coronavirus-pandemic/5336320002/>
- 78 Dirr, A. (2020, June 8). *After Milwaukee had just 5 voting sites in April Election, Officials Recruiting more Poll Workers so it won't Happen in November*. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/milwaukee/2020/06/08/milwaukee-polling-places-more-workers-recruited-november-election/3124855001/>
- 79 Associated Press. (2020, May 3). *Kansas to Recruit Teens as Poll Workers in Response to Virus*. Lawrence Journal-World. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/state-government/2020/may/03/kansas-to-recruit-teens-as-poll-workers-in-response-to-virus/>
- 80 Economist. (2017, February 4). *Millennials across the Rich World are Failing to Vote*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.economist.com/international/2017/02/04/millennials-across-the-rich-world-are-failing-to-vote>
- 81 Law, A. (2020, May 22). *How to Boost Youth Political Participation during COVID-19*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/how-boost-youth-political-participation-during-covid-19>
- 82 Cho, A. Jasmine Byrne & Zoe Pelter. (2020, February). *Digital Civic Engagement by Young People*. UNICEF. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/reports/digital-civic-engagement-young-people>
- 83 Wickranmanayake, J. (2020, April 3). *Meet 10 Young People Leading the COVID-19 Response in their Communities*. Africa Renewal. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/coronavirus/meet-10-young-people-leading-covid-19-response-their-communities>
- 84 UNESCO. (2020, June 9). *Experts Discuss Youth Exploitation of Media and Digital Spaces in the Africa Region during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://en.unesco.org/news/experts-discuss-youth-exploitation-media-and-digital-spaces-africa-region-during-covid-19>
- 85 IFES. *Countering the COVID-19 Infodemic: Students in Bangladesh Lead the Charge*. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/news/countering-covid-19-infodemic-students-bangladesh-lead-charge>
- 86 UNESCO. (n.d.) *Education: From Disruption to Recovery*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

- 87 Council of Europe. (n.d.) *Online Consultations with Moldovan Pupils on the new Civic Education Subject*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/online-consultations-with-moldovan-pupils-on-the-new-civic-education-subject?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_JN0XPSMpBk7I&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_count=1
- 88 McCurry, J. (2020, April 13). *South Korea Votes in First Major Election of Coronavirus Era*. The Guardian Retrieved June 23, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/14/south-korea-votes-in-first-national-election-of-coronavirus-era>
- 89 UNDESA. *World Population Prospects 2019*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Interpolated/>
- 90 United Nations. (n.d.). *Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention*. Retrieved June 21, 2020 from <https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/documents/Coalition%20to%20Strengthen%20the%20Rights%20of%20Older%20People.pdf>
- 91 United Nations. (2020, May). *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_covid-19_and_older_persons_1_may_2020.pdf
- 92 Ritchie, H., et. al. (2020, June 21). *Case Fatality Rate of COVID-19 by Age*. Mortality Risk of COVID-19. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://ourworldindata.org/mortality-risk-covid#case-fatality-rate-of-covid-19-by-age>
- 93 United Nations. (2020, May). *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_covid-19_and_older_persons_1_may_2020.pdf
- 94 Hui, M. (2020, March 12). *South Korea's Coronavirus Patients will be able to Vote from Homes and Hospitals*. Quartz. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://qz.com/1815783/south-korea-coronavirus-patients-to-vote-from-home-and-hospitals/>
- 95 Bicker, L. (2020, April 15). *Coronavirus: South Korea Holds Elections in Masks and Clinics*. BBC. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52275993>
- 96 Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People. (2020, May 5). *An Open Letter to the UN Secretary-General in response to the release of the 'Policy brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons'*. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from <https://rightsofolderpeople.org/open-letter-to-the-un-secretary-general/>
- 97 Barthal, M. & Galen Stocking. (2020, April 6). *Older People Account for Large Shares of Poll Workers and Voters in US General Elections*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/06/older-people-account-for-large-shares-of-poll-workers-and-voters-in-u-s-general-elections/>
- 98 United Nations. (2020, May). *Policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on older persons*. Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Policy-Brief-The-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Older-Persons.pdf>
- 99 Statista. (2019). *Distribution of Internet Users Worldwide as of 2019, by Age Group*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272365/age-distribution-of-internet-users-worldwide/>
- 100 Jimenez-Damary, C. (n.d.). *Press Statement on the 22nd Anniversary of the Adoption of the UN Guiding Principles*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/2020/04/17/press-statement-on-the-22nd-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-un-guiding-principles/>
- 101 International Organization for Migration. (2019). *World Migration Report*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf
- 102 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2019*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>
- 103 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020). *Global Report on Internal Displacement*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

