



Overcoming Challenges to Democracy and Governance Programs in Post-Conflict Countries

CEPPS Lessons Learned

REPORT | MAY 2021

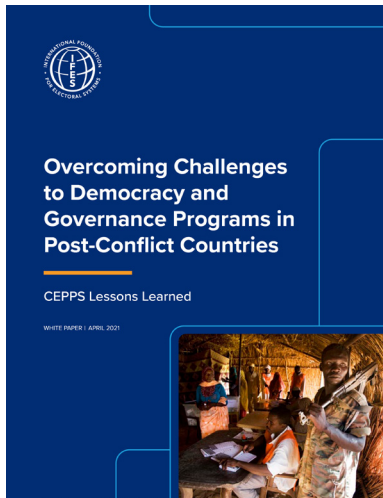




Overcoming Challenges to Democracy and Governance Programs in Post-Conflict Countries

Democracy and governance assistance is more difficult and ever more crucial in the aftermath of conflict. Using data from more than 25 years of programs by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) in 18 countries, *Overcoming Challenges to Democracy and Governance Programs in Post-Conflict Countries: CEPPS Lessons Learned* examines challenges related to post-conflict contexts and offers recommendations.

Launched in February 2019 with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the “Identifying Successful Democracy and Governance Approaches in Post-Conflict Countries” project highlights lessons learned from CEPPS interventions during political transitions from conflict. The project’s second paper will reflect on local partners’ perspectives of local partners at the receiving end of this assistance and the post-project phase, highlighting interventions that had lasting effects and contributed to the sustainability of project outcomes.



Overcoming Challenges to Democracy and Governance Programs in Post-Conflict Countries: CEPPS Lessons Learned
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CEPPS Lessons Learned

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Reached 205M+
people with civic and
voter education



Trained 759,326
election officials
in fiscal years
2015-19



Worked in 145+
countries

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Executive Summary

Introduction

As the 2019 Global State of Democracy shows, the quality of democracies around the globe is declining, driven by weakened checks and balances, shrinking civic spaces, erosion of media integrity and insufficient progress in combatting corruption and increasing gender equality.¹ The 2020 Democracy Index, which assesses the quality of democracy in 167 countries, found that the average global score fell from 5.48 in 2018 to 5.44 in 2019 and 5.37 in 2020, the lowest score since the index was created in 2006.² In this context, democracy and governance assistance becomes increasingly difficult, but ever more crucial to identifying and nurturing legitimate democratic actors, processes and institutions.

This assistance faces even more challenges in conflict and post-conflict transitional environments, which are usually marked by a number of characteristics that are not favorable to either democracy or stability, such as weakened institutions, political turmoil, social divisions and grievances and security threats. Although the COVID-19 global crisis led to several ceasefires in early 2020, these have largely failed to create sustainable peace,³ and conflicts are still on the rise across the world. Given the current and emerging patterns of violent conflict globally, these complex transitional contexts will likely be even more common in the near future.

Given the significant investment⁴ that the United States and other countries make in post-conflict countries to promote democracy and mitigate conflict, it is important to understand what factors might hinder the capacity of democracy and governance implementers to operate effectively in these environments and to achieve democratization and stabilization goals. This report thus aims to contribute to a better understanding of these challenges, the strategies that have been applied to overcome them and the outcomes of such strategies. The lessons learned from previous programming discussed here are intended to help donors and implementers design more realistic programs and ensure that implementation optimizes time and resources and produces more sustainable outcomes.

This report is the first of two in this project. It is based on a review of academic literature, data from program reports and interviews with 28 implementers to gather their perspectives and experiences in the past 25 years of democracy and governance programming in 18 post-conflict countries. The second report will reflect on the perspectives of local partners and the post-project phase, highlighting interventions that had lasting effects and contributed to the sustainability of project outcomes.

¹ International IDEA. (2019). *The Global State of Democracy 2019: Addressing the Ills, Revising the Promise*. <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2019.31>

² Democracy Index 2020. (2021). *The Economist Intelligence Unit*. https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf?mkt_tok=NzUzLVJUS00MzqAAAF7mC3QUUM-L7BE38CBrsVgyfxZkHDqH0btQjKHTBIN2WZxblqER-O1MO-PNrLGfHGEB7Acm-aXxiXXy3ksngitER0lhPc_0dkSbR41oJ7wkeNEng

³ Organized Violence During the Pandemic — Insights from the UCDP Candidate Events Dataset covering the first three quarters of 2020 (2020). UCDP. <http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1576/UCDP-Bulletin---Organized-violence-during-the-pandemic.pdf>

⁴ U.S. government funding for democracy promotion programs increased from \$121 million in 1990 to \$722 million in 2003, reaching \$2.7 billion in 2017. See also Lawson, M. L., and Epstein, S. B. (2019). *Democracy Promotion: An Objective of U.S. Foreign Assistance* (CRS Report No. R44858). Congressional Research Service website: <https://fas.org/spp/crs/row/R44858.pdf>

Summary of Findings

Our analysis of programs revealed that challenges to democracy and governance aid usually stem from two types of causes — external and internal. External causes are often challenges of context, or the existing conditions and pressures in the country that make it more difficult for assistance providers and donors to properly and efficiently implement activities and achieve program goals. Internal causes, over which implementers can exert more control, are generally program design and implementation issues. These may be activities that fail to achieve intended objectives or activities that, by achieving objectives, might actually hinder the ultimate goals of stabilization and democratization, even if temporarily.

The two tables below summarize the categories of challenges, how those challenges materialized in the CEPPS projects and program adaptations or lessons learned that could help minimize their negative effects. We expect that the patterns of successful mechanisms and lessons learned shared throughout this report are applicable to and can be replicated in a wide array of programs in complex environments, regardless of conflict status. They are not, however — and cannot be — a recipe for guaranteed success in any context or period. The need for careful contextualization of each program remains strong and goes beyond simply understanding a country's history; it requires considering also the different active systems — the country's economic, societal, cultural and political forces — and their effects and influences on program interventions.

Table 2. Context Challenges

Category	Program Findings	Adaptations and Lessons Learned
Ongoing insecurity	Security threats to implementers and beneficiaries affecting capacity to reach different communities, hold meetings, organize activities and mobilize participants	Continuously analyze impact of security levels on ability to operate and design and adjust program scope accordingly
		Develop program contingency plans, including core programming with reduced local teams and remote work
		Connect and coordinate with defense aid and other development initiatives and programs (including on preventing or countering violent extremism and poverty reduction) to improve efficiency of investments
Unresolved social divisions and grievances	Existing unsurmountable rivalries among implementing partners	Adopt do-no-harm approaches and framework (e.g., understand existing dividers and tensions and analyze potential conflict-exacerbating impacts of assistance)
		Mediate internal conflicts, impose conditions to uncompromising organizations and build balanced working groups of partners with common interests
	Perceptions of implementer partisanship or foreign interference	Broaden the range of beneficiaries and identify and build the trust of rising leaders

Lack of political will	Lack of political will and buy-in from local authorities due to suspicions about implementers' intent, failure to see the value of aid or unwillingness to implement programs that might exacerbate the ability to maintain power	Build personal relationships (influenced by implementers' familiarity with country and existing network of partners, reputation, capacity to show commitment to the best of the country, level of access to decision-makers and commitment to building rapport with mid-level officials)
		Leverage donors' political influence to overcome political and bureaucratic blockages
		If changes in political or organizational leadership are needed, make them gradually and ensure the transfer of trust
		Be realistic about what the project can accomplish
		Identify entry points — usually less political or politicized work (e.g., strict technical assistance and social issues that are consensual across the political spectrum)
		Demonstrate the value of aid through quick-results activities and provide small personal incentives
Lack of physical infrastructure	Unreliable communication and transportation	Plan back-ups for communication and transportation to minimize reliance on infrastructure and public services
Lack of human capital	Conflict-driven brain drain and import of expertise	Build basic skills of local personnel (e.g., administrative, managerial and organizational) before and during implementation to ensure effective and sustainable initiatives
		Employ regional expertise and promote regional exchange and development
		Promote the return of exiles when appropriate
Implementing programs under time pressure elections	Lack of sufficient time to develop relationships, build staff capacity and set up necessary structures and procedures	Increase timeline for program implementation and build a roadmap for second-cycle elections and other mid- to long-term processes
	Beneficiaries' undervaluation of technical assistance and prioritization of commodities	Coordinate material and technical/advisory support across the donor/implementer community in complementary ways, ensuring the provision of commodities is accompanied by relevant technical support to operate and maintain them

Table 3. Program Design and Implementation Challenges

Category	Program Findings	Adaptations and Lessons Learned
Increasing political competition and uncertainty about the future	Programs designed to increase political participation and the diversification of political platforms are likely to increase the number of actors competing for power, which might create new sources of tension	Collaborate to build systems that reward <i>democratic</i> competition
		Plan for initial phase of potential destabilization
Lack of institution-building and/or sustainability	Overreliance on top-level individuals from implementer organizations and local partner institutions, which experience high turnover	Build and <i>retain</i> local capacity in field offices and build strong local staff, and help build and resource new units within local institutions when needed
	Disruption of support and resources, erasing gains	Replace temporary external service providers with permanent local staff, and help build and resource new units within local institutions when needed
		Select low-tech, low-resource solutions for administrative and operational needs when appropriate (for reduced maintenance costs)
	Low level of skills and knowledge transferability	Train disseminators of knowledge, such as trainers and advocates, using methodologically rigorous adult-learning techniques
Develop and disseminate reusable or adaptable products and tools		
Create networks and build channels of communication and exchange among local stakeholders		
Insufficient context-specific program design and adaptive planning and management	Narrow focus of early assessments and reports	Incorporate a systems-thinking approach and conduct applied political economy analysis before and throughout project planning and implementation
	Indicators and evaluations are heavily oriented around outputs rather than results	Report and reflect on challenges and incorporate lessons learned to other programs
		Invest in broader results and impact evaluation
Constrictive work plans and insufficient room for adaptability	Build flexibility into the program work plan and budget, planning for different scenarios and creating pools of funding for rapid responses and ad hoc support	

Designing and Implementing More Effective Programs

The workflow depicted below presents some steps to help prevent or address the common challenges for implementers outlined above and to encourage incorporation of lessons learned into new and existing programs at different stages of the programmatic process.

Graph 1. Designing and Implementing More Effective Programs



Methodology

Key Concepts

Post-conflict transitions

Transition, as a country's period of significant changes toward a new order, can take different directions (e.g., to democratic systems or to more illiberal or authoritarian regimes). For the purposes of this report, we focus on countries in which there were, at some point, transition movements toward democratic, stable and peaceful states. These transitions can be sought, for instance, following the end of an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regime, deep political crises or violent conflicts. Although all these transitional contexts deserve attention, and these features frequently overlap in a single context, this study focuses on countries going through transitions from violent conflict.

Democracy and governance assistance

Democracy and governance assistance consists of “activities intended to encourage the transition to or improvement of democracy in other countries. U.S. foreign aid to promote democracy may focus on electoral democracy, with a narrow emphasis on free and fair elections, or reflect a more liberal concept of democracy, which includes support for fundamental rights and standards that some argue make democracy meaningful.”⁵ We are considering the different contributions and effects of democracy and governance programs in constitutional and legal frameworks, electoral administration, political parties and civil society. This assistance is not homogeneous, and the scope of programs might vary considerably. A table summarizing the types of assistance involved in each country's program is presented in Annex 2.

Stabilization

The U.S. interagency Stabilization Assistance Review has defined stabilization as “a political endeavor involving an integrated civilian-military process to create conditions where locally legitimate authorities and systems can peaceably manage conflict and prevent a resurgence of violence.”⁶ In addition, “[S]tabilization may include efforts to establish civil security, provide access to dispute resolution, deliver targeted basic services, and establish a foundation for the return of displaced people and longer-term development.” We summarize these ideas into interventions that contribute to country stabilization to the extent that they achieve the following intermediate goals:

- Establish or increase access to paths to addressing grievances peacefully;
- Improve the capacity of local institutions to create or maintain peace;
- Improve access to basic services; and
- Improve civil security.

