

ELECTORAL RISKS

Guide on External Risk Factors

Third edition



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NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The [first edition](#) of this Guide was published in 2013 as the support document for the Electoral Risk Management Tool. In 2018 it underwent a redesign. [The Guide](#) was reformatted and allocated an ISBN and a digital object identifier (DOI).

The 2013 and 2018 versions of this Guide drew on the human security framework, which offered a comprehensive understanding of context-related factors that can undermine the credibility of electoral processes. This edition draws on the democracy model developed by International IDEA to assess the global state of democracy.

This has two benefits. Firstly, it promotes an understanding that electoral integrity is interlinked with the quality of other democratic institutions and processes, which makes this Guide particularly suited to contexts where security risks are less prominent.¹ Secondly, it allows users to tap into the wealth of methodological guidance and data offered by the Global State of Democracy Indices and reports, and the Democracy Tracker. The latter is updated on a monthly basis, providing insights into ongoing developments.

The Guide is a living document and will be continually updated. International IDEA welcomes feedback and user experiences. For more information, please contact the Electoral Processes team (elections@idea.int).

¹ In contexts where human security challenges are dominant features, readers should consider using the previous version of this Guide (Alihodžić and Uribe Burcher 2018).

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial intelligence
CSO	Civil society organization
EMB	Electoral management body
GBV	Gender-based violence
GSoD	Global State of Democracy
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual
VAWE	Violence against women in elections

Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Note to the third edition.....	iv
Abbreviations	v
About this Guide	1
Purpose of this Guide	1
Users of this Guide	1
Definitions	1
The structure of the Guide and description of the factors.....	2
Customization	4
Risk factors related to the Global State of Democracy democratic model	5
1. Limited Suffrage	7
2. Restricted Political Parties	8
3. Unelected Government	9
4. Ineffective Parliament	10
5. Limited Local Democracy	11
6. Limited Access to Justice	12
7. Limited Civil Liberties	13
8. Lack of Political Equality	14
9. Lack of Judicial Independence	15
10. Unpredictable Enforcement	16
11. Corruption	17
12. Constrained Civil Society and Civic Engagement	18

Risk factors that fall outside of the Global State of Democracy model.....	19
13. Environmental Hazards.....	21
14. Presence of Problematic Online Actors.....	22
15. Violent Contexts (Variety of Violence)	23
16. Gender-based Discrimination and Violence.....	24
References	25
About the authors.....	29
About International IDEA	30

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This Guide can be used as resource material for training, assessment and analysis efforts.

The Guide outlines key *context-related (exogenous or external)* risk factors that can undermine electoral integrity, either as a cause or contributing cause. When these risks factors materialize, they can generate stresses, shocks or crises in the electoral process.

Combined with the partner Guide on internal (process) risk factors (Third Edition Alihodžić et al. 2024), it provides a more complete overview of electoral integrity risk factors. In contexts where human security challenges are dominant features, readers should consider using the previous version of this Guide (Alihodžić and Uribe Burcher 2018).

USERS OF THIS GUIDE

The Guide is developed as a resource for electoral management bodies (EMBs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and other state and non-state actors who have mandates and interests in protecting the integrity of elections.

DEFINITIONS

Elections with integrity are defined as ‘any election that is based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in international standards and agreements, and is professional, impartial, and

transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle' (Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012).

Electoral risk is the likelihood of negative occurrence in elections that may be caused by external or internal factors.

Internal risk factors (endogenous factors) are process-related conditions that may lead to increased electoral risks.

External risk factors (exogenous factors) are context-related conditions that may lead to increased electoral risk.

