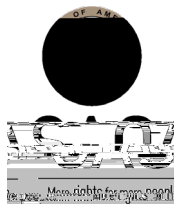




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المنظمة العربية للإدارات الانتخابية



Lessons Learned Processes: Advancing to the Next Elections

Guidelines from and for Election Management Bodies

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For additional resources on lessons learned processes, visit www.IFES.org. To provide feedback on these guidelines, contact lessonslearned@ifes.org.

Lessons Learned Processes: Advancing to the Next Elections

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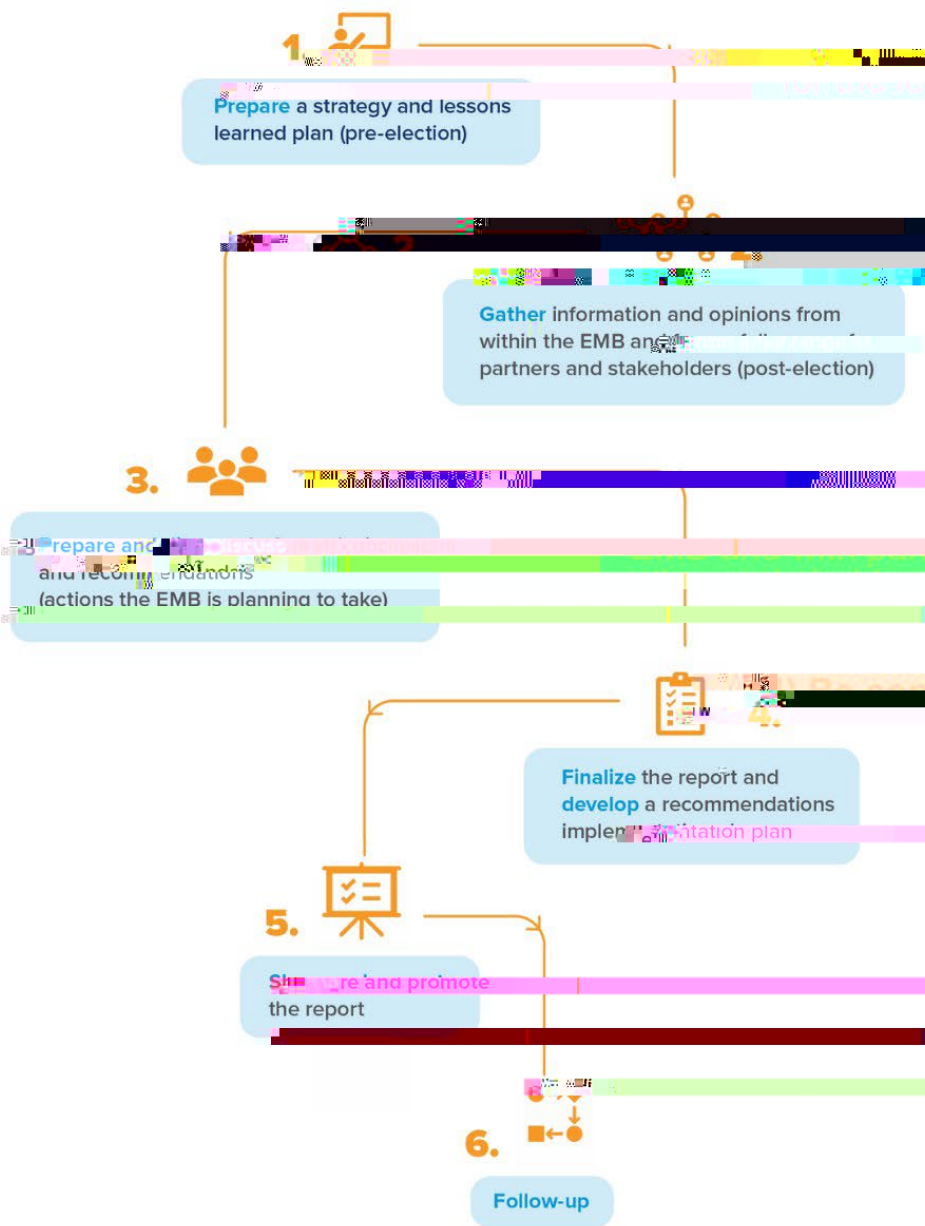
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6 Key Actions for a Successful Lessons Learned Process



7 Key Principles to Learn From

1) Establish a process for the lessons learned process well before an election and involve stakeholders.

2) Collect and analyze information for informed decision making.

3) Communicate meaningfully within the EMB and with partners and other stakeholders.

4) Acknowledge shortcomings and focus on systemic issues and opportunities.

5) Draw clear, balanced conclusions, make specific, feasible recommendations, and link them with EMB planning.

6) Establish a schedule for monitoring the implementation of lessons learned recommendations.

7) Be transparent and accessible about the process, recommendations, and subsequent monitoring of

Developed by IFES in collaboration with

ACEEEO, the AU, Arab EMBs, the Central and Eastern Europe Regional Election Commission, the EMB of the Republic of Serbia, IFES, OSCE/ODHR, UNDP, UNDP/PA, and UNDP.

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Foreword



No election is perfect, but given the current democratic challenges across the world, it is more important than ever that we try to hold elections that are trusted, credible and inclusive. We need electoral processes that can meet the ongoing difficulties there can be and also the emerging challenges that we face in the 21st century. It is critical that we learn effectively from each election to improve future processes, to serve current as well as upcoming generations.