⁵ Democracy Promotion: An Objective of U.S. Foreign Assistance. (January 4, 2019). *Congressional Research Service*.

⁶ United States Department of State, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. (2018). *Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts To Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas*.



A young Independent Election Commission (IEC) worker sits on ballot boxes in one of five warehouses within the IEC compound in Kabul during the audit of Afghanistan's 2014 presidential election. Photo credit: David Jandura.

This report relies on rich qualitative data from more than 25 years of democracy and governance programs implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) in 18 post-conflict countries.

CEPPS⁷ was established in 1995 as a recipient of a cooperative agreement issued by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to three non-governmental organizations (NGOs): The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The CEPPS partners have since implemented programs in more than 140 countries, focusing on supporting election management bodies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media, political parties and legislatures. The democracy assistance provided by CEPPS, although varying considerably from country to country, generally aims to build or strengthen the capacity of these local partners to create environments that allow for fairer, more inclusive and more transparent political and electoral processes.

Selection of Cases

To identify relevant cases for analysis, the research team initially cross-referenced the list of countries in which CEPPS projects have been implemented since its inception in 1995 with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Conflict Termination Dataset. This database identifies all conflicts "involving armed contestation of a particular incompatibility between the government and at least one armed group that results in at least 25 battle deaths in a given year."⁸ The database also accounts for conflict episodes, defined as continuous periods of violent contestation for a given incompatibility. Only conflicts ending with a peace agreement or a ceasefire were considered in this initial selection, as stabilization efforts in countries where conflicts end with a military victory by one side, although statistically more likely to result in durable periods of non-violence, are usually driven by the victors and often ignore or defy liberal norms.⁹ Given our focus on stability among domestic stakeholders, we also excluded all wars other than intrastate wars, but we did include intrastate wars with international interventions. Finally, since our intention was to assess the role and impact of governance and democracy aid during a transitional period, we focused our analysis on programs taking place within 10 years of the end of the conflict. This initial selection brought the country list to a total of 17. Afghanistan did not make it to the original list due to categorization issues,¹⁰ but we decided to include it, given its importance as a source of lessons learned for future programming, bringing our final list to a total of 18 countries.

⁷ See: *Our Story*. CEPPS. (July 15, 2020). <https://cepps.org/about-us/our-story/>

⁸ Uppsala Conflict Data Program. UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: www.ucdp.uu.se, Uppsala University. Retrieved August 28, 2020.

⁹ Piccolino, G. (2015). Winning wars, building (illiberal) peace? The rise (and possible fall) of a victor's peace in Rwanda and Sri Lanka. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(9), 1772. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1058150>

¹⁰ UCDP does not consider the Bonn Agreement signed in 2001 to be a peace agreement. Nevertheless, the Bonn Agreement was signed by representatives of several anti-Taliban groups and "established a roadmap and timetable for establishing peace and security, reconstructing the country, reestablishing some key institutions, and protecting human rights." These were also the goals of the several international democracy assistance providers working in Afghanistan, making the country an important case from which to draw lessons, even though it does not meet the definition of a post-conflict country.

Criteria for Country Selection



CEPPS programming within 10 years of the end of the conflict



Conflict included in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Database



Conflict ended in a negotiated settlement or peace agreement between 1995-2014



Intrastate war

Table 1. List of Post-Conflict Countries with CEPPS Programming¹¹

Country	Region	Conflict Termination Year(s)	Termination Type(s)	Rebel Group Name(s)	CEPPS Programming Years
Afghanistan	Asia	2001	Peace agreement*	Taliban	2003–present
Angola	Africa	2002	Peace agreement	UNITA	2004–2011
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Europe	1995	Peace agreement	Serbian irregulars, Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina	1996; 1999–present
Burundi	Africa	2006; 2008	Peace agreements	Palipehutu-FNL	2013–2016
Central African Republic	Africa	2006	Peace agreement	UFDR	2009–2011
Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire)	Africa	2001; 2008	Peace agreement	RCD; CNDP	1997–2007; 2016
Georgia	Europe	2004; 2008	Ceasefires	Republic of South Ossetia	2006–present
Guatemala	Americas	1995	Peace agreement	URNG	2010–present
Indonesia	Asia	1999; 2005	Peace agreement	Fretilin; GAM	2007–2015
Côte d'Ivoire	Africa	2004	Peace agreement	FRCI	2000–2001; 2007–2008; 2014–2018
Liberia	Africa	2003	Peace agreement	LURD, MODEL	2004–2009; 2015–2018
Myanmar (Burma)	Asia	2011	Ceasefire	RCSS, SSPP; DKBA 5, KNU	2013–present
Nepal	Asia	2006	Peace agreement	CPN-M	2004–present
Niger	Africa	1997; 2008	Ceasefires	UFRA; MNJ	1998; 2003; 2010–2015; 2018–present
Nigeria	Africa	2004	Ceasefire	NDPVF	2005–present
Peru	Americas	2010	Ceasefire	Sendero Luminoso	2007–2012
Sierra Leone	Africa	2001	Peace agreement	RUF	2001–2002; 2010–2013; 2017–present
Sri Lanka	Asia	2001	Ceasefire	LTTE	2004–2008; 2010–2010; 2015–present

¹¹ For the purposes of this project, the 10-year period applies for each peace agreement or ceasefire. For example, since Niger had ceasefires in 1997 and 2008, we are interested in the post-conflict periods between 1997–2007 and 2008–2018. CEPPS programming may not have addressed the post-conflict transition explicitly, particularly if conflict was very isolated or if programming began at the end of the 10-year period.

These criteria provided a workable list of post-conflict transitions from which to draw lessons. Of course, there remain many important sources of variation among the 18 cases, many of which likely influenced how smooth or challenging the implementation of democracy assistance was in these countries. “Post-conflict”¹² countries can look completely different from one another depending, for example, on the root causes of the conflict and its scale, the way the conflict ended, the perceived legitimacy of this ending and the extent to which grievances remain after the official peace agreement or ceasefire. While in some countries the vestiges of conflict are long gone before the 10-year mark, in others the tensions might remain for many more decades. Annex 1 presents a brief overview of the context of each country during the time of the program analyzed in this project.

Data Collection

After initial selection of cases for analysis, we collected all available, relevant records of CEPPS projects that covered the period of interest.¹³ Although we were able to gather and analyze several files referring to programs in the countries in our list from different periods, we could not retrieve some reports, particularly from earlier years of projects when digitization was less common. Some relevant experience from these projects may be absent from this analysis, although it is unlikely that the missing material could undermine the findings discussed in this report.

Following the analysis of the available reports, we conducted in-depth interviews with 28 individuals who have worked directly on implementation of the projects. Interlocutors were mainly those who led management of the programs from the field, but we also interviewed some managers and regional directors from headquarters offices for this report.



In 2006, there were 17,000 UN peacekeepers on hand to ensure Election Day security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

¹² For an overview of the typology of post-conflict environments, see Brown, G., Langer, A., and Stewart, F. (2011). *A typology of post-conflict environments*. <https://soc.kuleuven.be/crpd/files/working-papers/wp01.pdf>

¹³ These records included, but were not limited to quarterly, annual and final project reports; activity timelines; work plans; monitoring and evaluation documents; budget and financial reports; and certain products of assistance (e.g., baseline assessments, operational plans, manuals).

I. Challenges Related to Post-Conflict Contexts

Although research points to a number of ways that democracy aid can contribute to stabilization, program outcomes vary considerably. Lappin summarizes, “the number of warring parties; the war aims of the parties; balance of military power; size of country; number of combatants; levels of death and destruction; length of conflict; residual state and economic capability; and the type of peace agreement in place.¹⁴” All can create very different post-conflict environments that usually affect existing power dynamics and dictate the extent to which grievances remain after conflict, as well as the damage inflicted on public institutions, infrastructure and human capital, which can affect the level of difficulty implementers might find in operating in the country. Finally, stakeholders’ political buy-in and openness and time available to effect democratic change can also lead to significantly different levels of programmatic success. This section discusses these issues, the related practical challenges that CEPPS implementers have faced and the lessons learned from these experiences.

Lack of Security

Even after a ceasefire or peace agreement, many countries continue to experience high levels of violence, criminality and disregard for the rule of law.¹⁵ Many studies argue that civil conflicts resume



Following a six-week postponement stemming from security concerns and violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, Nigerians headed to the polls for the 2015 presidential and National Assembly elections. In this photo, a presiding officer explains to voters how to mark a ballot. Photo credit: Nena Lukin

Case Studies

Burundi

In Burundi in 2015, citizens trained by CEPPS to monitor electoral violence were themselves threatened by certain groups, and some decided not to deploy on Election Day, compromising performance and data collection. The security conditions in Burundi deteriorated so much throughout program implementation that CEPPS was forced to leave the country, interrupting activities and direct support to local partners.

Nigeria

In Nigeria in 2010, the presence of Boko Haram and the constant threat posed by the group undermined voter turnout and, potentially, the election results. Staff of the election management body suffered attacks, and widespread violence on Election Day led to the annulment of results, a huge setback that undermined implementers’ efforts to increase the integrity of the process and build public trust in its results. Ultimately, CEPPS had to abandon its plan to support in-person parallel vote tabulation and focus on remote assistance.

¹⁴ Lappin, R. (2010). The Unique Challenges of Post-Conflict Democracy Assistance. *Peace Review*, 22(2), p. 179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402651003751479>
¹⁵ *Ibid.*

because grievances have not been resolved, and violence is committed particularly by groups that were dissatisfied with the negotiations that ended the conflict.¹⁶ Indeed, civil conflict experiences strikingly high recidivism: every civil war that occurred between 2003 and 2010 was a continuation of a previous one.¹⁷ This conflict trap can pose significant security risks to program implementers and beneficiaries and can hinder not only the implementation of activities but ultimately the achievement of stabilization goals.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Security threats to implementers and beneficiaries — In countries where strong actors emerge during conflict and seek to centralize power, implementers' efforts to offer opportunities for different actors to play roles in the political process may engender tension. In some contexts, state actors might intentionally weaken or co-opt security institutions to maintain power. In others, non-state actors can be the spoilers of democratic gains.

As interlocutors have shared, the threat of violence makes it difficult for implementers to move from one place to another to reach different communities, hold meetings, organize activities and mobilize participants, stalling program progress.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Analyze the impact of security levels on the ability to operate, and adjust program scope accordingly — Not surprisingly, it is easier to implement comprehensive programs and attain positive results in post-conflict environments where the physical security of implementers and beneficiaries is not at high risk. When security risks are widespread, however, implementers should carefully assess what activities are feasible and narrow the scope of programs to channel resources into what can realistically be achieved.

“ We as [democracy and governance program] implementers often fail to adequately integrate conflict resolution strategies. We must be aware that partners may have trauma and should work with other organizations to incorporate various components of post-conflict healing into our programs.”

Develop contingency plans for programs in volatile countries — In volatile countries where security levels might decline abruptly,

Case Study

Burundi

When forced to leave Burundi in 2015, CEPPS prioritized working with its CSO partner Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral to strengthen the organization's online presence and develop a communications plan and activities that could be conducted remotely.



During the lead-up to and throughout Election Day, Burundians and international observers tracked election security incidents on an online early warning system for electoral violence introduced for the first time in Burundi.

¹⁶ Collier, P. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4), 563–595. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oeq/gpf064>; Gurr, T. R. (2016). *Why men rebel*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

¹⁷ UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, Vol. 4, 2009.

implementers should also strive to develop contingency plans including, whenever possible, working through a reduced team of local staff who are well-trained on remote communications and online platforms. This allows local staff to stay in constant communication with teams at headquarters who manage financial transactions as needed so certain activities can continue without major disruptions. These adaptations can be challenging, however, especially in countries where technology availability and online engagement are low.