One simple way to distinguish between internal and external risk factors is that the former are election-specific and do not exist outside the electoral context, while the latter are characteristics of the context regardless of elections.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE FACTORS

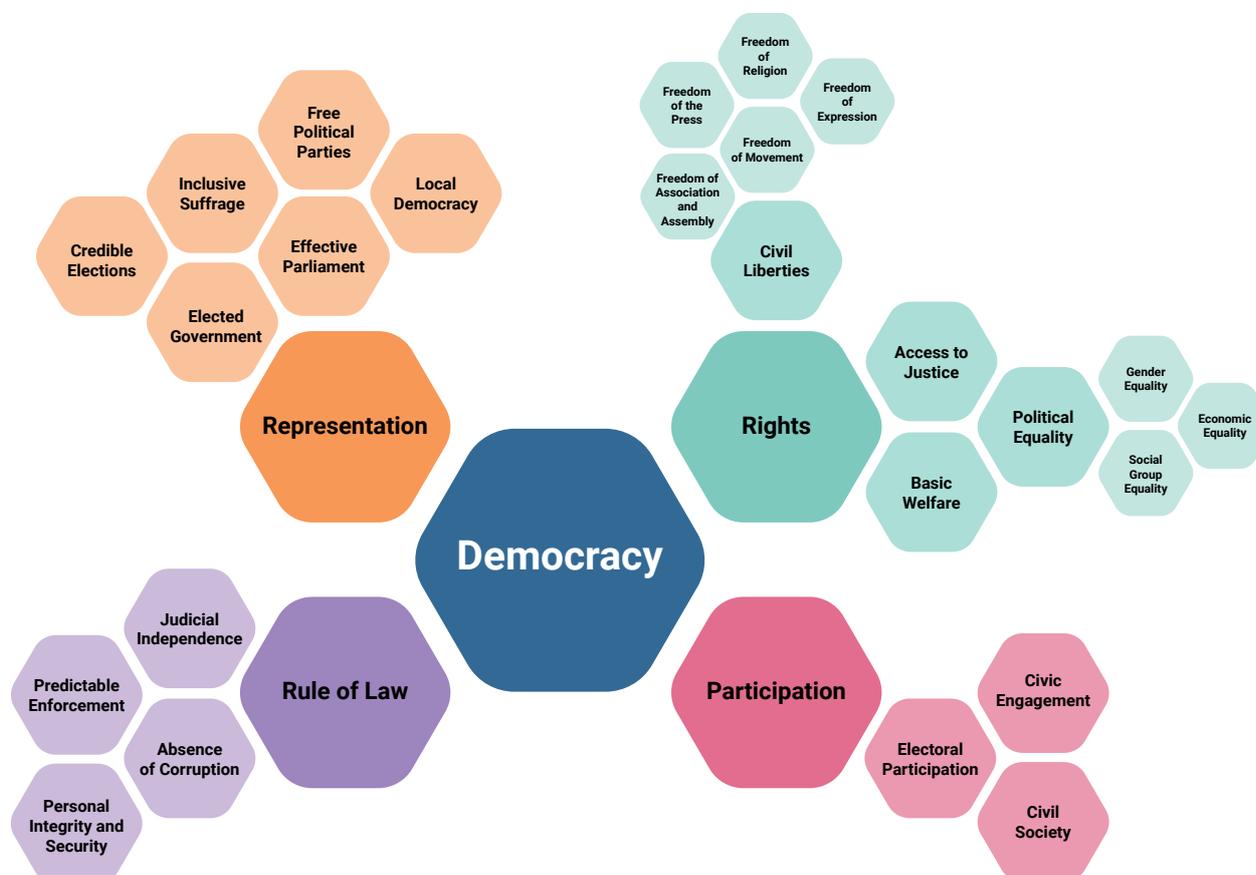
This Guide's structure primarily draws on International IDEA's democracy model designed to measure the global state of democracy (hereafter the [GSoD model](#), see Skaaning 2022). This conceptual framework was introduced by the [Global State of Democracy Report in 2017](#) (International IDEA 2017) to denote key [attributes and subattributes of democracy](#) (International IDEA n.d.). The current model, revised in 2022, points to four core attributes of democracy: Representation, Rights, Participation and Rule of Law (Figure 1).

This Guide thus benefits from a well-established methodology; users can refer to the [Global State of Democracy Indices](#) (GSoD Indices) data set or methods to establish or examine democratic trends in respective countries. In addition, users can benefit from the [Democracy Tracker](#) which provides monthly, event-based information on democracy and human rights developments in 173 countries. Event reports include a description of the event, specific aspects of democracy that have been impacted, the magnitude of the impact, links to original sources and keywords to enable further research.