These guidelines are from views and suggestions collected from election administrations around the world, with additional input from a wide range of other actors, including technical experts, citizen observers, organizations working with parties, and also development partners. The extensive institutional and personal assistance given to development of these guidelines shows the broad commitment there is to supporting election administrations' learning, in order to be increasingly effective and impactful in the delivery of their services. We would like to thank all of the organizations and individuals who have supported the development of these guidelines.

The work of election administrations is critical for effective democratic functioning and governance. These guidelines seek to support election administrations around the world in undertaking their work responsibly and effectively, involving wider stakeholders, and finding ways forward through all the challenges we face now and in the years that come. Lessons learned exercises are critical as the most substantive link between a just-completed electoral cycle and setting the stage for the next. We hope that the guidelines are of use to election administrations, political parties, civil society organizations, and development partners amongst others.

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In particular, IFES thanks the main collaborating partners: the African Union (AU), the former Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO), ArabEMBs, the Carter Center, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Commission, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Organization of American States (OAS), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNPPA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

A number of other organizations contributed to this research. These included the Pacific islands, Australia, and New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network, (PIANZEA), the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), Demo Finland, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), the Oslo Center, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). Citizen observer organizations also assisted: Transparencia Electoral (Argentina); Misión de Observación Electoral (Colombia); Iniciativa Social para la Democracia (El Salvador); Al Hayat Center (Jordan); Africa (Nigeria); The Center for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (Serbia); Opora (Ukraine); and the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN). In addition, various development partners and many individual election experts made contributions.

Various IFES Country Directors assisted with the development of this project, which also underwent IFES's peer review process. Additionally, the research team would like to thank IFES' monitoring and evaluation team for their

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AAR	After-action review
ACE Project	Administration and Cost of Elections Project
ACEEEO	Association of European Election Officials
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRTA	The Center for Clean and Fair Elections
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIPD	Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy
EMB	Election management body
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus group discussion
GNDEM	Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT	Information and communications technology
IFES	The International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IRI	International Republican Institute
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung
MOE	Misión de Observación Electoral-

Introduction

Lessons learned exercises conducted after an election provide an effective way to review how an electoral process went and plan for

range of external stakeholders involved in the process, as well as the political dynamics, which the more general literature does not address.

Some limitations and shortcomings are evident in some EMBs' practices. These may include limited or no consultation with stakeholders during lessons learned processes, no links between findings and actions, a lack of public reports or updates on implementation, timeframes that do not promote effective participation by other actors, and the absence of consultation with lower-level or ad hoc EMB staff. Challenges that EMBs often report include insufficient knowledge of how to conduct a lessons learned exercise, not enough time or resources, the quality of contributions from stakeholders, and lack of interest among the EMB leadership.

“Unfortunately, lessons learned exercises are often done to simply tick the box.”

– EMB representative

These guidelines seek to address this methodological gap by providing information on why lessons learned processes can be useful for EMBs and how to conduct these exercises effectively. Every context is different. Thus, rather than taking a prescriptive approach, overall principles and possible actions are emphasized. These guidelines can help EMBs elaborate their current practices and save time in developing lessons learned processes. The guidelines cover the benefits of and principles for a positive lessons learned process, related international standards, and key action points. They look at inclusion, concerns, risks, and ways to work with international development partners. They then go into working-level details and provide step-by-step suggestions for lessons learned processes, along with sample templates.

The content of these guidelines comes primarily from the experiences and recommendations of EMBs across the world, as well as others involved in elections. These include partner organizations, citizen and international observers, agencies that work with political parties, election experts, and development partners.⁴ Developed through an extensive consultation process and wide collection of global data, it is hoped these guidelines can be meaningful and practical. In developing the guidelines, reference was made to survey

⁴ The [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers](#) (2005) establishes the basis for credible international election observation.

responses from EMBs in 57 countries and from 32 international experts. Input was also received from eight leading citizen observer groups, eight organizations that work with political parties, and four leading development partners. There was also collaboration with 15 organizations that work on elections, including multilateral agencies and EMB networks. Through survey responses, focus group discussions, interviews, and desk reviews, we obtained input from approximately half of all countries in the world that hold elections.⁵ A number of EMBs reviewed drafts of the guidelines, which also went through the IFES peer review process. Feedback is welcomed, especially as more lessons learned processes are conducted, to support further development of the guidelines and practices.⁶

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staggered, starting by reviewing voter registration and later reviewing the election as a whole. They may focus on national and/or regional elections. EMBs can build on previous lessons learned approaches, scaling up and increasing opportunities for impact with subsequent elections and exercises. Whatever form a lessons learned exercise takes, the principles and key action points described below can help the process delivery for an EMB and the service it provides to citizens in future elections.

1. Why Conduct Lessons Learned Exercises?

stakeholders have participated in developing recommendations—and see that they are based in evidence. This helps the EMB avoid future problems and manage challenges.

Lessons learned processes can enable an EMB to increase collaboration and build trust with stakeholders, including marginalized groups and the public more widely; they are also part of EMB accountability. An EMB can develop trust through a meaningful less2po7se cole

acceptance of its decisions and actions. A lessons learned process can help make it easier for an EMB's voice to be heard, which is particularly important when disinformation spreads. Rigorous identification of an EMB's needs through a lessons learned process can also make its requests more convincing and support interagency collaboration. Such institutional strength can assist an EMB in obtaining the funding and agreements necessary to operate and to advocate effectively for reforms (including legal changes).