Connect and coordinate with defense aid and other initiatives and programs to optimize results —

Although democracy and governance interventions can themselves contribute to bringing groups together and mitigate tensions, other factors important to conflict resolution are outside the scope of this programming. As discussed in the U.S. Stabilization Assistance Review,¹⁸ increasing interagency communication is important to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. Government efforts. Democracy and governance assistance implementers could benefit from coordinating with organizations that work to prevent or counter violent extremism in countries where this is an issue, for example, or with organizations that work to reduce poverty and economic inequality. While the former could help deradicalize and reintegrate fighters into peaceful politics, the latter could help make political and electoral processes truly fair. Przeworski argues that “people are not politically equal in economically unequal societies.”¹⁹ It is particularly important that defense aid and democracy and governance assistance be streamlined and that stabilization efforts do not empower militaries at the expense of civilian leadership.

Interlocutors have shared that collaborating with other systems of policies and programs can be useful, but it is not usually something on which implementers are able to focus; indeed, it is not generally prioritized or even required. Allocating time and funding in work plans for more intentional collaboration can help break down these siloes.

Unresolved Social Divisions and Grievances

Upon the eruption of violence, ethnic identities may “become cemented in ways that make cooperation between groups even more difficult.”²⁰ The social tensions and divisions that cause conflict rarely dissipate



An SLA/MM soldier stands guard at a polling station in Zam Zam internally displaced persons camp in El Fasher, North Darfur, Sudan, on the first day of nationwide elections in April 2010. The 2010 elections were the first in Sudan following an extended period of conflict. Albert Gonzalez Farran, UNAMID

Case Study

Central African Republic

In the Central African Republic, the presence of the Lord’s Resistance Army and Chadian groups aligned with anti-Bozizé movements required CEPPS to move interventions in 2011 from the original targeted areas to regions where security risks were lower.

¹⁸ United States Department of State, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. (2018). Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas. <https://www.state.gov/reports/stabilization-assistance-review-a-framework-for-maximizing-the-effectiveness-of-u-s-government-efforts-to-stabilize-conflict-affected-areas-2018/>

¹⁹ Przeworski, A. (2018). Why bother with elections? Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

²⁰ Walter, B. F. (2010). *Conflict Relapse and the Sustainability of Post-Conflict Peace*. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/9069/WDR2011_0008.pdf?sequence=1

completely after a ceasefire or peace agreement. Socioeconomic grievances and ethnic or religious cleavages might linger even after the end of a conflict,²¹ and this thin social fabric might rupture during implementation of reforms. Furthermore, state policies and instruments that perpetuate social, ethnic and political grievances might also remain after conflict.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Existing unsurmountable rivalries between partners — In its efforts to include different stakeholders in discussions, decision-making processes and political activities, and to establish communication channels among them, CEPPS has often aimed to create local working groups and coalitions of partners. In many cases, these initiatives contributed to better communication and set the stage for long-term collaboration. In some instances, however, existing rivalries and competition among local actors (especially if stemming from recent grievances) are too strong to overcome.

As much as implementers want to make quick progress toward democratic principles, they must first be aware of and address the obstacles to achieving this goal. Effective democracy and governance programming usually requires trust and commitment from different stakeholders, and some post-conflict environments are not conducive to swiftly building this foundation. As one interlocutor put it, “We can’t just go and start implementing a democracy and governance program neglecting that that country has a history, that people have a history — and that they might not want to work together because of that history.”

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Case Studies

Central African Republic

In the Central African Republic in 2011, CEPPS’ main CSO partner experienced difficulty managing expectations and balancing its activities among its member organizations because CSOs became jealous or suspicious if they were excluded from activities.

Niger

In Niger, three CSOs that had agreed to work together refused to collaborate between 2012 and 2013, impeding communication and compromise and stalling some program activities. Implementers later recommended that future program designs clearly delineate the roles of local CSOs or simply avoid working with certain groups if the potential for conflict was considered too high.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Perceptions of implementer partisanship — Working with election management bodies (EMBs), political parties and CSOs on democracy and governance issues, CEPPS partners have had to navigate inherently political environments. Despite efforts to remain neutral and provide inclusive assistance across the political spectrum, in some cases the sole fact of working with certain types of actors may be perceived as a partisan choice. This issue was particularly accentuated in more closed countries, like Burundi at the time of program implementation, where working with civil society, media outlets and some political parties was perceived as an anti-government effort. In such contexts, not only is implementers' ability to move forward with activities compromised; their relationships with local partners can bring more visibility to these local actors and potentially increase risks of retaliation against them.



IFES' project brings together citizens, civic activists and elected officials from Central Africa to discuss improving government transparency and accountability.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Adopt do-no-harm approaches and frameworks — To identify and understand social divisions and to ensure program interventions do not unintentionally deepen them, it is important that implementers actively develop and apply do-no-harm approaches. During program design and start-up, implementers must conduct thorough research through desk studies and consultations with local interlocutors and members of the international community who may be on the ground. Implementers must then analyze how their presence could shift or influence the environment and put mechanisms in place to mitigate any negative consequences and avoid harm. This assessment should cover any potential conflict-exacerbating impact of assistance, reveal how to make better programmatic decisions (e.g., about where to work and with whom, how to set the criteria for assistance recipients, whom to hire and how to build relationships with local authorities) and enable implementers to redirect and adapt programs that are interfering negatively with existing societal fissures.²² This assessment should lead to a contextualized do-no-harm plan that can be reviewed and adapted as the program develops, or following relevant contextual changes.

Mediate internal conflicts, impose conditions on uncompromising organizations and build balanced working groups of partners — In situations such as in Niger, CEPPS' first step was to attempt to mediate the internal conflict between CSOs until it became clear that neither group was willing to work toward a solution to their conflict. When such mediation efforts fail, picking sides can be even more dangerous, as it might build resentment and increase perceptions of partisanship among powerful local actors. Implementers might

Case Study

Burundi

At the time of program implementation in 2014, government actors perceived CEPPS' work with civil society, media outlets and political parties as anti-government, increasing obstacles to program implementation.

²² Collaborative for Development Action. (2004). *The Do No Harm Handbook (The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict)*. The Collaborative for Development Action Inc, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

be forced to cut ties with uncompromising organizations or establish clear conditions for their participation and make efforts to build more balanced coalitions with smaller groups that are willing to cooperate.

Broaden the range of beneficiaries with common interests, and identify and build trust with rising leaders

— One strategy CEPPS has used often to mitigate perceptions of partisanship is to include as many actors as possible from across the political spectrum in its programs. This has applied, for example, to trainings or workshops for participants from opposing political parties. Interlocutors have shared that they have had more success in bringing these actors together when they focused on issues that appealed to each actor's interests. For example, most political parties are usually motivated to mobilize youth so they can increase their base of supporters. In addition, as parties want to expand their voter bases, they are generally open to building capacity to develop issue-based platforms, which helps mitigate the division of parties along ethnic or social lines, as was the case in Sri Lanka. CEPPS has also minimized potential suspicions about protecting EMBs to which it provided assistance by simultaneously supporting civil society groups as they increased scrutiny of the electoral process.

Finally, in countries where it could maintain a lasting presence, CEPPS often tried to identify rising leaders in government, political parties and civil society to build trust and increase their openness to working with CEPPS once in positions of power.

Lack of Political Will

Implementers face additional challenges when the country's government is not receptive to programs that can effect meaningful change. Wright²³ argues that recipient governments play an active role in the aid process and in accepting or rejecting

Case Studies

Guatemala

In Guatemala in 2004, after dissolving a working group whose members were not willing to cooperate, CEPPS helped create a coalition of observer organizations that involved more indigenous groups, women and youth, empowering new groups around common interests.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka in 2007, CEPPS broadened its range of beneficiaries by working with diverse political parties that shared the goal of expanding their voter bases and reaching out to voters across ethnic lines.



A young leader in Sri Lanka provides opening remarks to welcome participants to the Election Commission's National Voters' Day event.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

CEPPS supported the development of the Association of Election Officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina into a viable and self-sustaining organization with a lead role in the professional development of election officials. Ultimately, members of the Association went on to lead Municipal Election Commissions, and some have served on and chaired the country's Central Election Commission.

²³ Wright, J. (2009). How foreign aid can foster democratization in authoritarian regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(3), 552–571.

democracy assistance. As self-interested actors, Wright suggests, it is unlikely that incumbent governments will accept democracy assistance programs that could undermine their ability to retain political power.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Lack of political will and buy-in — In countries with limited democracy experience, building democratic institutions and fostering a cohesive political culture require considerable political will and buy-in from local stakeholders to engage in the program. But obtaining political buy-in and the support of key actors for the implementation of programs was a difficult task in many of the countries analyzed for this project. Implementers might be seen as obstacles for strong actors that want to consolidate their power. They can also be seen as outsiders, untrustworthy and self-interested. Especially when implementers arrive at a critical juncture for the future of the country, as the post-conflict period is likely to be, such suspicions might increase. In some contexts, local actors might simply not see the value of the aid, refusing to take on more work or responsibility if they foresee no gains from the extra efforts.

Stakeholders' commitment and determination to advance the program are among the most important factors in achieving its goals. As one interlocutor put it, “We might have beautifully designed programs fail and programs that are just mediocre on paper succeed because there was political will to implement them.”

We might have beautifully designed programs fail and programs that are just mediocre on paper succeed because there was political will to implement them.”

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Build personal relationships — The more obvious lesson learned from this challenge is that building good personal relationships with the government, public officials, political actors and civil society and obtaining their buy-in — or, at least, acceptance — for the work conducted with local partners is an important factor for the success of programs. Unfortunately, bringing all stakeholders on board is not always easy or possible, and programs cannot stall because a few spoilers might resist or actively work against democratic initiatives. Implementers must still foster and strengthen personal relationships with democracy champions. In CEPPS' experience, the success of these relationships was often based on several factors:

- Implementers' knowledge of and familiarity with the country and its political dynamics — Some programs seem to have benefited from having directors from the target country (or a country in the region with a similar context), who were more likely to understand the nuances of the post-conflict dynamics. Others, however, welcomed third-country nationals who were perceived as more neutral arbiters with no personal or political preferences and stakes. This calculation and choice will depend on each country's context, but the composition of the implementing team, and especially the leaders who will be the face of the program, is certainly important. One interlocutor shared, “We talk about institutional relationships, but it is really individuals building those. Sometimes, openness to partnerships comes down to whether [local stakeholders] like the country director.”

“ We talk about institutional relationships, but it is really individuals building those. Sometimes, openness to partnerships comes down to whether [local stakeholders] like the country director.”

- Implementers’ capacity to show their commitment to the best interests of the country (as opposed to foreign interests) — How aid recipients view an implementer’s intent might be influenced by the latter’s nationality or the source of project funding, for example, and the history and relationship between the countries. Implementers must make efforts to show in words and action that they have no hidden agenda and that their goals are the same as those pursued by local democracy champions.
- Implementers’ history in the country, social network and reputation — As interviewees often mentioned, the longer implementers could work in a country, the more time they had to develop relationships of trust and build the reputation of the implementing organization. Short programs and high staff turnover, on the other hand, hindered these efforts.
- Implementers’ access to decision-makers — As activities often need authorization or direct engagement of decision-makers at the executive level, multiple layers of bureaucracy or political issues can slow processes. When implementers have no direct access to the individuals making these decisions, it is harder to overcome obstacles. Not surprisingly, implementers have found it easier to work in smaller countries or at the provincial level in larger countries, where personal relationships with top-level authorities were more easily fostered.
- Implementers’ commitment to building rapport with mid-level officials — While relationships with decision-makers are essential to advance certain project goals, implementers must keep in mind that those individuals usually hold their positions temporarily and that changes in leadership can disrupt the continuity of projects (e.g., public officials, EMB commissioners, or political party chairs). In CEPPS’ experience, building relationships with mid-level officials (e.g., EMBs’ technical directors, political party secretaries) has proven useful to the continuity of institutional relationships once leaders change.

“ It is easier to work at the provincial level — things are less political.”