The Guide refers to a negative state of these subattributes as to factors that increase risks to undermined electoral integrity. In addition to factors from the GSoD model, the Guide introduces the risk factors emanating from other key context-related characteristics. These include **Environmental Hazards**, **Presence of Problematic Online Actors**, **Violent Contexts**, and **Gender-based Discrimination and Violence**.

Readers should note that subattributes **Credible Elections** and **Electoral Participation** are omitted; the former because it is a proxy of electoral integrity and latter because it is addressed in the *Guide on Internal Risk Factors*.

Figure 1. Global State of Democracy framework



Source: *The Global State of Democracy 2024: Strengthening the Legitimacy of Elections in a Time of Radical Uncertainty* (Stockholm: International IDEA, forthcoming 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.55>>.

Other subattributes and risk factors are omitted or merged because they strongly interrelate when impacting electoral integrity, namely:

- subattribute **Basic Welfare** is omitted because, when considered in the context of elections, it affects more voting preferences than electoral integrity (although risk factor **Corruption** refers to instances in which corrupt politicians and officeholders use access to welfare and services to mobilize/reward its members and supporters);
- subattributes **Civil Society** and **Civic Engagement** are merged into a single risk factor named **Constrained Civil Society** and **Civic Engagement**;
- risk factor **Gender-based Discrimination and Violence** covers **Gender Equality** which, in the GSoD model, is a sub-element of subattribute **Political Equality**; and
- risk factor **Violent Contexts (Varieties of Violence)** covers subattribute **Personal Integrity and Security**.

For each risk factor, the following details are provided:

1. Introduction (for factors defined by the GSoD model related denotation is used).
2. A question that needs answering to determine whether the factor represents a risk in a given country context.
3. A narrative explanation (generic and indicative) of how the given risk factors can undermine electoral integrity.

CUSTOMIZATION

The list of risk factors presented in this Guide is not exhaustive. Also, how risk factors are named or described may not fit local terminologies and specific contexts. Users may reasonably decide to merge some of the factors described, or generate several risk factors that refer to issues now elaborated under a single factor. Users should consider customizing vocabulary once critical risks are identified in a given country and electoral context.

Risk factors related to the Global State of Democracy democratic model



1. LIMITED SUFFRAGE

In the GSoD model, Inclusive Suffrage denotes the extent to which adult citizens have equal and universal voting rights, both passive and active.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where suffrage is limited, how can it affect electoral integrity?

Inclusive suffrage is a human right and an essential precondition for the conduct of democratic elections. Elections cannot yield credible results when broad and inclusive suffrage does not exist. Suffrage issues can relate to a lack of openness and accessibility of the process to all citizens.

The openness of the process implies de jure suffrage, ensuring that all citizens (including ethnic minorities, displaced persons and refugees, migrant workers etc.) have political rights that are realized through participation in the election of their political representatives.

Accessibility of the process implies that reasonable arrangements for registration and voting are in place to cater for the participation of all eligible voters, including those living in institutional settings or who, for any other reason or personal condition, cannot vote in regular polling places (also relates to factor: **Political Equality**).

Both de jure exclusions and limited access can be strategies for excluding political opponents and their supporters from exercising their right to participate, thus undermining electoral integrity.

2. RESTRICTED POLITICAL PARTIES

In the GSoD model, Free Political Parties denotes the extent to which political parties are free to form and to campaign for political office.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where the freedom of political parties is limited, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

At the core of electoral processes are political parties and independent candidates who participate on equal terms, regardless of whether they are ruling or opposition parties. Restricting political parties' freedom, which can also happen outside the electoral race, may profoundly impact the integrity of electoral processes.

Ruling parties and elites can weaken their political opponents by abusing their positions of power. Examples include staging false legal processes against opposition parties and leaders, campaigns of assault, harassment and intimidation directed against opposition members and supporters, or even political murders.

When political parties cannot function freely, they can be weakened to the point of being unable to meaningfully participate in electoral processes. In such instances, electoral integrity is undermined.