Lessons learned processes can help improve an EMB's internal functioning. Information and ideas from staff are critical in determining practical actions. A lessons learned process that engages staff can help them feel heard, better understand different parts of the organization, know more about how and why decisions are made, and have more confidence in the EMB's leadership. Thus, a lessons learned process can help get staff on board for change, given that they can be a part of the process, see where decisions have come from, and understand the basis for choices being made. A lessons learned exercise can help bridge gaps between technical staff and leadership, which can be especially useful for commissioners who may hold their positions for a limited term. A good lessons learned process that uses a clear framework and evidence basis for decisions can also help an EMB's leadership reach agreement and determine ways forward. The process also helps foster a culture of ongoing, constructive dialogue and continuous learning, rather than waiting for a lessons learned exercise after an election. The ongoing nature of the process strengthens an EMB's ability to mitigate unanticipated risks and deliver credible elections. A lessons learned report—one product of the process—a

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2. Principles for Effective Lessons Learned Processes

Establish a schedule for monitoring the implementation of lessons learned recommendations.

Monitoring enables an EMB to evaluate how recommended actions have been implemented and to adjust plans as needed. Lessons learned findings, conclusions, and recommendations can form the basis of a new strategic plan; with monitoring as part of reviewing and adjusting the plan. A commitment to monitoring helps show stakeholders that the EMB is serious in taking

A methodical lessons learned process is in keeping with a meaningful electoral cycle approach. An EMB's commitment to a thorough lessons learned process, planned ahead of an election, can help promote positive engagement and the mobilization of any resources and capacity development that may be needed.

“Post-election reviews and engaging with stakeholders after elections can be time consuming, expensive, and sometimes challenging, but it is useful for reforming the electoral legal framework, improving the electoral processes and procedures, and for promoting transparency and inclusivity.”

– EMB representative

Indicative Timings

The timing of lessons learned processes will vary according to circumstances and preferences. However, a suggested timeline involves starting to plan for the exercise up to six months before an election and to publish a report up to about six months after an election . Beginning well before the election

4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and access are essential to full participation for a meaningful lessons learned process. The principle of diversity acknowledges the range of differences between people. Equity provides fair opportunities, including through measures to level the playing field for all. Inclusion is the desired outcome, thereby ensuring equal opportunities for full participation for all. Accessibility makes things easy to understand, obtain, and take part in, including for persons with disabilities.

EMBs typically have statutory responsibilities under national legislation, binding international treaties, and the SDGs. In particular, CEDAW and its authoritative interpretation refer to de facto equality (with the removal of de jure barriers necessary but not sufficient) and the need for temporary special measures to ensure the equal representation of women.¹⁹ At the time of writing, 189 of the 193 United Nations member states are parties to the CEDAW treaty. The CRPD emphasizes full participation, identifying the lack of universal design and reasonable accommodation as forms of discrimination. The 185 states that are party to the CRPD are obliged to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability.²⁰ Under the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, states are obliged to provide for free participation at all levels of decision-making in elective institutions and administrative bodies to at least the same extent as other sectors of the population. Related standards are contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.²¹ Similarly, the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also includes election-related obligations. SDG 10, on reducing inequality, includes a target of empowering and promoting the social economic and political inclusion of all; SDG 5, on gender equality, includes a target related to women's full and effective participation in political and public life.²²

In reviewing an election and possible improvements, it is essential to consider the interests of diverse groups. This is particularly important for those at -risk of being disadvantaged or marginalized.

administration. This requires EMBs to have disaggregated data and to consult with organizations that are composed of and representing the interests of disadvantaged and historically marginalized groups. Those consultations are most effective when they are about the election in general and not only topics that immediately affect a group of people. Meaningful inclusion also requires information to be available and easily accessible to a full range of

possible for people to take part in election processes, engage regularly with civil society organizations that represent citizens' interests, and use plain language that most people can understand. An EMB can also make visible and continual efforts to improve the process, including through lessons learned exercises. During those exercises, it can ask overarching questions about how to increase and broaden participation (including voter turnout). An EMB can also suggest that as part of a lessons learned process, parties consult with underrepresented groups within their parties (for example, women's and youth wings, and people who live away from the capital, including in rural areas).

5. Concerns and Risks

EMBs and others referred to a number of challenges that could arise, also noting possible solutions. These potential issues and concerns about a lessons learned process and possible mitigating measures are detailed below.

- x Problems within the EMB will be exposed, making it look weak and stirring controversy about recent elections.

It is a sign of institutional strength to be able to acknowledge problems and puts the organization in a much better position for working out ways forward with stakeholders on board. People can more easily accept an EMB's shortcomings if they know it is addressing them and is committed to improvement. Participants in lessons learned processes may vent frustrations, which can be productive if they feel heard (especially for the first time) and can then look ahead. It may be helpful to remind them that the process is not about (t)-6.6u3Dasesons ciaa

LESSONS LEARNED PROCESSES: ADVANCING TO THE NEXT ELECTION

occurred. It is good to work out a media plan around launch of the report and can be helpful to forewarn journalists that the report is coming so they can plan more substantive pieces at that time.

- x The lessons learned process will generate unrealistic expectations for change.