Leverage donors’ political weight — When direct buy-in from key actors is not as easy to achieve and political blockages hinder program implementation, the involvement of donors through their embassies has been of major help to some CEPPS programs. According to program directors and managers interviewed for this project, on many occasions USAID and the U.S. Embassy were able to reach out to local government representatives and resolve political or bureaucratic issues, enabling implementers to move forward. This is naturally more feasible in countries that have a generally good perception of the United States, and where U.S. Government representatives have built lasting and trusting relationships with local officials. As staff turnover can be high within implementer organizations, having trusted U.S. Government representatives introduce new implementers was mentioned as an important factor in building trust.

If changes in leadership are needed, make them gradually, and ensure the transfer of trust — More gradual leadership replacements, enabling trusted figures to introduce new partners, are helpful in giving continuity to trust-building. Interlocutors also shared that it is important to make efforts to retain local office staff, as they are familiar with the cultural aspects of their country, how stakeholders tend to behave and the power dynamics between them. As one interlocutor put it, “[the local staff] are the ones who know where they are, they know

the relationships [between stakeholders].” At times, it has also been beneficial to involve local stakeholders directly in CEPPS’ selection process for new program leadership.

“ [The local staff] are the ones who know where they are, they know the relationships [between stakeholders].”

Be realistic about what the project can accomplish — Even when implementers build positive relationships with local stakeholders, there might be some areas of work that are seen as off limits — either because of cultural values or the personal interests of powerful groups. Implementers must understand what these limitations are and be realistic about what the project can accomplish with the existing political will, even if this means postponing work in areas that are considered important. One interlocutor noted, “It is not that some interventions are not important, but it’s just that there is no openness to them [at that moment] and forcing them [on stakeholders] would be a waste of resources.” Comprehensive pre-implementation assessments and “reality checks,” particularly with local staff and country experts, can contribute to more realistic program designs.

“ It is not that some interventions are not important, but it’s just that there is no openness to them [at that moment] and forcing them [on stakeholders] would be a waste of resources.”

Identify entry points and champions — If obtaining political buy-in is hard in countries that want political change, it is much harder in closed countries where the government (or at least parts of it) is not open to the democratization efforts of implementers, and where the involvement of donors is unlikely to help. Implementers should analyze when such circumstances are likely by, for example, conducting actor or systems mapping and political economy analyses before designing a program (see more in *Incorporate a systems-thinking approach and conduct applied political economy analysis before and throughout project planning and implementation*, page 33). In contexts categorized as hard to operate in, CEPPS has found it helpful to identify entry points or paths of least resistance. These have often translated into less political or politicized work, such as strictly technical support to public



A Kenyan woman take part in the White Ribbon Campaign, "Taifa Letu" for peace

institutions, or rights advocacy initiatives that were welcomed (or not opposed) by actors across the political spectrum. It has also helped to identify champions within a target institution or community who were able and willing to mobilize others and take action.

Demonstrate value of aid and provide personal incentives — In their efforts to improve processes and procedures, implementers usually bring new tasks or responsibilities to local officials and partners who are often already overwhelmed by their daily tasks. They might see such interventions as extra work rather than assistance, preventing them from buying into program participation. It is thus important to show the value of such participation to direct beneficiaries. CEPPS has accomplished this by, for example, providing quick resources (e.g., technologies, tools or information) that immediately facilitated or reduced the work of partners. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, CEPPS’ polling work at the outset of the project helped build the implementer’s reputation, as it presented invaluable information to political parties that no other organization had provided. An interlocutor shared, “The polling program allowed us to build trust very quickly. We did it differently than others had done before, and our polling revealed information that was very helpful for the party that nobody knew [until then]. We were told that we restored the credibility of polling in Bosnia.” CEPPS has also found that providing small personal incentives, such as participation certificates, contributed to beneficiaries’ increased interest in taking part in activities. EMB staff and legislators were also often more interested in participating in lessons-learned exercises or engaging in discussions about legal reforms when these were conducted during meals or retreats organized by implementers.

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Case Studies

Angola

In 2004, a year after program initiation in Angola, CEPPS saw no new constitution, slim prospects for a revised electoral law, a non-existent National Election Council and narrow space for political participation. This made it difficult for civic groups to conduct civic education, advocacy and media outreach activities. CEPPS utilized this time to lay the groundwork for effective civic partnerships and electoral networks through intensive organizational capacity-building support, such as holding trainings on observation experiences and norms in the region, public speaking skills and strategic planning assistance.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, a topic well-accepted by actors across the political spectrum was the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities to political participation. CEPPS’ programming in this area faced little or no resistance in the country.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, opposing political parties shared a common interest in engaging more youth in political participation. CEPPS found this area of programming a good entry point to engage rival political parties.

Lack of Physical Infrastructure

Conflict often leads to the collapse of basic physical infrastructure, making operations much harder (such as for transportation and communications).²⁴ In addition, in many post-conflict contexts, the governance capacity to fix (or in some cases to build) this infrastructure may not exist. These issues make it difficult for implementers not only to organize activities but also to engage stakeholders across the country, especially those who live in more remote and isolated areas.



Logistics distribution in Indonesia. Photo credit: Suparta

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Unreliable communication and transportation — Program support can be compromised if poor communication hinders coordination and if implementers and participants cannot move around easily or access basic services. In Myanmar, for example, observers trained by CEPPS had trouble transmitting information to their offices due to the country's weak communication infrastructure, delaying the dissemination of observer reports. In Nigeria, poor transportation options, combined with security problems, led to the hijacking of trucks that were delivering electoral materials to polling stations.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Plan backups to minimize reliance on infrastructure and public services — As infrastructure weaknesses are easy to spot but hard to change in the short term, implementers should consider them as risks in their planning and, where appropriate, work with partners to implement backup mechanisms to ensure the success of activities even if problems arise. These could include, for example, procuring SIM cards with mobile data for communication and contracting reliable and experienced service providers for transportation (such as drivers who know the region and have vehicles that are appropriate for the terrain). In the absence of strong broadband connectivity, implementers can opt for low-tech solutions, such as utilizing radio repeaters, to establish lines of communications.

“ We had to plan and budget for where we wanted to work based on the distance, as we could only drive safely during the day.”

Coordinate with other implementing partners — When dealing with poor roads and transportation infrastructure, CEPPS partners can coordinate transportation efforts to distribute materials to pool resources and reduce duplicative trips.

Case Study

Myanmar

In 2015, domestic election observers faced challenges in quickly communicating with CEPPS headquarters due to deficiencies in the communication infrastructure. This delayed public reporting for all the groups, which were unable to make substantive statements on Election Day.

²⁴ Addison, T. and Brück, T. (2009). Making Peace Work: the Challenges of Social and Economic Reconstruction. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Lack of Human Capital

Research shows that civil wars lead to higher emigration rates among highly skilled individuals. This brain drain is particularly significant in countries experiencing ethnic conflicts, and it worsens in conflicts of longer duration.²⁵ Given that internal conflict reduces expected returns on educational investment, highly skilled individuals are likely to leave the country to seek greater rewards. The economic burdens posed by conflicts also mean that funding or government capacity are often not sufficient to provide high-quality education (including on civics and political culture) to citizens who remain in the country.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Conflict-driven brain drain and import of expertise — The lack of qualified personnel makes it harder for implementers to build local capacity and increases program costs by forcing implementers to bring in consultants from other countries. This challenge is also often reflected in relationships with civil society groups that have little experience with or knowledge of program management and administration. The lack of human capital in certain post-conflict environments might impose obstacles to finding reliable and skillful domestic partners who can implement activities and ensure successful initiatives continue after the project officially ends.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Build basic skills of local personnel — In several programs analyzed for this project, CSO partners had somewhat ambitious work plans whose implementation was delayed by critical operational and managerial problems that CEPPS identified. Some CSOs, for example, lacked the human capital to properly manage budgets and prepare required financial reports, and some struggled to follow donors' procurement requirements. If these problems became apparent early, CEPPS often could take a few steps back and work on building basic skills before moving forward with program implementation. Implementers in general should thoroughly evaluate CSOs' capacity and incorporate basic operational and managerial training to fill potential gaps that might affect the CSOs' performance.

Employ regional expertise and promote regional exchange and development — Implementers sometimes employ external consultants in areas where local expertise is scarce and there is not enough time to build the needed capacity locally. Where this is the case, implementers should consider employing consultants or representatives of institutions from the region or from other developing countries within a “South-South cooperation²⁶” approach (see text box, next page). These initiatives can encourage context-appropriate innovation and regional exchange and can expand the positive results of a program to more countries. In some cases, employing regional experts rather than experts from developed countries, can help minimize perceptions of patronizing attitudes and colonialism toward aid recipients.

“We had planned these great things... [we] wanted to give [CSOs] sub-awards. Then we realized there was no way we could give them a sub-award because they had no capacity whatsoever. What we did instead was working to build those organizations, training them on how to deal with their finances, how to manage activities, how to apply for grants.”

²⁵ Bang, J. T. and Mitra, A. (2013). Civil War, Ethnicity, and the Migration of Skilled Labor. *Eastern Economic Journal*, 39(3), 387–401.

²⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (March 19, 2019). What is “South-South cooperation” and why does it matter? United Nations. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>

Promote the return of exiles — Where security conditions allow, implementers can facilitate or encourage the return of individuals who were forced to leave the country during the conflict and are motivated to take part in the democratization process (see text box for an example of how CEPPS leveraged the return of exiled Burundian political leaders to support consensus-building dialogues).

Time Pressure and Rushed Elections

Another significant challenge for democracy and governance assistance implementers is the pressure to achieve results quickly. Lappin explains,

[T]he international community is often keen to establish a clear and relatively early exit point, usually centered on an election, to avoid the high costs of a lengthier commitment, to counter claims of imperialism, and out of a concern that the peace agreement may be repudiated if a legitimate government is not installed promptly.²⁷

This concern was also shared by experts and practitioners as reported in a recent International IDEA policy brief:

[E]lections in countries transitioning from war to peace benefit significantly from technical, financial and political support provided by the international community. However, when elections are promoted as an exit strategy for the international community, it may lead to trade-offs which do not favour democratic elections or democratic consolidation in the long run.²⁸ ... [There is a] consensus that decisions made on the timing and sequencing of transitional elections are not always well informed. This can be because of narrow interests of stakeholders involved, because insufficient time is allocated to elections during peace talks, or because those involved in negotiations do not possess the necessary electoral knowledge, which can lead to suboptimal solutions.²⁹

Case Studies

Niger

In Niger, a workshop on Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections was facilitated by a Nigerien legal expert for members of the Independent National Electoral Commission, who felt they could more easily rely on African expertise sensitive to their needs, political context and culture. Another CEPPS capacity-building training for Nigerien security forces also relied on South-South cooperation and was led by a Malian former general and electoral security expert who had recently been appointed interim president of the Electoral Commission of Guinea.

Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire, Ivorian and regional experts, including the president of the National Assembly of Niger and former National Assembly deputy in Benin, led an orientation for newly elected members of the National Assembly.

Burundi

As the 2015 elections drew nearer, exiled political leaders began returning to Burundi to run for office. In response, CEPPS organized the Favorable Environment for the 2015 Elections workshop, which brought together 136 political stakeholders from across the political spectrum to engage in dialogue and make commitments ahead of the elections. In many cases, this was the first time key political stakeholders had spoken to one another since opposition leaders.

²⁷ Lappin, R. (2010). The Unique Challenges of Post-Conflict Democracy Assistance. *Peace Review*, 22(2), p. 182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402651003751479>

²⁸ Alihodžić, S., Matatu, N., Joseph, O. and Lewis, K. (2019). Timing and Sequencing of Transitional Elections: International IDEA Policy Paper No. 18. *International IDEA*. <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2019.13>

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

The involvement of technical experts in the discussions about election timelines can help prevent rushed decisions and support the development of more realistic timeframes for adequate pre-electoral activities. One interlocutor commented about the first post-conflict elections in Liberia: “I really feel like we had an impact on the timing of the elections [in Liberia] because we got in early.”

“I really feel like we had an impact on the timing of the elections [in Liberia] because we got in early.”