- 104 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2004). *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>
- 105 United Nations General Assembly. (2019, January 11). *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/195
- 106 Guterres, A. (2020, April 23). *We are all in this Together: Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery*. Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and>. See also [UNHCR COVID-19 Guidance on Migrants, Displace People, and Refugees](#).
- 107 Ibid. See also [Guidance Note on Addressing and Countering COVID-19 Related Hate Speech](#).
- 108 ACAPS. (2020, April 16). *COVID-19 Government Measures: Impact on Displaced Populations Update III*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.acaps.org/special-report/covid-19-government-measures-impact-displaced-populations-update-iii>
- 109 Yeong, J., & Yee, I. (2020, May 14). *Tens of Thousands of Singapore's Migrant Workers are Infected. The Rest are Stuck in their Dorms as the Country Opens Up*. CNN. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/14/asia/singapore-migrant-worker-coronavirus-intl-hnk/index.html>
- 110 Pandey, V. (2020, May 20). *Coronavirus Lockdown: The Indian Migrants Dying to Get Home*. BBC. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52672764>
- 111 IFES. (2020, June 10). *Additional Five Million Ukrainians May Vote in Local Elections this Fall*. Retrieved from <https://ifesukraine.org/news/an-additional-four-million-ukrainian-citizens-will-be-able-to-vote-in-local-elections-this-fall-thanks-to-successful-advocacy-for-protecting-the-rights-of-internally-displaced-persons/?lang=en>
- 112 Shujaat, A., Roberts, H., & Erben, P. (2016, September). *Internally Displaced Persons and Electoral Participation: A Brief Overview*. IFES. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/idps-electoral-participation-october-2016.pdf>
- 113 IOM. (2020, May 12). *'Sincere Talk' Social Media Campaign Fights Stigma in Armenia*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.iom.int/news/sincere-talk-social-media-campaign-fights-stigma-armenia>
- 114 Husain, S. & Diam Abou-Diab. *Refugee conditions deteriorate amidst multiple crises in Lebanon*. Atlantic Council. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/refugee-conditions-deteriorate-amidst-multiple-crisis-in-lebanon/>
- 115 UNHCR. (2020, April 20). *Displaced and Stateless Women And Girls At Heightened Risk of Gender-Based Violence in the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2020/4/5e998aca4/displaced-stateless-women-girls-heightened-risk-gender-based-violence-coronavirus.html>
- 116 (Personal communication, May 15, 2020).
- 117 OutRight Action International (2020). *Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTQ People*. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from: https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/COVIDs-ReportDesign_FINAL_LR_0.pdf
- 118 Human Rights Campaign (2020). *The Lives and Livelihoods of Many in the LGBTQ Community Are At-Risk in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/COVID19-IssueBrief-032020-FINAL.pdf?_ga=2.157961081.2123002187.1592915405-49179332.1591020884
- 119 United Nations for LGBT Equality (2020). *International Human Rights Law and Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity*. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.unfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/International-Human-Rights-Law.pdf>
- 120 OutRight Action International (2020). *Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTQ People*. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from: https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/COVIDs-ReportDesign_FINAL_LR_0.pdf