3. UNELECTED GOVERNMENT

In the GSoD model, Elected Government denotes the extent to which national, representative government offices are filled through elections.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where the government is not elected, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

In most instances, elections ensure peaceful transition from one democratically elected government to another. However, sometimes, democratic elections take place in a country where the government is not elected.

This may be due to one or more of the following: (a) the country is transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy or (b) from war to peace, and the continuity of the elected government might have been interrupted; the country may (c) be undergoing a transition from deep political crises to democratic consolidation; or (d) previous elections served as a façade for authoritarian regimes to acquire external legitimacy.

In the first three instances, it is often the case that countries are governed by some form of transitional authority. Also, elections may be managed by provisional electoral management bodies. Risks that can materialize to undermine electoral integrity include the lack of continuity of democratic governance and holding of elections, uncertainty about whether actors genuinely intend to democratize, and trade-offs relating to the timing and sequencing of elections (which carry political, legal, technical, security and other risks).

4. INEFFECTIVE PARLIAMENT

In the GSoD model, Effective Parliament denotes the extent to which the legislature is capable of overseeing the executive.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where parliaments are ineffective, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

There is a strong linkage between effective parliaments and electoral integrity. Through their law-making function, parliaments play an essential role in implementing electoral legal reforms to optimize conditions for elections with integrity. For example, these efforts can include periodic revisions of boundary delimitation and alignment of national electoral laws with international commitments and agreed standards. Parliament must ensure that the electoral legal framework provides a level playing field for all political actors.

Parliaments also need to allocate sufficient resources for the conduct of elections and they often appoint the leadership of electoral management bodies in a non-partisan manner. They play an important role in the oversight of EMBs and any other agency with a mandate to support the organization of elections. This oversight must be exercised carefully to avoid the perception of interference (AGORA n.d.).

When parliaments are ineffective in performing their duties, the integrity of elections may be at risk.

5. LIMITED LOCAL DEMOCRACY

In the GSoD model, Local Democracy denotes the extent to which citizens can participate in free elections for influential local governments.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where local democracy is limited, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Local democracy often refers to:

the decentralization of power and responsibility to democratic institutions at village, municipal, city, town, district, county, and equivalent local levels—typically, but not exclusively, through elected mayors, councillors and other local officials. Effective local democracy can facilitate public participation, improve service delivery, strengthen communities, and improve development outcomes. [However] excessive localization can... create local oligarchies or local autocracy in which unaccountable powers are exercised without real democratic representation or accountability.
(Bulmer 2017: 3)

When local democracy is constrained, whether because local elections do not take place, there are limits to participation in them, or they deliver oligarchic and unaccountable representatives, electoral integrity may be at risk.

6. LIMITED ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In the GSoD model, Access to Justice denotes the extent to which the legal system is fair. That is, citizens are not subject to arbitrary arrest or detention and they have the right to be under the jurisdiction of—and to seek redress from—competent, independent and impartial tribunals without undue delay.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where access to justice is limited, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Justice delivers when it is accessible to all. Equal justice empowers individuals and groups to challenge discrimination, deal with grievances, have their voices heard, or hold decision makers accountable.

Access to justice entails broad public access to justice at the local, regional, national and international levels. It implies that financial costs for seeking justice are reasonable, that citizens and media professionals are given access to the courtrooms in which judicial proceedings take place, and that judgements are explained and made public. Limited access to justice may disproportionately affect marginalized groups such as women, ethnic and religious minorities, or poor people.

In countries where access to justice is limited, there is a risk that the same will be the case for electoral justice. In such instances, the integrity of elections may be at risk ([International IDEA 2010](#); [Figueroa 2016](#)).

7. LIMITED CIVIL LIBERTIES

In the GSoD model, Civil Liberties denotes the extent to which civil rights and liberties are respected (citizens enjoy the freedoms of expression, press, association and assembly, religion, and movement).