The first elections after a conflict usually have very high stakes, as defeated candidates or parties might not only lose political power but suffer other retaliation (e.g., jail time, confiscation of financial assets). Holding elections before mechanisms are in place to protect actors from unfair treatment can thus lead to more violence and political instability.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Lack of time to develop relationships, build stakeholders’ capacity, and set up necessary structures and procedures — Very much in accordance with the literature discussed above, our analysis of project reports and interviews with implementers shows that the timing of activity implementation, often coupled with a sense of urgency for holding elections, played against program success. Democracy and governance implementers often get the chance to start working with local partners only a few months before key events like elections.

Although still valuable and sometimes necessary, given the low local capacity to undertake transitional elections, for example, the aid provided by implementers can be severely constrained in such circumstances. Time to build the relationships and connections necessary to implement activities is short, and new leaders and their staff are too busy working on *getting things done* and cannot take the time to learn how to *do better*. Rapid



International election observer during the counting process for the 2019 presidential election in El Salvador. Photo credit: Jacek Frączek

Case Studies

Bosnia and Herzegovina

After the signing of the Dayton Accord in 1995, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, with support from CEPPS, facilitated the first two national elections (1996 and 1998) before transferring this authority to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Central Election Commission in 2002.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, CEPPS supported the creation of the Independent Election Commission Media Monitoring Unit to monitor election coverage in the media with the aim of ensuring a level playing field for candidates. After CEPPS purchased video and audio monitoring equipment in 2009, four staff were trained to use it, ultimately issued regular reports on findings during the campaign period and informed media outlets if they were in compliance with or violation of media regulations.

elections sometimes have negative consequences for inclusion or fairness, as new political actors do not get the chance to build and disseminate their platforms, voter registration efforts cannot reach all eligible citizens and voter education efforts are limited. Not surprisingly, when CEPPS worked under those circumstances, the teams often assumed a more direct role in *conducting* operations, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see text box), rather than *enabling* local actors to do so. This type of emergency aid can yield positive results in the short term but can also hinder mid- and long-term success if measures are not taken to transfer skills and ownership to local stakeholders.

“There was nothing wrong with the initiative per se. They liked it, but they said ‘We really like the work that you did, it was very engaging. But why did we start something if we had to stop [operations] after only two months?’ And we just didn’t have an option.”

Beneficiaries’ undervaluation of technical assistance and prioritization of commodities — CEPPS has observed that some local partners, especially in the months leading up to elections, were less interested in technical assistance (e.g., instruction, skills training, advisory, technical data and analysis) than in receiving aid in the form of equipment and other commodities. This has sometimes translated into prioritizing relationships with aid providers that could invest large amounts of funding in the quick purchase, for example, of computers and other technology instead of working with technical assistance providers on a more careful analysis of appropriate systems, procurement processes and training plans. While technology can be of great help to developing institutions as they restructure their processes, undervaluation of technical assistance at this stage is detrimental to appropriate use of the technology and can lead to resource waste.³⁰ For example, Nigeria’s EMB held exaggerated expectations about computerization of the voter registration system and how doing so might solve the institution’s problems in this area. Although initial computerization enhanced the EMB’s capacity to create a more accurate voter list and eliminate duplications, the lack of internal expertise to use the system and unrealistic plans for the use of the electronic voter registration modality led to many fewer citizens being registered electronically than expected.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Increase timeline for program implementation and build a roadmap for second-cycle elections and other mid- to long-term processes — CEPPS’ experience shows that, whenever possible, implementers should try to initiate programs and get involved before or at the start of the electoral cycle, when decisions are still being made, plans are still being developed, and implementers have the chance to be an integral part of the process and provide inputs. With enough time, implementers are also more likely to be able to build the capacity of local staff to run activities instead of having to deploy external experts to fill gaps. When implementers and donors must use short-term strategies to support the first, rushed elections, they should commit to building a comprehensive roadmap for second-cycle elections, using the time in between to transfer knowledge and build relationships and local capacity. To avoid dependence and overreliance on international implementers, beneficiaries must understand the roadmap and the milestones they must achieve.

Coordinate material and technical and advisory support in complementary ways — Many competing priorities are at play in countries that are rebuilding after conflict. Therefore, institutions managing important processes such as elections are likely to receive less funding than they need. Sometimes, however, by complementing

³⁰ It is also the case that introducing expensive items in a context of poverty and resource competition incentivizes theft and bribery.

budgets with equipment purchases and appropriate technical support, international implementers can contribute to better processes. Implementers should thus coordinate and collaborate on the analysis of needs, selection of appropriate material, procurement and installation of products, and transfer of knowledge and expertise to local institutions to ensure their appropriate use and maintenance. Implementers should also encourage technical and administrative changes within democratic bodies to institutionalize a culture of capacity-building.

II. Challenges Related to Program Design

In addition to contextual factors, some features of a program's design can affect the success of interventions in contributing to a country's democratization or stabilization. For instance, activities might be completed successfully, but their results might unintentionally create or exacerbate political tensions. Or, they may be completed successfully but yield short-lived results. Finally, activities may be conducted just as expected without yielding any significant positive results at all.

Increasing Political Competition and Uncertainty About the Political Future

Independent international organizations can be seen as arbiters or guarantors during negotiations or implementation of settlements; they may ease tensions and fears of violations and have the potential to prevent conflict. However, the organizations also need to be transparent and, in many cases, expose issues that undermine the fairness of political and electoral processes. Revealing weaknesses or vulnerabilities in a country's political institutions and processes, although important in disseminating information that might not otherwise be available to the public, can also understandably instigate public dissatisfaction and deepen conflict.

Democracy and governance programs can also create turmoil through their own success in supporting political reforms that increase competition. As different actors have opportunities to gain political power, competition can lead to contention, creating divisions that may destabilize the country further and increase uncertainty



A Salvadoran woman looks for her name on the voter list during the 2019 presidential election in El Salvador. Photo credit: Jacek Frączek.

Case Study

Georgia

In Georgia in 2003, CEPPS worked on a voter list computerization project, the first electronic version of the voter list in the country. This work required close cooperation with the Central Election Commission and District Election Commissions, which checked the list for duplicates to avoid the potential for any voter to cast more than one ballot. However, CEPPS faced resistance from the leadership of the Central Election Commission and the ruling party.

CEPPS found several duplications in the voter registry, to the dissatisfaction of some local authorities, who sent the police to shut down the project.

about its political future and risks that conflict will resume.³¹ This is arguably one reason why countries transitioning to democratic systems are less stable than consolidated autocracies, where there is little or no room for power uncertainty.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Increased number of actors competing for power and reduced chances of electoral manipulation or fraud

— In most, if not all, its programs, CEPPS implemented activities that were intended to empower minority groups, strengthen smaller parties and give voice to new political actors. These activities promoted a more diverse political environment, which is one of the pillars of democratic systems. The literature suggests³² that such initiatives might also stir up tensions among groups that may have been silent and disengaged, lacking any chances of gaining power, but now see potential benefits in fighting. In countries where one or a few actors emerge from conflict intending to grab power and repress competitors, as was the case in Myanmar, this type of program can be made more difficult, and the combination of the two opposite forces (empowerment by international actors and repression by domestic actors) can lead to more conflict.

“When the police shut us down, it was four months of work completed thrown away by the beneficiary. We were afraid of being arrested.”

Wright³³ argues that recipient governments play an active role in the aid process by accepting or rejecting democracy assistance. As self-interested actors, Wright suggests, it is unlikely that incumbent governments will accept democracy assistance programs that could undermine their ability to retain political power. When CEPPS' work reduced the chances for actors in power to manipulate electoral processes, this did cause resistance in some cases caused.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Collaborate to build systems that reward *democratic competition* — As discussed below, implementers of democracy and governance aid must think of their work not as a standalone task but as part of a system in which the successes of various elements are interdependent. Accordingly, timing and sequencing are instrumental to success. If implementers invest in empowering new or smaller actors to fight for political power but make no progress in creating or strengthening democratic institutions and peaceful paths for this power contest, these actors might channel their efforts toward violent paths, undermining stabilization efforts. Donors

Case Study

Myanmar

Following the conflict in Myanmar, which ended formally with the 2011 ceasefire, many CSOs remained wary of conducting or facilitating overtly political activities for fear of the government's reaction. In 2012, the government denied a CEPPS observation partner's request for official accreditation and deported the majority of its staff for conducting its election training program without proper approval. Based on this experience, CEPPS ensured all future trainings were authorized by the government.

³¹ Flores, T. E. and Nooruddin, I. (2012). The Effect of Elections on Postconflict Peace and Reconstruction. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(2), 558–570. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381611001733>

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Wright, J. (2009). How foreign aid can foster democratization in authoritarian regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(3), 552–571.

and implementers should thus take into consideration this broader picture and harmonize the empowerment of political actors with fostering an environment that allows those actors to pursue political interests democratically. This might mean consolidating professional election commissions, strengthening independent media and enhancing civil society's capacity to hold public institutions accountable.

Plan for an initial phase of potential destabilization — In some countries, this lesson is easier described than achieved, as there may be no political will within public institutions to foster a fair democratic environment. Still, political actors and civil society groups that are being repressed and marginalized benefit from international support, and these actors might represent the best opportunity for an eventual democratization of the country, serving as catalyzers of political mobilization and change. In Burundi, for example, while CEPPS felt strong resistance from public authorities, the civil society groups with which it worked welcomed the support and continued to lead initiatives to promote democratic principles.

In closed countries, efforts by these champions to disrupt abuses of power are likely to be met with more repression, so stabilization should not be expected as an immediate outcome. As domestic actors lead changes toward democratization, international donors and implementers should consider how to better protect them through destabilization periods and better support them in the long run as they build an enabling environment for democracy and stabilization.

Lack of Institution-Building and Sustainability

A comparative study conducted by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations and local partners in eight post-conflict countries³⁴ explains that “international assistance has proven instrumental for the short-term political stabilization and socio-economic recovery of post-conflict countries,” but “the long-term impact of aid on the development of domestic institutions is rather limited.”³⁵ The study indicates that, although democracy aid is usually successful at setting up new institutions, it is less so at consolidating those institutions. In general, democracy aid struggles to make incipient democratic institutions more transparent, accountable to society or financially stable. This of course does not apply to all democracy and governance programs. For example the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency recently funded an analysis of the effects of democracy aid based on a systematic review of 90 quantitative studies.³⁶ The study found that this aid made a small yet positive contribution to democracy. More importantly, the report states that effects are stronger for institution-building when democracy aid targets core pro-democratic actors (e.g., EMBs, political parties, legal institutions, civil society and the media), rather than development more generally (e.g., socioeconomic issues). Although the evidence on this issue is ambiguous, it is undeniable that the sustainability of outcomes remains a main challenge for many programs in post-conflict environments.

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

Overreliance on and high turnover of top-level individuals — While building relationships with political and institutional leaders and strengthening their skills through training are important goals, especially to advance decision-making, these top-level positions are more volatile. When these leaders leave their positions, implementers might have to build new relationships and strengthen the capacity of new leaders, slowing institutional progress. This is especially true in countries where members of the civil service rotate in and out of posts and low remuneration and benefits drive qualified individuals away from the public sector.

³⁴ The study analyzes democracy assistance programs in post-conflict Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda. de Zeeuw, J. (2005). Projects do not create institutions: The record of democracy assistance in post-conflict societies. *Democratization*, 12(4), 481–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340500226036>

³⁶ Niño-Zarazúa, M., Gisselquist, R. M. and Horigoshi, A. (2020). Effects of Swedish and International Democracy Aid. *Expert Group for Aid Studies*.