Some stakeholders may underestimate the complexity of change or assume their suggestions will be implemented. They also may not understand the limits of an EMB's mandate. Therefore, it is helpful to clarify from the start how the EMB leadership will make decisions and the factors it will consider. For example, an EMB can emphasize

stakeholders for a more substantive process after an election. It is useful for EMBs to provide staff with a platform to record observations and make recommendations throughout an event. Every action can be an opportunity for learning and optimizing service delivery.

- x Some internal and external actors will not support an open approach to election

x

6. Working with International Partners

Obtaining support from development partners is easier with a good lessons learned process that includes evidence-based identification of problems and next steps, institutional ownership of reform, and an open governance approach. A good lessons learned process helps development partners recognize an institution's needs, see that proposed reforms have been thoroughly worked out, and understand stakeholders' views. Carefully developed plans—based on honesty, transparency, and consultation make it easier for

development

planning is invaluable, it should not distract from the EMB's core mandate of planning and conducting credible elections.

Possible steps include the following:

1. The EMB leadership establishes the purpose and importance of the lessons learned process through a formal public decision.
2. The EMB leadership selects responsible staff and external facilitators. This includes identifying EMB staff to manage and implement the lessons learned process. A small working group could be established, including staff who are close to or part of the senior management and are given the authority to lead the process effectively. Consideration could also be given to possibly including or involving a very limited number of stakeholders.

Any external facilitation required needs to be arranged and contracted at this stage (see sub-section below). Such persons need to be skilled at election planning in the country in question, organizing, information management, analysis, thinking constructively and practically, understanding organizations, working collaboratively, facilitating meetings, summarizing information, writing clear reports, and presenting. Stakeholders must trust external facilitators to be objective and impartial.

3. Prepare a draft strategy and plan for the lessons learned exercise. This can cover the overall purpose and principles of the exercise, an outline of the methodology, timing, and the persons responsible for its implementation.

example, for a previous election or after different stages of the current electoral process, such as voter or candidate registration), and their strengths and limitations.

It should be clear that there is a commitment to making the report public and to integrating conclusions and recommendations into EMB planning. It can therefore be helpful to also plan media engagement before, during, and after the lessons learned exercise, including on progress on implementation of recommendations. It should be clear that this is forward-looking and about identifying possible improvements to the process. It is helpful if it is clear about who has final sign-off on the report (which is typically the board of commissioners). In developing the draft strategy and plan, it is also th>s 16.391 e

agencies, and other key stakeholders to discuss the lessons learned process and the importance of contributing to it. Explain the purpose of the process, the opportunities it brings for stakeholders to feed into future changes, the draft sJ 0 Tc 0 Tw 35-5.9 (p)1eBDC 0.0934l//ha

emphasizing the value of prior consultation within their organization (including with groups that are underrepresented in the election process).

It can be very useful to commission surveys and/or focus groups, for example, of permanent and/or ad hoc EMB staff, either managed in-house or contracted to a specialist company. A specialist company can be particularly useful in the commission of surveys and/or focus groups with the public, both of which require the specialist capacity of an organization with experience and reach for such research.

10. Prepare the tentative format for the final report . Agreeing on a tentative report format with the EMB leadership, including the headings, approximate length and form (with consideration to any corporate styles), at an early stage provides a joint starting point, although changes are likely. See Annex 3 for sample templates.

Points to consider

- x Should the EMB arrange for independent facilitation? Stakeholders need to know they will not experience negative repercussions if they give critical commentary. An EMB needs to establish such an enabling environment to have a meaningful process that fosters trust. In contexts where there is a mistrust of offices of the state and/or a history of rejection of results by contestants, stakeholders may

intergenerational responsibility), community leaders, and selected experts. There may also be international



The main aim of Stage 2 is to collect information and opinions on what went well in the election process, what did not go well, and what improvements could be made. This involves collecting information and opinions from inside the EMB and from partners and stakeholders more broadly. Ideally, these groups will first undertake their own internal consultations (including with underrepresented groups within their organizations), and then prepare comments for submission. These can be provided in writing or verbally in either small meetings or a larger stakeholder meeting. It is helpful to hold consultations at the local level as well as centrally. The key goal of this stage is to listen.

“Having discussions about the lessons learned exercise far enough out from the election so that the details of when, where and who are agreed, and arrangements put in place will make it much easier to get a good result.”

– Representative of a development partner

Gathering information and opinions can begin directly after an election results process to allow time for the EMB, partners, and stakeholders to prepare their submissions. The lessons learned exercise will review the entire electoral cycle completed. Therefore, it is imperative to clarify the timing in advance so that different EMB departments can be prepared and collect data before people forget or depart from their positions, likewise with partners and stakeholders. Soon after an election, the EMB can first gather data and opinions internally, from its permanent and ad hoc staff. Stakeholders can then be consulted after they have had time to hear from people within the organization and prepare their submissions. Observing organizations may need some three months to prepare their reports. The exact timing depends on the electoral context and may need to be adapted under certain circumstances (for example, if there is a difficult legal challenge).

Possible steps for collecting information include :

1. Conduct a desk review to identify and collect EMB -related information and documentation . This can include data on electoral operations (including, for example, disaggregated data on voter registration, polling efficiencies, and results aggregation processes); status reports on strategic planning; numbers and types of complaints; reports by citizen and international observers; expert analysis; media commentary; and surveys of permanent and/or ad hoc staff. It can be helpful to produce short summaries of these sources to keep the information manageable and to be able to identify recurring themes. Key information can o2913 0sdf() [4age heof9 (ec)-29 (r)-6.6 ()]Tn.2 (and)13oTc 0.061

at overall functioning, not personal behavior. Keep the focus on a constructive review of electoral processes and identifying ways to improve them.