Question: When elections take place in contexts where civil liberties are limited, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Civil rights and liberties include freedom of expression, press, association and assembly, religion, and movement. Freedom of expression relates to the extent to which the public is able to discuss political issues openly. The freedom of association and assembly relates to the extent to which political and civil groups (e.g. civil rights groups) can freely organize. The freedom of press relates to the extent to which the news media are diverse, honest, critical of the government, and free from censorship (from the government or self-imposed). The freedom of religion relates to the extent to which individuals and groups can freely practise religion. Freedom of movement refers to the extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of foreign and domestic movement.

The absence of these freedoms could profoundly impact electoral integrity. For example, when elections take place in an environment where political issues cannot be freely debated, where citizens cannot politically organize freely, where media reporting on elections is controlled by the government, where individuals cannot compete in elections because of their religion, race or ethnicity, or where movement is restricted, then the context will be less conducive to holding democratic elections.

8. LACK OF POLITICAL EQUALITY

In the GSoD model, Political Equality denotes the extent to which political equality between social groups and genders has been realized (citizens are not subjected to discrimination and exclusion due to their gender or social identity).

Question: When elections take place in contexts where political equality is lacking, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Political inequality refers to constraints on social groups because of their identity (ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic), or marginalization because of their political affiliation, sexual orientation or physical capacities (UN 2010; see also UN 2021).

Numerous studies have shown that inequality can negatively impact electoral participation. For example, economic inequality can depress political interest and participation in the election among all but the most affluent citizens (Solt 2008). Racial and economic inequality—for example, during times of pandemics—and public health inequalities affecting persons with disabilities, among others, are likely to result in decreased electoral participation of disadvantaged groups (Smith and Pattabhiraman 2020). When participation in elections is undermined due to any type of political inequality, electoral integrity will suffer.

9. LACK OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

In the GSoD model, Judicial Independence denotes the extent to which the courts are not subject to undue influence from the other branches of government, especially the executive.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where the judiciary is not independent, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Essential to the functioning of democracy, independence of the judiciary is guaranteed to the judiciary by the state and enshrined in the constitution or the law. It implies impartiality (judicial powers exercised without improper influences, inducements, pressures, threats or interferences), jurisdiction over all issues of a judicial nature, the right to be tried by ordinary courts or tribunals using established legal procedures, etc. (UN 1985).

When the judiciary cannot uphold its independence—in particular, from political parties who interfere directly or through the executive branches—it will lose credibility to resolve electoral disputes and thus its ability to restore electoral integrity where this has been undermined or lost. In such instances, many experts recommend entrusting the resolution of electoral disputes to specialized courts and bodies (International IDEA 2010: 5, 9), although such institutions can also face independence and integrity issues (Norris, Frank and Coma 2014: 97). These issues are elaborated in the *Guide on Internal Risk Factors*.

10. UNPREDICTABLE ENFORCEMENT

In the GSoD model, Predictable Enforcement denotes the extent to which the executive and public officials enforce laws in a predictable manner.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where enforcement is unpredictable, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Predictable enforcement is at the heart of legal certainty. The principle is necessary so that all concerned can calculate the legal consequences of their actions and the outcome of legal proceedings with relative accuracy (Paunio 2009). For the functioning of democratic societies, it is critical that its executive branch predictably enforces laws, while lawmakers and the judiciary branch need to ensure that laws are broadly acceptable, adapted to changing circumstances and predictably interpreted (Paunio 2009; Lindquist and Cross 2010).

Without enforcement, even the best electoral legal framework may fail to deliver elections with integrity. Predictability of law enforcement is critical for elections because if election laws are not consistently enforced, a sense of impunity and/or lack of public trust in the electoral process will take root. Therefore, in countries that face systemic enforcement challenges, this function can be assigned to independent and specialized electoral enforcement agencies, such as electoral prosecutors or electoral courts/tribunals (ACE n.d.a).

11. CORRUPTION

In the GSoD model, Absence of Corruption denotes the extent to which the executive, and public administration more broadly, does not abuse office for personal gain.

Question: When elections take place in contexts where corruption is profound, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Deep-rooted corruption and corrupt behaviours represent a significant risk to electoral integrity for several reasons. Many electoral malpractices rely on corrupt behaviours, including bribing of voters, poll workers or election administrators (vote-buying). In many cases, corrupt politicians and officeholders will misallocate state resources on a discriminatory basis, for example, access to welfare benefits and services, to reward/mobilize their party members and supporters.

A widespread corruptive practice is job patronage, which creates webs of client–patron obligations or encourages illegal contributions. These practices strongly emerge in closely contested elections, where winning margins are expected to be narrow (Rose-Ackerman 2018; Sule, Sani and Mat 2018).

There are differing views concerning the relationship between corruption and turnout. Corruption can increase turnout if citizens can be motivated to remove corrupt elites by turning out to vote. However, corruption can also decrease turnout because it corrodes the political system, leading to distrust and voter apathy. Evidence suggests that the latter is true for countries with low to medium levels of system corruption (Dahlberg and Solevid 2016).

Finally, corruption tends to exacerbate gender inequalities by creating an unconducive environment for female candidates, who are less likely than men to engage in vote-buying or get promoted through nepotism. Because women are less prone to engage in corrupt behaviour, investments in gender equality may result in lower levels of corruption over time (Sida 2015; Transparency International 2013; Schwenk 2022).

12. CONSTRAINED CIVIL SOCIETY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This factor combines two GSoD subattributes that are closely interrelated in elections—Civil Society and Civic Engagement.

In the GSoD model, Civil Society denotes the extent to which organized, voluntary, self-generating and autonomous social life is institutionally possible.

In the GSoD model, Civic Engagement denotes the extent to which people engage in political and non-political associations and trade unions.

Question: When elections take place in contexts in which civil society and civic engagement are constrained, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Civil society space in which citizens can self-organize, and civic engagement as the use of this space to address social and political issues, are both important features of democratic societies.

For civil society actors to be influential, it is necessary that broad parts of the population engage in or support their activities. In countries where the political establishment wishes to undermine civil society, the former makes efforts to cut ties between CSOs and the general public. These actions may include negative campaigns directed against CSOs—often labelling them as foreign emissaries or agents, thus discouraging citizens from attending CSO events—or even prosecutions. In some instances, governments develop networks of fake CSOs to confuse citizens and frustrate genuine civil society efforts (EU TACSO 2019; Ewepu 2021).

CSOs worldwide are well versed in protecting electoral integrity by serving as independent overseers of electoral activities. In a context where civil society and civic engagement are constrained, citizens and CSOs may find it difficult and risky to engage in this task.

RISK FACTORS THAT FALL OUTSIDE OF THE GLOBAL STATE OF DEMOCRACY MODEL



13. ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Question: When elections take place in contexts where environmental hazards materialize, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Environmental hazards are defined as 'extreme events or substances in the Earth and its ecological system that may cause adverse consequences for humans and things they value' (Liverman 2001). Environmental hazards are increasingly connected with climate change and can profoundly impact democratic governance through their effects on among others food security, conflicts, water scarcity and migration (Lindvall 2021).

The number of natural disasters, including floods and cyclones, has tripled in the last four decades (IEP 2020). This dramatic development is consistent with the predictions of climate scientists, and it is thus highly likely that elections will be increasingly affected by natural hazards over time (Asplund et al. 2022). James and Alihodžić (2020) describe the key negative impacts of natural disasters on the integrity of elections. They relate to opportunities for deliberation; contestation; participation; and electoral management quality.

For example, emergencies can reduce opportunities for deliberation by limiting media outlets and independent journalists to operating minimal services. Equality of contestation is undermined in states where incumbents have control over the state media and use it as a campaign tool, while opposition parties—due to a declared emergency—remain in 'lockdowns' and unable to mobilize. Further, emergency relief efforts may involve donations and humanitarian aid becoming misused for buying votes. Evidence also exists that equality of participation can be negatively affected in regions affected by natural disasters. Electoral management delivery is strained because emergencies can force EMBs and others into compromises, impose extra financial challenges or even render elections undeliverable (James and Alihodžić 2020; International IDEA 2022; James, Clark and Asplund 2023).

14. PRESENCE OF PROBLEMATIC ONLINE ACTORS

Question: When elections take place in contexts where problematic online actors are present, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

The information environment has become increasingly difficult to navigate due to the overwhelming amount and wide variety of data, often conflicting and of dubious quality. The unprecedented volume of potentially false or misleading information can flood the users. Foreign interference and domestic disinformation are increasingly concerning phenomena, amplified by artificial intelligence-enabled social media algorithms and mainstream media (Noel and Chan 2022; Dawood 2021).

In a context where problematic actors are manipulating the online information environment, the perpetrators will often target elections as part of a broader effort to undermine and destabilize democratic institutions and processes. 'Online disinformation can amplify voter confusion, reduce turnout, galvanize social cleavages, suppress political participation of women and other marginalized populations, and degrade trust in democratic institutions' (NDI n.d.; NDI 2019). In such instances, the integrity of elections can suffer.

15. VIOLENT CONTEXTS (VARIETY OF VIOLENCE)

Question: When elections take place in contexts marred with violence, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Many countries experience violence resulting from communal conflicts, actions of insurgents and organized crime groups, oppressive governments using security sector agencies, civil wars, and so on. More narrowly, political violence involves ‘a heterogeneous repertoire of actions oriented at inflicting physical, psychological, and symbolic damage to individuals and/or property with the intention of influencing various audiences for affecting or resisting political, social, and/or cultural change’ (Bosi, Ó Dochartaigh and Pisiou 2016: 1). The GSoD model’s subattribute **Personal Integrity and Security** denotes the extent to which bodily integrity is respected and people are free from state and non-state political violence. It examines different types of violations including torture and political/extrajudicial disappearances and killings (International IDEA n.d.).

Elections are high stakes political events. Therefore, when elections take place in violent contexts, they are often marred with violence (Staniland 2015). Fjelde and Höglund (2022) note that violence can become an institutionalized feature of electoral dynamics in electoral autocracies and countries with a conflict-ridden past. Election-related violence—physical, psychological or sexual—results in disfranchisement through the deprivation of citizens’ or groups’ rights and ability to vote and compete (ACE n.d.b) and ultimately can undermine the integrity of the process and its results.

16. GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

Question: When elections take place in contexts where gender-based discrimination and violence are present, how can it impact the integrity of electoral processes?

Gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination constitute one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world; one in three women are subjected to physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. GBV affects women and girls of all socio-economic backgrounds in both developing and developed countries (World Bank 2019; WHO 2021). During times of conflict and crises, the threat of sexual and gender-based violence significantly increases for women, girls and LGBTQIA+ persons. Due to fear of retaliation, stigma, and not being believed, few victims and survivors seek help or report attacks (UN Women 2021).

GBV in politics and elections encompasses a wide range of tactics seeking to exclude women and minorities from political and public life. 'As elections are the main event by which formal political power is established ... VAWE [violence against women in elections] remains the highest barrier to women realizing their political rights' (UN Women/UNDP 2018: 1). Violent acts in politics and elections of this kind should be understood as a continuum including physical, sexual, psychological, and online-based violence (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2023). Acts can range from intimidation and harassment of women in the private, public or political sphere, to forced resignation and assassinations of female candidates (Bjarnegård 2018; Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo 2020).

Technologically facilitated violence against women (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2023) and gendered disinformation (NDI 2021) are growing trends. Gender stereotyping and gender-blind electoral laws and policies risk further inhibiting women's ability to fulfil their electoral rights. Sexual discrimination and GBV therefore remain a risk and threat to the integrity of electoral processes and results worldwide (Thalin & Alihodžić 2023).

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About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

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We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

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The organization of elections is a complex undertaking for any society. It requires the broadest social mobilization and implementation of various electoral activities, while complying with strict procedures and deadlines. Therefore, many things can—and often do—go wrong due to deficient laws, logistical hurdles, technical and human errors, or unethical actions taken by key electoral actors, to mention a few. When risks materialize, they can generate stresses, shocks or crises that can undermine the integrity of the electoral process.

The Guide outlines key context-related (exogenous or external) risk factors that can undermine electoral integrity, either as a cause or contributing cause. When these risk factors materialize, they can generate stresses, shocks or crises in the electoral process. Combined with the partner Guide on internal (process) risk factors, it provides a more complete overview of electoral integrity risk factors.