Disruption of support and resources erasing gains — An issue that affects several countries in which CEPPS works (especially but not only those experiencing post-conflict transitions), is insufficient sustainability of institution-building program results. In many cases, a country’s technical needs for an election, for example, are the same as they were five or 10 years before. This is due to at least two issues. First, countries emerging from conflicts are more likely to receive the kind of “emergency aid” mentioned above, with external actors conducting tasks directly to ensure completion by hard deadlines like Election Day. These situations leave little room for transfer of skills and, when the project ends and external actors leave, they take the technical expertise that will be needed in the future. Second, and usually by request of the beneficiaries themselves, resource-intensive technical or technological solutions are introduced to existing systems. While technology can improve many processes and facilitate the work of partners, some might require continuous investments (e.g., highly technical expertise, software subscriptions and licenses, maintenance, updates, training of new staff, staff labor) that the partners’ resources cannot sustain. Thus, any gains made during the program are likely to stall as soon as program funding ends. An interlocutor shared, “political party members who had worked with us and had just been elected were very upset, they asked ‘how could you leave us?’ They feel the processes are better, but that they won’t be able to keep going after it ends.”

“When the police shut us down, it was four months of work completed thrown away by the beneficiary. We were afraid of being arrested.”

Low level of knowledge and skills transferability — Although focusing only on dialogue-based peacebuilding processes, a report developed by the Alliance for Conflict Transformation analyzes in detail the issue of the low level of skills transferability between direct beneficiaries and the larger society, also a common issue in more general electoral and political process interventions. Transferability refers to the extent to which the effects of the program are spread or transmitted beyond the group of direct beneficiaries “to influence other groups, practices or policies, and make broader changes in society.”³⁷ This transfer can occur through several methods: dissemination of products, a ripple effect within personal spheres of influence, policy advocacy, media campaigns, cascade models (replication of intervention by participants), ongoing platforms and mechanisms, community meetings or conferences, cooperative actions and a mix of methods. When these methods are not used, or are used poorly, newly acquired knowledge or skills remain limited to a few individuals or groups and might even create inequalities or unbalanced power dynamics in the country.

Although the intention of the interventions is usually to develop catalyzers of change, current mechanisms for monitoring results are often insufficient to capture the reach of these catalyzers, what they do with the knowledge and skills they acquire and how many people benefit indirectly.

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Build and retain local capacity (especially of mid-level technical staff) — Working with top-level officials is necessary to gain political buy-in, improve institutional leadership and better inform decision-making that might affect the future of the institution itself. However, top-level positions also often experience higher turnover, so partnerships between an implementer and beneficiary organizations cannot rely on these relationships alone. To minimize reliance on individual leaders, as several interlocutors commented that implementers should invest more in building the capacity of mid- and high-level career professionals and technical workers who

³⁷ Carstarphen, N. and Shapiro, I. (2016). *Dialogue projects and transfer*. Unpublished internal report, US Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/USIP-Dialogue-Grant-Meta-Review-Full-Evaluation-Report-10.2016.pdf>

are likely to have longer tenures and who can retain and expand acquired knowledge and skills within the institution. This also applies to the implementer: Although country directors are important program leaders, it is also important to retain competent local staff with solid relationships with partner institutions who can continue to build bridges between the institutions.

Replace external, temporary service providers with permanent local staff and help build new units with their own budgets — External technical service providers can provide new insights, introduce new solutions and fill capacity gaps in beneficiary institutions. As an essential step in their journey to self-reliance, however, partner institutions must minimize long-term reliance on external expertise and financial support and capitalize on short-term opportunities to build internal capacity. In this sense, implementers can help by working with partners to, for example, incorporate new responsibilities into the scopes of work of existing personnel or develop positions or units to fulfill new needs. Implementers can also invest in training for these new staff, basic equipment and strategic planning.

“Election commissions have a tendency to pursue the shining objects instead of the more solid foundational issues. They want internet voting before ensuring that their staff have computers to work from.”

Select less complex, low-resource solutions when appropriate — Another potential way to address the problem of lack of sustainability is to identify solutions that are more likely to last and yield consistent positive results. Implementers and aid recipients need to recognize the allure of cutting-edge technology but also understand that new staff can more easily adopt simpler or less costly — although perhaps less appealing — technology solutions without training and usually without high investment or maintenance costs. As interlocutors have shared, however, local partners tend to prioritize high-tech or more expensive solutions, seeing them as more likely to enhance the image of their institutions. For example, one implementer mentioned, “Election commissions have a tendency to pursue

Case Studies

Nepal

Realizing the utility of training social studies teachers to train voter educators in turn, in 2012 the Election Commission of Nepal, with CEPPS support, trained 753 teachers across the country with the objective of improving their knowledge and capacity to enhance delivery of electoral education in the classroom. These resources also formed the basis for the Commission’s lobbying the Ministry of Education, Department of Education and Curriculum Development Center to commit to including updated electoral education information in school curricula. Following feedback from District Election Officers and guidance from CEPPS, the Commission decided to decentralize the trainings to social studies teachers to develop, prepare and implement training programs for teachers in their districts. This helped institutionalize the curriculum at the local level, supporting the sustainability of the program.



Women from a Muslim community in Nepal eagerly learn during door-to-door voter education by the community facilitator. Photo credit: Binod Ohja

Nigeria

Nigeria’s EMB relied on external vendors to design and produce electoral and voter education materials, which are recurrent needs. In 2011, CEPPS helped the EMB gain control over these processes by helping it establish a graphic design center within its own structure and train the new staff. Importantly, however, partners must cover the costs for maintaining the continuity of such positions or units.

the shining objects instead of the more solid foundational issues. They want internet voting before ensuring that their staff have computers to work from.” Comparative analyses of different models and solutions should be communicated to partners, emphasizing the mid- and long-term costs of each and steering them away from unsustainable options.

Train disseminators of knowledge, such as trainers and advocates — To increase the reach of program benefits while optimizing resources, CEPPS has often invested in training local individuals who could multiply the impact of their newly acquired knowledge and skills by training others in their institutions in turn or disseminating messages within their communities. Although it is effective to maintain local capacity once the program is completed, this tactic often requires local institutions (e.g., EMBs, political parties, CSOs, universities) to commit to sponsoring and creating opportunities for new trainings and information dissemination.

Develop and disseminate reusable or adaptable products and tools — Another strategy that CEPPS has used to increase the reach of its programs beyond direct beneficiaries is developing and disseminating materials (e.g., manuals, guides, templates or roadmaps) to serve as references and guide the work of others, both during and especially after the project ends. This facilitates the standardization of procedures and sustainability of results. Implementers should strive to develop products that others can adapt or reuse with minimal or no external support.

Create networks and build channels of communication and exchange among local stakeholders — By facilitating the creation of coalitions and working groups, CEPPS has fostered the exchange of information among organizations and helped create direct communication channels through which new information can reach larger audiences. Implementers should highlight the mutual benefits of group membership to encourage partners to maintain working groups beyond the program period. Interlocutors have also shared that, when they could not work directly with or provide sub-awards to local partners due to limited funding, it was helpful to continue engaging them in other opportunities, such as by inviting them to events of interest, to maintain the sense of a network.

Case Studies

Peru

In Peru, CEPPS trained Congressional staffers alongside newly elected Congresswomen on the importance of maintaining contact between members of Congress and their constituencies. Through this work, Congressional and committee staffers also gained skills to organize town hall meetings and plan town hall models.

Côte d’Ivoire

In Côte d’Ivoire, political parties were able to use CEPPS’ materials to train their own monitoring agents, even after CEPPS programming ended.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, after receiving CEPPS’ support for four years (1999–2003) to establish itself as a reliable institution, the group that became the Association of Election Officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued its work as an NGO providing training for electoral officials. The organization still exists.

Insufficient Context-Specific Program Design and Adaptive Planning and Management

Finally, a major problem that can undermine the success of democracy aid in general and in post-conflict countries in particular is the lack of thought and consideration regarding the country's unique features, how actors and systems interact with each other, and how the program might affect and be affected by these dynamics. This understanding of the country's context and political and societal developments is important not only for the initial program design but for continuous evaluation of results and adaptations to redirect the program toward a successful path. If, for instance, some interventions ultimately benefit only one or a few of the groups that fight for power in the region, the program might unintentionally contribute to power imbalances and motivate rather than mitigate conflict. A report by the Alliance for Peacebuilding argues,

[C]onflict dynamics are not static and do not take a linear path. Programs must swiftly, appropriately, and ably adjust to these changes to ensure they prevent, manage and mitigate conflict and build peace. Before programs can adapt, however, they must be able to detect and diagnose environmental shifts. Yet, standard design, monitoring, and evaluation ... practices, including non-adaptive log frames and post-hoc evaluation methodologies, remain relatively inflexible.³⁸

Experiences from CEPPS Programs

This category of challenge is perhaps the most pervasive as it applies to and overlaps with almost all other issues discussed in this analysis. As mentioned above, this is a challenge that international implementers face across the globe (regardless of post-conflict status) and that increasingly gains attention as we are forced to reflect on the unintended impacts of our interactions with a country's dynamics and conflicts.

Narrow focus of early assessments and reports — Nearly all CEPPS programs analyzed here included an important assessment component that served to identify key areas of support and informed program activities in general. These assessments have been useful both to allow for more targeted assistance and to increase awareness among beneficiaries of weaknesses or challenges within their institutions. Assessments conducted in the earlier years of CEPPS, however (and earlier program implementation reports in general), have largely omitted a structured analysis of important contextual factors related to political, economic, social and cultural issues posing constraints to (or creating opportunities for) achieving goals. Implementers might have avoided touching on these issues for reasons including, for example, their sensitive character and potential to damage relationships with partners, or because of donors' interests focused on objective needs and positive results. The lack of more structured contextual analysis could also have been due to the absence of appropriate methodologies or mechanisms to consistently monitor events and their effects on programs.

The increased interest in discussing factors outside a program and their impact on program implementation is seen in the evolution of assessments and program reports. In addition to providing recommendations, more recent assessments have made purposeful efforts to identify potential spoilers in advance and work around them to achieve expected goals. The first pages of program quarterly reports changed from "summaries" to "political context and challenges," and final reports began to discuss "lessons learned." An interlocutor shared that the introduction of assessments and their increasing application in the past two decades has greatly contributed to the development of programs that are more appropriate and targeted. "Early on," he said, "we

38 Baumgardner-Zuzik, J., Greenberg, M., Hume, E. and Forsyth Queen, E. (2018). *Snapshot of Adaptive Management in Peacebuilding Programs*. Alliance for Peacebuilding. <https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/afp-publications/snapshot-of-adaptive-1-2018>

didn't do assessments. We did our best to transfer good experiences to new countries. People moved from one country to another and carried with them their experiences and adapted as they went.”

“Early on, we didn't do assessments. We did our best to transfer good experiences to new countries. People moved from one country to another and carried with them their experiences and adapted as they went.”

Despite significant progress in reflecting on country context and being upfront about challenges and obstacles faced, implementers still have considerable work to do in this area. As noted throughout this paper, although the political context is important, project success depends on many other factors, from personal relationships fostered with local partners to the appropriateness of certain activities in determined environments during specific periods.

Much less attention has been given to these types of obstacles than, for instance, to high-level political conflicts. It is telling, for example, that many difficulties regarding working with some institutions — whether EMBs, political parties, CSOs or other international actors — or challenges in overcoming cultural barriers have been unveiled only during candid interviews with implementers rather than through reviews of written program reports.

Indicators and evaluations heavily oriented around outputs rather than results — Monitoring the progress of program implementation is an important task, and implementers like CEPPS have made efforts to ensure the objectivity and measurability of indicators used for each project's activities. These have been useful to assess, for example, the number of beneficiaries reached by certain activities, targeted trainings or products delivered as part of the assistance. Although these are necessary indicators to measure project outputs, they are often insufficient to assess broader program results. For instance, while it is relatively easy to extract information from CEPPS reports about the number of individuals or political parties trained during a certain project, it is much more difficult to understand the extent to which the trainings helped participants in their daily work, whether they led to the development of stronger campaigns or the longevity of program gains in general. These are, of course, more complex questions; the answers require more investments in monitoring and evaluation and more interviews, surveys, focus groups and observations that time and budgetary constraints often do not allow.

Strict work plans and insufficient room for adaptability — Work plans are necessary to guide the work of implementers and ensure activities are well structured to achieve the program's goals within the established timeline. However, completing planned activities does not necessarily ensure progress toward goals, and neither implementers nor donors should lose track of the big picture. In more complex environments, changes can occur quickly, and the activities outlined in a six-month-old work plan might no longer be the most useful. It is thus important to keep program goals in mind and understand that there are different routes to achieve them. An interviewee shared, “Sometimes we focus so much on following a work plan that we don't realize that some things are not working.”

Adaptations and Lessons Learned

Incorporate a systems-thinking approach and conduct applied political economy analysis before and throughout project planning and implementation — A related recommendation calls for a more active

and explicit role of implementers in analyzing a wider range of elements and systems in the country before developing programs, and periodically throughout their implementation, to maximize program effectiveness.

Democracy and governance activities do not take place in a social vacuum. In fact, post-conflict environments might make them even more connected to and dependent on other factors. One interviewee mentioned a significant setback of the project on which he worked — the project neglected to some extent the freshness of grievances among local partners and the economic incentives or disincentives that affected their engagement in project activities.

“Sometimes we focus so much on following a work plan that we don’t realize that some things are not working.”

Even activities that can be seen as more objective and straightforward are not completely exempt from social, cultural, economic or political influences (see text box for an example from Nigeria). Identifying the roots of these problems and understanding that the roots might touch spheres outside our own can lead to much more effective solutions.

CEPPS’ work to improve democracy and governance systems cannot be taken in isolation. CEPPS and other international implementers must acknowledge and take into consideration the interconnected systems that positively or negatively affect efforts to strengthen democratic principles and institutions.

Report and reflect on challenges, and incorporate lessons learned into other programs — Implementers in the field are most likely aware of challenges as they experience them and might not consider it necessary to report on them. There are, however, several benefits to doing so. First, instituting formal project mechanisms of inward reflection forces implementers to periodically dedicate time to identify and think through elements that might be undermining the success of the project and act on them before progress stalls. While implementers may not be able to solve these issues immediately, defining them can help identify actors who could address them or, at a minimum, build knowledge of the challenges beyond a small group of people in the field. This information can be a valuable addition to the exchange of best practices and lessons learned help avoid the same mistakes when implementing similar programs in similar contexts.

Case Studies

Nigeria

In Nigeria, as CEPPS was supporting the Election Commission to improve the voter registration in 2008, it became clear that efforts to make the voters’ list more inclusive and representative of the Nigerian population were undermined by an issue beyond technical remediation: *purdah*, the practice of secluding girls and women within the family, kept many women from registering.

In this case, simple institutionalization of women-only queues or special days for registration, rather than an expensive technological innovation, could help achieve the goal of registering more female voters.

Angola

In Angola, churches were identified as key partners for successful peace programming, and CEPPS ultimately leveraged faith-based coalitions from churches in almost every corner of the country to discuss how churches can influence the overall electoral process. could help achieve the goal of registering more female voters.

Reflection should occur in a regular and intentional way, and program teams should build reflection sessions into their work plans and budgets.³⁹ Given the sensitivity of some of this information, such reports must be treated carefully and should not be made public.

“Frequent communication with the [USAID] mission helped us share a good understanding of moving pieces in the country and set the stage for when shifts were needed.”

Build flexibility into the program work plan and budget —

To formalize a commitment to the big picture (i.e., achieving goals rather than simply completing a sequence of planned activities), implementers must build flexibility into work plans and budgets. This includes using reflection sessions to guide activities and optimize the use of resources on paths that bring them closer to achieving the stated goals. Changes to interventions might also lead to budgetary adjustments, so implementers must build this flexibility into their budgets, especially by creating pools of funding to respond to new opportunities in the country.⁴⁰ Implementers interviewed for this project concurred that donors’ openness to this flexibility and embrace of adaptive management has been invaluable to advance programs in difficult environments. One interlocutor further shared that “frequent communication with the [USAID] mission helped us share a good understanding of moving pieces in the country and set the stage for when shifts were needed.”

There are also instances in which, although implementers and donors agree that program adjustments are needed, procedures or requirements included in the donor agreements slow them down. While some such requirements are necessary to ensure structured programs and the accountability of implementers, the challenge is to reform procedures intended to ensure a balance of flexible interventions and rigorous commitment to results.



IFES Ukraine participates in a lessons learned workshop with the CEC.

Case Study

Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire, CEPPS, with USAID’s support and flexibility, decided to proceed with developing training-of-trainer sessions and materials for voter registration monitoring in 2008 despite government authorities’ delays in adopting guidelines for these procedures.

Although the electoral commission was initially opposed to scheduling workshops before completing its official training calendar, CEPPS’ and USAID’s decision to move forward with the assistance that its partners desired is likely to have spurred the authorities to take action that enabled the registration process to finally begin.

³⁹ For practical tools to organize reflection sessions for adaptive management, see Pact’s “Adaptive management: A practical guide to mitigating uncertainty and advancing evidence-based programming” (2020) at <https://www.pactworld.org/library/adaptive-management-practical-guide-mitigating-uncertainty-and-advancing-evidence-based>

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Invest in broader results and impact evaluation — Looking at bigger-picture impact and the causal links between program activities and results can help implementers adapt existing programs and adapt lessons to similar projects. An impact evaluation conducted during the program can help explain, for example, why, even though an initiative intended to help prevent political violence met expectations for participation, it did not help mitigate violence. The impact evaluation would analyze how participants used tools or knowledge acquired during the initiative, the extent of community dissemination of such gains (beyond direct beneficiaries) and the sustainability or longevity of the initiative's effects, enabling implementers to adjust the program accordingly.

This type of more in-depth analysis of results, even though an initiative intended to help prevent political violence met expectations for participation, it did not help mitigate violence. The impact evaluation would analyze how participants used tools or knowledge acquired during the initiative, the extent of community dissemination of such gains (beyond direct beneficiaries) and the sustainability or longevity of the initiative's effects, enabling implementers to adjust the program accordingly.

Case Studies

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2007, the two contesting coalitions asked CEPPS to conduct a training-of-trainers for poll watchers for the second-round presidential elections. Given the tense security situation and deep distrust prevailing after the first round, CEPPS and USAID deemed this a priority activity that fell within the purview of the program, especially as the trainings were to take place for poll watchers in the provinces, where significant organizational problems occurred during the first-round elections.



Liberian voters queue up to vote at 8:00 a.m.

Liberia

In Liberia, an evaluation team contracted by USAID eight years after the launch of the program found that CEPPS activities contributed directly to strengthening the understanding and knowledge of the civic leaders and members of the CSOs that participated in the program.

Conclusions

The extensive academic literature on democracy and governance aid in post-conflict environments features fairly different conclusions. While some researchers suggest that some democracy aid is always better than no aid at all,⁴¹ others argue that democracy aid might be pointless or harmful to stability (when stability comes from an authoritarian regime, for example).^{42,43} Our in-depth review and analysis of CEPPS' experiences in post-conflict countries — although only a sample of the universe of democracy and governance work — suggests that contrasting findings regarding the power of this type of aid are likely due, to a large extent, to the different contexts and ways in which the aid is implemented. As discussed throughout this report, different post-conflict environments, program design and implementers' ability to overcome challenges can all significantly affect the overall success of a program.

The considerations below regarding **country context** do not mean that donors and implementers should avoid the more difficult and uninviting environments altogether. In fact, some of these complex contexts might be those that most need support. The purpose of discussing these differences is rather to highlight that different contexts may require different approaches and that it is crucial not only to understand the circumstances in which a program operates but also to respect them and be realistic about what the program can accomplish.

Regarding the country context, implementers tend to be more successful in:

- Engaging local partners and achieving positive results in countries where conflict was limited and grievances mostly resolved, rather than in countries where, despite a ceasefire or peace agreement, the roots and triggers of conflict were still present, causing hatred and mistrust among potential partners;
- Conducting activities and operating effectively in countries that provide reasonable security conditions and physical infrastructure, rather than in countries where implementers and beneficiaries are afraid of developing activities or struggle to do so due to lack of transportation or communication; and
- Implementing programs in countries where they are able to build positive personal relationships with local stakeholders and attract political buy-in rather than in countries where they are seen as a threat or where local stakeholders show no openness to the program.

Regarding the design and implementation of programs, implementers tend to:

- Effect more meaningful changes in countries where they have more time to build relationships and work with local partners to consolidate gains and transfer skills, rather than in countries where programs are short and limited in scope;
- Contribute to more peaceful electoral processes in countries where power sharing already exists to some extent and the strengthening of political actors leads to more pluralism and representation, rather than in countries where these efforts trigger repression from dominant figures;

42 Lappin, R. (2010). The Unique Challenges of Post-Conflict Democracy Assistance. *Peace Review*, 22(2), 178–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402651003751479>

43 Hegre, H. (2001). Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992. *American Political Science Review*, 95(1), 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055401000119>

44 Fearon, J. and Laitin, D. (2003). Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review*, 97(1), 75–90. www.jstor.org/stable/3118222

- Be more successful in creating lasting outcomes when they focus on building capacity, transferring skills, strengthening institutions and building a roadmap to self-reliance, rather than when they provide only *ad hoc* assistance to fix immediate problems; and
- Optimize resources better and yield more positive results from interventions when they conduct intentional adaptive management and reorient the program based on the changing context and windows of opportunity, rather than when following rigid work plans.

These findings remind us that, while replicating successful interventions may be a good approach in general, those interventions might fail in certain post-conflict countries not because they are poorly designed, but because they are a poor fit. To avoid wasting resources in stalled or ineffective programs, donors and implementers must spend considerable time and effort not only in the design phase but throughout implementation, regularly reflecting on the program's contribution to the ultimate outcomes it is intended to achieve. These exercises are only as productive as the team's capacity to adapt and reorient the program toward more appropriate interventions.

All of these considerations, in addition to the lessons learned from CEPPS program implementation described in previous sections, highlight the importance of careful contextualization of interventions and of a clear understanding of how they can contribute to stabilization goals, especially if those paths do not seem straightforward. The need for contextualization goes beyond simply understanding a country's history to considering the different active systems — the country's economic, societal, cultural and political forces — and their effects and influences on program interventions. As systems change, so should democracy and governance programs. Our success will depend on our capacity to understand and respond to the systems.

Finally, although the lessons discussed in this report can help implementers better navigate the program design and implementation processes to ensure the successful completion of interventions, the extent to which the interventions lead to long-term, sustainable results still needs to be explored in greater depth. To do so, in the next phase of this project we will explore the perspectives of former beneficiaries of CEPPS programs in post-conflict countries and understand what types of results stand out, which outcomes were short-lived and how to better structure assistance to support continuous democratic progress.

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Annex 1 – Country Contexts

Afghanistan

In 1996, the Taliban seized control of Kabul and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, beginning a five-year civil war, the latest in a series of violent conflicts that have consumed the nation since the 1970s. The Bonn Peace Agreement, signed in 2001 by representatives of several anti-Taliban groups, created a roadmap and timetable for establishing peace and security, reconstructing the country, re-establishing some key institutions and protecting human rights. In 2004 and 2005, Afghans cast ballots for elected representatives for the first time in over three decades. However, conflict and instability have continued throughout the country.

CEPPS programming aimed to support the effective and educated participation of Afghan voters in the electoral process and to encourage transparent and accountable elections by building strong institutions and increased citizen participation in the election process.

Angola

The Angolan Civil War began in 1975 between two former anti-colonial guerrilla movements, the communist People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the anti-communist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The conflict was considered a proxy war between the Soviet Union and the United States, along with their allies. Conflict continued intermittently until the assassination of UNITA Leader Jonas Savimbi in February 2002, eventually leading to a peace agreement in April 2002 between the victorious MPLA and UNITA. After the peace accord, no consensus was reached regarding a timeframe for elections or organizational and logistical challenges; elections were ultimately delayed until 2008.

CEPPS programming began in 2003 and focused on training civil society organizations to better engage in the electoral process, carry out civic education training and conduct advocacy efforts.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnian war took place between 1992 and 1995 as part of the larger breakup of Yugoslavia. Following Bosnia and Herzegovina's declaration of independence, bitter ethnic conflict erupted. The war ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in its final version in December 1995. The warring factions agreed to promote peace and stability; they also agreed to a single state with a complex internal dual-entity administrative structure that included a rotating State Presidency. The end of the war created an opportunity for the country to move forward in rebuilding its shattered economy and infrastructure.

Early objectives of CEPPS programming, which began in full in 2001, were to enhance the organizational and operational capacity of political parties, support the Brčko Assembly in developing more effective and transparent legislative processes and in supporting and strengthening local election commissions.

Burundi

The Burundian Civil War, which began in 1993, was a result of longstanding tensions between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups. The signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in 2000 led to the creation of power-sharing government structures designed to bring the country's main political actors together in a coalition government. The conflict formally ended in 2005, following successful national elections.

CEPPS programming, which began in 2013, had the overarching goal of fostering dialogue among stakeholders to develop a conducive environment and legal framework for genuinely competitive elections in the context of political alternance that part of the population eagerly expected in 2015.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic Bush War was a civil war between Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) rebels and government forces, beginning after François Bozizé seized the presidency violently in 2003. Beginning in 2007, various rebel factions signed a number of peace agreements, including the 2008 Global Peace Accord, which granted amnesty and called for a disarmament process to integrate former rebels into society. In 2009, the Independent Electoral Commission was established to oversee the national elections, ultimately held in 2011.

The government's limited presence outside the capital, and its inability to deliver improved living conditions for the majority of the population, resulted in citizen apathy and disengagement from political processes. CEPPS programming began in 2011 with the aim of increasing civil society's capacity to promote dialogue on governance and development priorities and to advocate for the implementation of the Central African Republic's ongoing decentralization process.

However, violence persisted despite these attempts at peace, leading to an eventual outbreak of a second civil war in 2012 that saw Bozizé overthrown and widespread conflict across the country.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Two successive wars were fought in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1996 and 2003 following years of internal strife, economic decline and spillover from Rwandan genocide. After 32 years of authoritarian rule, fighting erupted in 1996, resulting in regime change and the political rise of rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Regional tensions and irregular proxy fighting continued in the following years, leading to Kabila's killing and the involvement of nine African countries and around 25 armed groups in the second Congo War. Peace talks in 2002 led to the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement by the Congolese parties of the Inter Congolese Dialogue, which detailed a plan for transitional governance. More than 5.4 million people — most of them civilians — died during and after the two wars.

CEPPS programming, which began in 2004, aimed to facilitate the implementation of a legal framework for a democratic transition to representative and accountable government; broaden citizen interest and enhance public participation during the transition period; and build the capacity of the election management body, political parties and citizen observation.

Georgia

Ethno-political conflict between Georgia and the former autonomous region of South Ossetia began in 1989. In 1990, South Ossetia's declaration of state sovereignty resulted in the deployment of Georgian troops. In 2004, the conflict again flared up as tensions between Georgia and Russia — which had a large peacekeeping presence in South Ossetia — escalated. In August 2008, Georgia's military, in an attempt to regain control of the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, confronted the Russian army in what is known as the Five-Day War. A final ceasefire agreement was brokered by the French president days later.

CEPPS programming began with the objectives of providing support for youth organizations to develop into independent, grassroots entities, increasing the number of youth engaged in the political process, strengthening party platforms based on public polling data and increasing transparency in the election process.

CEPPS programming resumed in 2007 to support legal and systemic changes, the professional development of election administration and procedures, a reinvigorated civil society and increased public engagement in citizenship and decision-making.

Guatemala

The 1996 United Nations-sponsored peace accords brought an end to decades of civil war between the government of Guatemala and rebel groups collectively known as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. General elections, generally regarded as free and fair, were held in 1999.

CEPPS programming began in 2003 with the aim of ensuring the transparency and integrity of the electoral process through election monitoring and the development of a national citizen network to promote long-term accountability. The international community believed the 2003 general elections posed a critical test to the country's democracy.

Indonesia

The insurgency in Aceh, beginning in 1976, was a conflict raised by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) against the Indonesian government to make the province independent. A unilateral GAM ceasefire was negotiated as part of the peace process after a 2003 government offensive and devastating 2004 tsunami, which consolidated political will to join forces in the reconstruction process. An eventual peace agreement was reached in 2005, largely due to an offer to GAM for broader autonomy, including the right to form political parties.

CEPPS' work in Indonesia, reviewed in this study, began in 2003. CEPPS partners had been in Indonesia for a longer period as part of the larger process of the democratic political transition of the country since its first democratic elections. Authoritarian president Suharto resigned in 1998, and the first transitional elections were held in 1999. The next critical transitional elections were held in 2004. The 2003 CEPPS programming had the initial objectives of assisting election officials, legislators and executive branch officials in establishing an electoral framework that would promote increased accountability, inclusiveness, transparency and participation in elections, and supporting political parties in establishing democratic internal structures and conducting issues-based campaigns.

Liberia

The Second Liberia Civil War began in 1999, with fighting between the Guinean-backed Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia and the Charles Taylor government. In August 2003, President Charles Taylor resigned and was exiled to Nigeria. Shortly thereafter, all warring parties signed the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, putting an end to 14 years of violent civil wars. The Transitional Government of Liberia was installed in October and held power until the first Liberian general election in 2005. Elected officials included former warlords, inexperienced first-time politicians and some illiterate members.

CEPPS programming, which began in 2004, aimed to support civil society in the electoral process through election monitoring, provide direct support to the National Elections Commission in their administration of the 2005 elections, and to strengthen the capacity of the Liberian Legislative Committee to exercise constructive oversight of the executive branch.

Myanmar

After five decades of military rule and general elections that were widely considered neither free nor fair, Myanmar began a political reform process in 2010. In accordance with the country's Seven-Step Roadmap to a Discipline-Flourishing Democracy, Myanmar's military junta was officially dissolved on March 30, 2011, by the newly established civilian government. Under President Thein Sein, the government continued to make conciliatory overtures to opposition political parties and negotiate a nationwide ceasefire agreement with multiple armed ethnic groups (14 of the 17 largest rebel factions participated in the State Peace Deal negotiations).

CEPPS programming, beginning in 2012, had the overall goal of promoting more genuine and inclusive electoral processes in Myanmar as part of broader democratic reforms in the country. Activities were envisioned to assess and build capacity among election-related partner organizations and the Parliament.

Nepal

The Nepalese Civil War, or the Maoist Insurgency, was fought between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the government of Nepal from 1996 to 2006. In April 2006, public uprisings against undemocratic rule resulted in King Gyanendra reinstating Parliament and called upon the Seven Party Alliance to lead the transition. Although the Maoists initially rejected the move, party leaders announced that they would respect the Parliamentary elections if they were free and fair. The civil war was resolved in November 2006 through the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Accord, which allowed the Maoists to participate in government and placed their weapons under UN monitoring.

While CEPPS has been in Nepal for a longer time, CEPPS programming, discussed in this report, began in 2010. Its goals were to restore public confidence in democratic processes and institutions and to encourage political participation, especially from marginalized groups, in a country still recovering from a decade of civil war.

Niger

From 1991 to 1997, Tuareg groups engaged in armed struggle against the government of Niger, demanding greater political autonomy and economic support to the Northwest regions. After attempted peace accords in 1993 and 1994, the last rebel group, the USARF, de-armed in 1997. However, a second Tuareg rebellion began in 2007, led by the Niger Movement for Justice; it was resolved by a Libyan-backed peace deal in May 2009. In 2009, a largely contested constitutional referendum was held to extend Mamadou Tandja's presidential mandate. In early 2010, heavily armed military soldiers led by Major Salou Djibou stormed the presidential palace in Niger, captured President Tandja and cabinet members, and declared a coup. With promises to reinstate democracy, and under international pressure, the military government established the National Consultative Council to head the transition process in complete independence from the junta.

CEPPS programming, beginning in 2003, aimed to increase awareness of and participation in Niger's local elections and to enhance the capacity of Nigerien political parties to conduct poll watching activities. In 2010, CEPPS programming worked to strengthen the capacity of the newly established National Independent Electoral Commission in preparation for the 2011 elections.

Nigeria

The 1999 general elections marked the transition from military to civilian rule in Nigeria. Elections in 2003 reflected real progress in the transparency and competitiveness of the electoral process, but there was also a strong consensus, among political parties and within civil society, that the electoral system needed further fundamental reform. However, civil strife continued within the country. In July 2004, the National People's Defense Volunteer Force declared an armed struggle against the federal government, leading to a fight for self-determination and resources. A ceasefire was reached in September 2004 between the Niger Delta militia and the federal government of Nigeria.

Initial CEPPS programming, beginning in 2004, sought to strengthen capacity and efficiency of key legislative committees; increase the capacity of Nigerian CSOs and their involvement with the Assembly; reinforce linkages between legislators and their constituencies; and enhance the ability and effectiveness of women legislators.

Peru

Intrastate conflict over land rights between the Peruvian government and left-wing guerilla groups began in 1965 and resumed in the 1980s with the emergence of Sendero Luminoso and Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. Conflict continued on and off until 2011, when Sendero Luminoso's leader announced a ceasefire and vowed to fight for political goals without arms.

CEPPS programming, which began in 2007, aimed to improve the legal environment to encourage political party reform, increase party representation and outreach, and support more issue-based and policy-focused political parties.

Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone civil war began in March 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front, with support from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, attempted to overthrow Joseph Momoh's government. In April 1992 Momoh was deposed in a coup, and the subsequent decade saw violent bloodshed, attempted peace agreements, intervention by world leaders and multiple transitions of power. In 2001, with support from UN forces and British and Guinean troops, the Sierra Leone Army defeated the Revolutionary United Front; and in January 2002, interim President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah declared the civil war over. The first general elections were held in May 2002, where President Kabbah and his party won landslide victories.

The CEPPS program, which began in 2001, aimed to 1) provide women and youth with the skills, knowledge and techniques to increase their understanding of the political system and electoral framework and prepare them to participate actively in the political process and 2) to help political parties become more inclusive of target groups in selecting candidates and party leaders, and 3) provide direct support to the National Electoral Commission in their administration of the elections.

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan civil conflict began in 1983 with an intermittent insurgency against the government led by the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam. In 2002, Norway brokered a cease-fire agreement between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government. Although peace talks broke down the following year, a fragile truce held, largely attributable to the devastation of the 2004 tsunami. In August 2005, the assassination of Sri Lanka's foreign minister reignited the conflict; for the next two years, the cease-fire agreement was repeatedly violated. In January 2008, the Sri Lankan government formally withdrew from the truce. In May 2009, the violent conflict ended after a large-scale operation by the army defeated the Tamil Tigers and killed its leader.¹

Initial CEPPS programming aimed to enhance and strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to monitor and report on the fairness and transparency of the election process, report on the fairness and accuracy of election coverage produced by national media outlets and provide equipment and technical assistance necessary to computerize the national electoral registry and bring it up to internationally acceptable standards.

⁴⁷ Bajoria, J. (May 18, 2009). *The Sri Lankan Conflict*. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/sri-lankan-conflict>

Annex 2 – Types of Assistance Per Country

	Afghanistan	Angola	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Burundi	Central African Republic	Côte d'Ivoire	Democratic Republic of Congo	Georgia	Guatemala	Indonesia	Liberia	Myanmar	Nepal	Niger	Nigeria	Peru	Sierra Leone	Sri Lanka
Training and capacity-building for EMBs	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Training and capacity-building for political parties			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
Training and capacity-building for CSOs	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓				✓			✓
Training and capacity-building for independent media	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Electoral legal analysis and reforms	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Electoral operations support	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Peace and security planning training; Electoral justice	✓			✓									✓	✓	✓			✓
Political finance and anti-corruption support	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓

Voter information and civic education reform	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Election observation/party poll watching		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Inclusion (women/youth/persons with disabilities/ethnic minorities)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



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