- x It can be useful at the start of a meeting to clarify the purpose /objectives, and ground rules including that information will be treated anonymously for the session. Explain that the goal at this stage is to listen, and explore findings and suggestions, and that the focus is looking at what went well and what can be improved. It can be helpful to say the information will be used but it will not be attributed to any individual or be used in an identifiable way, unless someone wants it to be. It can also be helpful to clarify the length of time for the meeting and what the subsequent stages will be of the lessons learned process.

“It’s a civil process that involves everyone. It’s an opportunity to improve and to include everyone.”

– Representative from a citizen observer group

- x Provide information that helps stakeholders give informed commentary. This can clarify the mandates of the EMB and other related institutions and also include more specific information on the election. For example, information could be collected on the gender identity of candidates, rates of invalid ballots by constituency, turnout figures, security incidents, and other data. It may be useful

- x What did not go so well? Prompts can include: What were you not sure about? Which things could have gone better? What was problematic? Which problems were the most

participation in general. Emerging issues can also be asked about,

“An ideal exercise involves structuring it in such a way that you understand where it has come from, why it’s being done, have a safe space for feedback, and is an exercise for planning ahead.”

– Representative from a citizen observer group

Points to consider

- x Should you meet with stakeholders in groups or separately? The important thing is that high-quality data can be collected on stakeholders’ experiences and suggestions and that stakeholders

online options if they are more convenient for some respondents and for stakeholders beyond the core group.

The main aim of Stage 3 is to prepare key findings, conclusions, and recommendations and discuss these within the EMB and with partners and stakeholders. This involves analyzing the data, comments, and suggestions collected; identifying key conclusions; and formulating recommendations. Following this, it is useful to review these points with the EMB leadership and then more broadly within the EMB and with partners and other stakeholders to obtain their feedback. During this process, conclusions and recommendations may evolve. Discussion (i) 416-0502-0094 Tw

particularly useful with regards to leading political parties. It can therefore be helpful if there is engagement from the senior levels of the EMB to stress the importance of the recommendations. It can be useful to establish the purpose of the meeting and to be clear that it is expected that there will be different opinions and disagreements and that it's helpful to understand stakeholders' different views. Clarify that the EMB will make decisions based on the discussions and the views.

The sooner this stage is undertaken the better, as it enables an EMB to use the time between elections more effectively and gives confidence that it is making improvements. Finalizing the report promptly can help maintain momentum within the EMB and with stakeholders. While it may be optimal for a recommendations implementation plan to be developed before an EMB signs off on a lessons learned report, in practice, it may require more time and be undertaken after publication of the lessons learned report is disseminated.

Possible steps include :

1. Revise the report and submit it to the EMB leadership for comment and sign-off. Final adjustments may be necessary before leadership approves the report and implementation of recommendations. The clearer the report, the more likely that the EMB leadership and staff, partners, and stakeholders will read and understand it.
2. Format the report so it is user-friendly. The report should be easy to read, understand and remember.

template). More detailed information on implementation can

reports may focus more on shortcomings as it is important to understand them and to identify recommendations going forward.

- x Present the recommendations effectively and prioritize them. Recommendations should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) so they are feasible to implement and track and will make a difference. Therefore, it is good if each recommendation has one distinct point. Note which EMB department is responsible for implementing the recommendation. Most recommendations should focus on what the EMB—not other actors—can do. For example, while the EMB does not typically decide the size of its budget, it may be able to request and advocate for more resources well in advance of an election. It can be helpful to identify which of the recommendations are the highest priority ones, so it is clear within the EMB and to stakeholders about where there is most need to focus attention and undertake actions. Some recommendations may be about undertaking further research or stakeholder consultation on an issue. However, too many of these types of recommendations may imply that the EMB is avoiding action. It is good to identify which recommendations would also benefit from a change in the law, and, if time allows, mark which ones relate to recommendations made by observer missions. Implementing some recommendations may require more than one electoral cycle, but trackable steps before the next elections can still be identified and committed to.

- x Make the report easy-to-navigate. Develop a logical structure with a table of contents, descriptive headings, clearly identified conclusions and recommendations, colorful graphics that draw attention to key points, and a numbered list of recommendations in one place. Use tables and bulleted or numbered lists to help readers manage the information. An executive summary should cover all the main points succinctly, including key recommendations, bearing in mind that this may be the only part of a report that is read. Include a list of acronyms and annexes as is useful.

- x How many recommendations should be included? The number of recommendations will vary, but all must be actionable and measurable. Recommendations that contribute meaningfully to future election processes should ideally be prioritized. Other changes can be made if useful. For example, departments may want to come up with more detailed action points for their respective areas of responsibility (in order to implement the recommendations from the lessons learned exercise and to further develop their work).

The main aim of Stage 5 is to raise awareness of the report and gain support for its conclusions and recommendations. This is an important opportunity for the EMB to show it is committed to improving its service and is open and responsive to stakeholders. The EMB's leadership can increase visibility and support for change—both externally and within the institution. The more traction there is to the report, the more likely it is that changes will happen, even if

environmentally-friendly to only use electronic copies, it can help with presentation and traction to have a limited number of paper copies available. Consider whether to make translated versions of the report available.

2. Prepare summaries of the report for presentations and easy access These may

6. Present the report to stakeholders. This can include a press conference and meetings with stakeholder groups (in the capital and possibly in other parts of the country), including donors. At these meetings, it can be helpful to explain how (pa)10.6 (r) cais-6.6 (e2 (on)10.5.0

to review the implementation of the recommendations, as well as future lessons learned exercises. If there are strong divisions, it can be helpful for a report to acknowledge the different positions. It is important to explain decisions and go over why actions are important, how they help the process, other stakeholder views, and supporting research. Additionally, it is useful to listen to the views of others, while being clear that the consultation stages have passed, and the report is now final.

- x Should the report be shared in advance with participants before a meeting? It can be helpful to give stakeholders time to read and consider the report and their responses to it (or at least the executive summary and/or recommendations). In practice, participants may not have time to read the report, so it is usually advisable to go over the main conclusions and recommendations of the report while also leaving time for questions and comments.

- x Will the report bring attention to EMB shortcomings? It is natural that a report and coverage will focus more on problems and shortcomings and less on what has gone well in an election process, as recommended changes are the most important part to scrutinize and debate. It is normal that there will be things to develop after an election, especially given emerging electoral challenges such as the role of social media and disinformation.

the conclusions and recommendations alive, for example, by incorporating them into strategic and operational planning. Structured monitoring of the implementation of the report's recommendations can help galvanize people for action, enable necessary adjustments to be made prior to the next elections, and increase EMB accountability. Monitoring can take place as a standalone engagement, or as part of monitoring the implementation of strategic planning. The implementation of recommendations is one of the most important measures of how effective a lessons learned process has been. It is essential to help sustain a learning culture.

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recommendations will be implemented. It may be easier to manage responses if they are collected via an online form or survey, which can maintain the anonymity of respondents. It may be helpful to separate responses from EMB staff from those of partners and stakeholders. Separately, it is good to hear from the EMB leadership about how they think the process has been.

2. Write a short record of the lessons learned process. This can include information on what was done, when, and what resources were involved, along with challenges and difficulties faced. It is good to also include a summary of the views of EMB staff and stakeholders on the lessons learned process.

identify whether and how the recommendations or their implementation fell short. This process will help inform future lessons learned processes and recommendations.

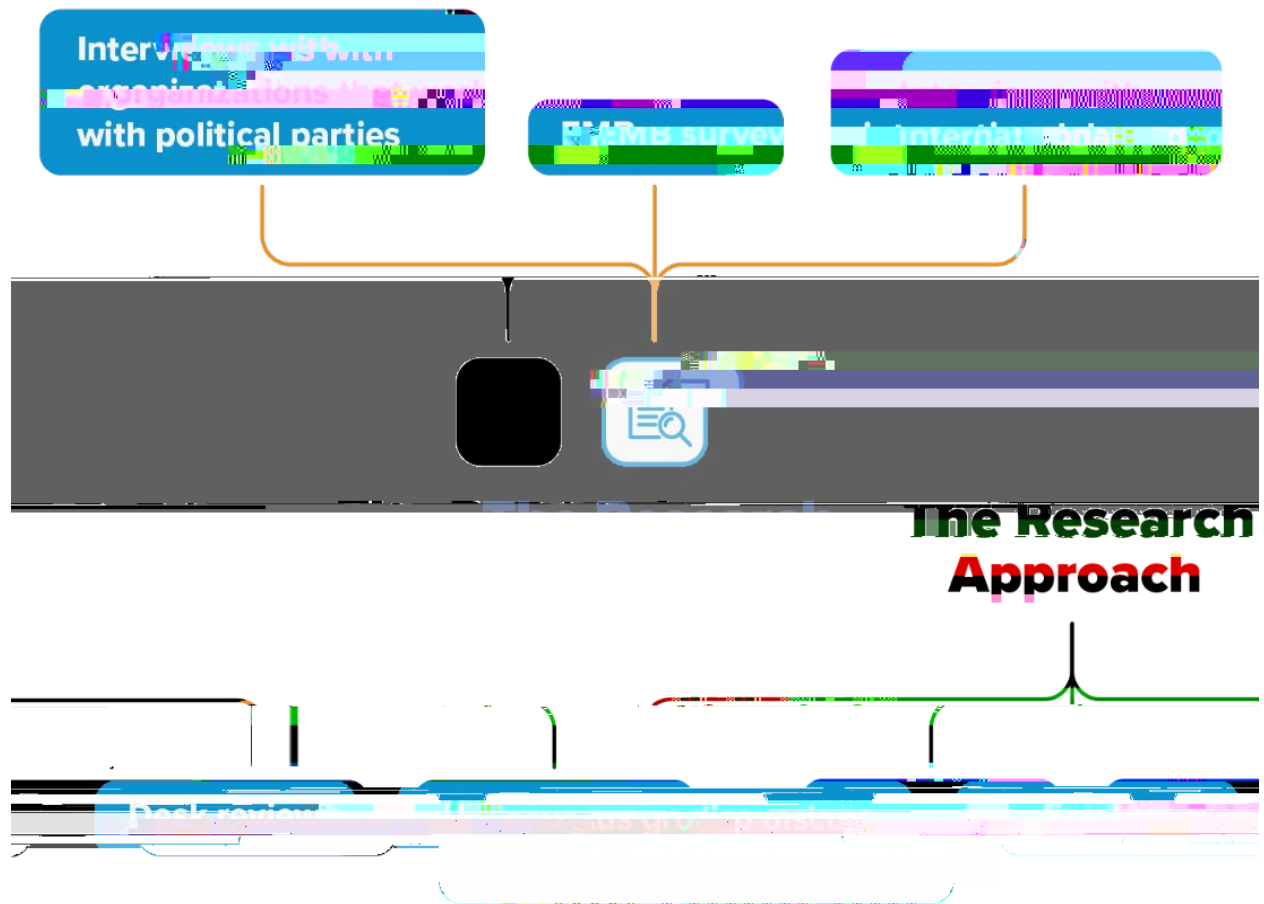
“For us in our lessons learned, it is for plan creation, not to become something that is left on a shelf when it comes a time to implement.”
– Representative of a development partner



Point to consider

- x What if some recommendations are for later stages of the electoral cycle, after the monitoring of implementation is scheduled? Some recommendations may apply to the next election, although preparatory actions may take place earlier. For example, consideration of improved training for poll workers could include researching shortcomings via focus groups or surveys, developing plans and materials, adapting budgets, and pilot-testing during by-elections.

Annex 1: Methodology for Development of the Guidelines



Survey of EMBs

The research team compiled an initial draft survey which was then reviewed by various IFES and external experts, including from UNEAD, UNDP, and the former ACEEEO. The final survey consisted of 30 qualitative and quantitative questions. Some sought factual information on the specifics of EMBs' lessons learned process. Others elicited opinions on the challenges, merits, and potential value of lessons learned exercises. Respondents were able to leave questions blank or state that they did not have an answer to any question. Space was also provided for free text comments. Respondents were informed clearly that all data would be treated anonymously.

The survey was translated from English into five languages: Arabic, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian. The research team used the QuestionPro survey platform to ensure that it was easy for respondents to use. Additionally, for EMBs concerned about reliable internet access, the team provided an offline version of the survey on request.

The survey was disseminated with support from regional organizations and networks with EMB contacts to improve reach. These included UNEAD, UNDP, the AU, OAS, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the former ACEEEO, ArabEMBs, and PIANZEA.

The survey was sent to respondents in 152 countries via the research team, a partner organization, or both. In total, 84 responses were received from 57 countries for a country response rate of 38 percent. The responses represented a broad range of regions, languages, and country sizes.

Responses were received from the following countries and territories:

Region	Countries and Territories
Africa	Botswana, Cameroon, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sao Tome et Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, Zambia, Zanzibar
Americas	Antigua, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
Asia-Pacific	Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Maldives, Nauru, Pakistan, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Tokelau
Europe and Eurasia	Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom

Middle East and North Africa

LESSONS LEARNED PROCESSES: ADVANCING TO THE NEXT ELECTIONS

International Organizations Working with Political Parties

To preserve the apolitical nature of these guidelines and given the logistical challenge of reaching out to political parties around the world, the research team consulted with international organizations that work directly with political parties, with the assistance of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD). The team received written input from or held one-on-one interviews with representatives from the following organizations:

Data from the research sources was triangulated to enable

LESSONS LEARNED PROCESSES: ADVANCING TO THE NEXT ELECTION

finalized, and lack of agreement on how to undertake a lessons learned exercise. Other problems commonly reported included: a lack of interest from EMB leadership, observer reports not being available on time (or lacking clear recommendations). Two-thirds of experts had experienced insufficient resourcing for lessons learned activities. Over half of respondents reported the experience of external stakeholders not providing clear and realistic input. Over half of respondents also reported experiencing difficulty accessing documentation from the EMB, contracted private companies, and other state agencies. Moreover, over half had the experience of EMBs finding it difficult to write and obtain agreement on a final report.

- x The most important factor identified for lessons learned processes to go well was to have EMB commissioner engagement and willingness to review both strengths as well as weaknesses. Other key factors included: EMB staff engagement, a clear process for conducting a lessons learned exercise, recognition for the need for reform, sufficient resources, as well as a demand from political parties, CSOs and/or the media.

- x All expert respondents agreed that the following should be considered good practice for lessons learned exercises:
 - o 1) Consultations: including with EMB commissioners and staff from across the country, other state agencies, parties, candidates, civil society organizations, other stakeholders, and technical assistance providers. Emphasis was put on the value of submission of written recommendations for improvements.
 - a o 2) Review of relevant documentation : including national legislation, EMB documentation, complaints, court decisions, independent analysis, obs-2 ()0.6 Td [(A)-8

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value of obtaining buy-in from parties ahead of an election was emphasized, as was the potential for change as a result of a lessons learned exercise (that could affect ruling and opposition parties). Buy-in from parties was regarded as essential to ensure that a lessons learned process goes well, that the conclusions are accepted, and that the parties contribute to the consensus for reform. Parliamentary parties are also critical given the role they can play in legislative reform. It was stressed that lessons learned processes can be a first step in building party ownership and consensus and that similar links with parliament can help promote reform.

x Only minimal communication between EMBs and parties is problematic. Without this communication, it can be difficult for parties to understand EMB decisions and actions. Lessons learned exercises are one way to develop communication. Additionally, it is useful for both EMBs and parties if the exercises involve consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including underrepresented groups, the media, business associations, and others.

x The methodology used for a lessons learned exercise is critical. Discussants suggested the importance of establishing an agreement on the methodology, ti Tc 0.00ttaeogy, 94TJ 0

value of involving a range of civil society organizations and experts was also emphasized (not just one or two). To be effective, it was noted that lessons learned exercises should identify the real issues and should be holistic.

- x Planning lessons learned exercises in advance helps get agreement and necessary arrangements in place. It was noted that people are often tired after an election, and it may be better to undertake a lessons learned exercise in stages, thereby saving deeper discussion till later. It was noted that it can be useful to undertake activities in smaller groups in order to get more realistic answers. It was also noted that it's important to have a transparent components of the process, even if some of the exercise is behind closed doors.

Annex 3: Sample Templates

The sample templates on the following pages list possible headings for documents, followed by potential content areas.

Sample Template : Strategy and Plan

1. Introduction

Context, leadership commitment, link to future EMB improvements, etc.

2. Aims and Purpose of the Lessons Learned Process

Why the lessons learned process is being conducted, intended benefits, why the process is important, etc.

3. Methodological Overview

Main principles followed, methodological approach and main stages of activities, main general questions, public reporting and information, etc.

4. Consultation

Who will be consulted (within the EMB, partners, and main stakeholder group), methods to be used (written submissions, meetings, surveys etc.), etc.

5. Timing

When key activities are indicatively scheduled to take place.

6. Responsible Persons

EMB leads, external facilitation (if required), final decision-making authority, point of contact.

7. Concluding Comments

Any other comments, final remarks, if any.

Sample Template :

consultations; and 3) key conclusions and recommendations (with key responsible agency and priority recommendations identified) [redacted] (f) (ed)] S

Sample Template : Submissions Form

1. Introductory Text

1.1 Purpose of the Lessons Learned Process

To improve future election processes, use the time between elections, involve stakeholders, etc. To answer key questions about what went well, what did not go well (and reasons), and ways forward.

1.2 Methodological Approach for the Lessons Learned Process

Principles of the lessons learned process, overview of the methodology, decision-making (EMB will listen to many views and then work out key conclusions and recommendations (based on research, consultations, the law, resources available, and international standards and good practice for elections), public reporting, later monitoring of the implementation of recommendations.

1.3 Thank You for Taking Part

2. Submissions Guidance

Submissions are more likely to be effective if they are based on a careful review by the organization/person submitting, precise, constructive (making suggestions for improvements and for these to be feasible), about systemic issues (and not about individuals), not too long, points be numbered format. All information can be presented without identifying individuals who contributed comments (revisions) [5]

Sample Template : Recommendations Implementation Plan

1 Introduction

Brief overview of the lessons learned process, summary of recommendations (including priority recommendations), time until the next elections and related events. This plan focuses on recommendations for the EMB (not those for other agencies).

2 Overall Approach to Implementing Recommendations

EMB commitment to implementing recommendations, incorporation of lessons learned conclusions and recommendations in operational and strategic planning, commitment to ongoing engagement with stakeholders and public reporting on recommendations and their implementation. Plan for monitoring the implementation of recommendations (timing, public reporting, and the EMB's leader for implementation).

3 Plan for Implementing Recommendations

For each recommendation: 1) recommendation number, 2) recommendation, 3) implementation lead (EMB department and role), 4) key actions to be undertaken (responsible department and possible timing), 5) resources needed, 6) targets and milestones, with timing, 7) other information (including potential risks).

Sample Template : Terms of Reference for External Facilitators

The list below is based on the guidelines for the lessons learned process. Select and adapt them as relevant for the context.

The following activities should be conducted in coordination with the EMB leadership, assigned staff, and possible external facilitators. The EMB leadership will make final decisions and be responsible for the content of reporting. Actions of the external facilitator should be consistent with the directions by the EMB leadership, the Lessons Learned Processes Guidelines, national legislation, and international standards for elections.

The External Facilitator will contribute to or lead on the following:

Stage 1: Pre-election preparation of strategy and plan

Activities:

- x Develop a strategy and plan for the lessons learned process
- x Develop an internal resourcing plan for the lessons learned process
- x Hold consultation meetings with key stakeholders on the draft strategy and plan
- x Finalize the strategy and plan

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Stage 2: Following the election, gather information and opinions

Activities:

- x Conduct

- x Brief any new commissioners or senior staff on the lessons learned process
- x Brief others on the lessons learned process and outcomes

Deliverables:

- x Report on the lessons learned process
- x Lessons learned process Archive
- x Plan for monitoring of the implementation of recommendations
- x Monitoring report on the implementation of recommendations

Location: [For hplmple:

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106), Dec. 13, 2006. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, Jun. 27, 1989, International Labour Standards Convention No. 169. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CO DE:C169

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Dec. 16, 1966, General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

Open Election Data Initiative. (n.d.). Homepage. <https://openelectiondata.net/en/>

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN SDG 5, 10, & 16).

<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

[https://www.ifes.org/publications/developing-disability-inclusion-policy-strategic-planning-and-implementation-guide?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=35226f5f10Td\(-\)Tj-0.11.04-004-0000Tw](https://www.ifes.org/publications/developing-disability-inclusion-policy-strategic-planning-and-implementation-guide?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=35226f5f10Td(-)Tj-0.11.04-004-0000Tw)

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