- 121 Jimenez, M. (2020). *COVID-19: Rights Experts Highlight LGBTI Discrimination, Antisemitism*. UN News. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1062042>
- 122 United Nations (2020). *UN supports LGBTI community during COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-supports-lgbti-community-during-covid-19-pandemic>
- 123 OutRight Action International (2020). *Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTQ People*. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/COVIDs-ReportDesign_FINAL_LR_0.pdf
- 124 Agoyo, A. (2020, June 9). *Congress Returns to Indian Country's Agenda in Age of COVID-19*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.indianz.com/News/2020/06/09/congress-returns-to-indian-countrys-agen.asp>
- 125 IWGIA. (2020, April). *The Indigenous World 2020*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from http://iwgia.org/images/yearbook/2020/IWGIA_The_Indigenous_World_2020.pdf
- 126 United Nations. (2007). *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UN-DRIP_E_web.pdf
- 127 International Labor Organization. (1989). *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169
- 128 Fischer, Edward. "Beyond Victimization: Maya Movements in Post-War Guatemala." *The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*, ed. Nancy Grey Postero and Leon Zamosc., p 93.
- 129 International Disability Alliance. (2020, May 5). *COVID-19 in Nepal: What are the challenges for indigenous persons with disabilities?* Retrieved June 17, 2020 from <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid19-indigenous>
- 130 Lakhani, N. (2020, May 26). *Why Native Americans Took COVID-19 Seriously: 'It's our Reality.'* The Guardian. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/26/native-americans-coronavirus-impact?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other
- 131 Cheetham, J. (2020, June 16). *Navajo Nation: The People Battling America's Worst Coronavirus Outbreak*. BBC. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52941984>
- 132 Barahamin, A. (2020, May 28). *Dignified Quarantine: Indigenous Strategies for Containing COVID-19 in Indonesia*. New Mandala. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.newmandala.org/dignified-quarantine-indigenous-strategies-for-containing-covid-19-in-indonesia/>
- 133 Phillips, Tom. (2020, May 3). *'We are on the Edge of Genocide': Brazil Urged to Save Amazon Tribes from COVID-19*. The Guardian. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/eve-of-genocide-brazil-urged-save-amazon-tribes-covid-19-sebastiao-salgado>
- 134 Albro, R. (2019, November 22). *Evo Morales's Chaotic Departure Won't Define His Legacy*. Foreign Policy Magazine. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/22/evo-morales-departure-bolivia-indigenous-legacy/>
- 135 Sunshine Manning, S. (2018, November 8). *Two Native American Women are Headed to Congress. This is Why it Matters*. Washington Post. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/11/08/two-native-american-women-are-headed-congress-this-is-why-it-matters/>
- 136 Smee, B. (2018, June 18). *Alarm Raised over Huge Number of Indigenous Children without Birth Certificates*. The Guardian. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jun/19/queensland-indigenous-children-no-birth-certificate>
- 137 Tucker, J., Jacqueline De Leon & Dan McCool. (2020, June). *Obstacles at Every Turn: Barriers to Political Participation Faced by Native American Voters*. NARF. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://vote.narf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/obstacles_at_every_turn.pdf
- 138 Doland, G. (2020, May 27). *Fewer Polling Places Present Challenges for Native Voters*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <http://nminddepth.com/2020/05/27/fewer-polling-places-present-challenges-for-native-voters/>

- 139 Native American Rights Fund. (n.d.) *Vote by Mail in Native American Communities*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.narf.org/vote-by-mail/>
- 140 Western Native Voice v. Stapleton. (2020, May 20). Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.narf.org/nill/documents/20200520western_native_voice_tro.pdf
- 141 Tendayi Achiume, E. (2020, May 29). *A Conversation with UN Special Rapporteur E. Tendayi Achiume: COVID-19, Racism and Xenophobia*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.justsecurity.org/70410/a-conversation-with-u-n-special-rapporteur-e-tendayi-achiume-covid-19-racism-and-xenophobia/>
- 142 United Nations. (1965). *International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>
- 143 United Nations (1992). *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Minorities.aspx>
- 144 Kirby, T. (2020, May 8). *Evidence mounts on the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on ethnic minorities*. The Lancet. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30228-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30228-9/fulltext)
- 145 Bhala, L., Gwenetta Curry, Adrian Martineau, Charles Agyemang & Raj Bhopal. (2020, May 10) *Sharpening the Global Focus on Ethnicity and Race in the Time of COVID-19*. The Lancet. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7211499/>
- 146 Center for Disease Control. (n.d.) *COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>
- 147 Guterres, A. (2020, May 8). Twitter post. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://twitter.com/antonioguterres/status/1258613180030431233?s=20>
- 148 Reppell, L., Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz & Vasu Mohan. (2020, June 24). *Preserving Electoral Integrity During an Infodemic*. IFES. Retrieved June 26, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series-preserving-electoral-integrity-during-infodemic>
- 149 Human Rights Watch. *COVID-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>
- 150 Korunovska, N. & Zeljko Jovanovic. (2020, April 28). *Roma in the COVID-19 Crisis: An Early Warning from Six EU Member States*. Open Society Foundations. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>
- 151 Ibid.
- 152 Minority Rights Group International. (2020, April 27). *Statement on the Impact of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic on Persons with Disabilities from Minority, Indigenous and other Marginalised Communities*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://minorityrights.org/2020/04/27/statement-covid-19-pandemic-on-persons-with-disabilities-from-minority-indigenous-communities/>
- 153 IFES. (2020, April 9). *How to Hold Accessible and Inclusive Virtual Meetings*. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/how-hold-accessible-and-inclusive-virtual-meetings>
- 154 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. (2020, July 15). *Online Training Launched to Engage Pakistani Women with Disabilities in Public Policy Reform*. Retrieved July 15, 2020 from <https://www.ifes.org/news/online-training-launched-engage-pakistani-women-disabilities-public-policy-reform>
- 155 Buril, F., Staffan Darnolf & Muluken Aseresa. (2020, May) *Safeguarding Health and Elections*. COVID-19 Briefing Series. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series-safeguarding-health-and-elections>



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems