

Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020

The National Election Board of Ethiopia has issued this directive pursuant to its power under Article 124(2) of the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election’s Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, so as to govern bodies that provide voter education, procedures for provision of voter education and to regulate the code of conduct of voter education providers and the process of accrediting them.

General Provisions

Article 1. Short title

This Directive may be cited as “Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020.”

Article 2. Definitions

Unless the context requires otherwise, in this directive:

1. “**Electoral Law**” means the Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election’s Code of Conduct Proclamation number 1162/2019.
2. “**Board**” means the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia re-established by Proclamation number 1133/2019.
3. “**Region**” means regions established in accordance with Article 47 of the Constitution and, for the purpose of this Proclamation, shall include Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa City Administration.
4. “**Local Civil Society Organizations**” means a Non-governmental, Non-Partisan, Not-for-profit entity established voluntarily at least by two or more Ethiopians registered to carry out its lawful activities in and outside Ethiopia, and include Non-governmental organizations, Professional Associations, Mass-based Societies and Consortiums.
5. “**Election Officer**” means a person assigned by the Board to administer elections at various levels.
6. “**Political Party**” or “**Political Organization**” means an entity with a political program established by organized citizens and registered in accordance with this Proclamation to hold political power by contesting in elections at the national, regional or local levels.
7. “**Voter Education**” means training and education given to citizens in a manner that is free from political partisanship to enable them to gain the necessary information to engage in informed participation in elections by understanding the purpose and importance of election; discharge their responsibilities and participate in the election process.
8. “**Educational institution**” or “**Institution**” means university, university college, college or teachers’ training center accredited by a relevant authority.
9. “**Trainer**” means an individual deployed by an organization accredited to provide voters’ education by the Board.
10. “**Person**” shall mean a legal or a natural person.

Article 3. Scope of application

This directive shall be applicable to local civil society organizations, educational institutions and trainers who provide voter education in any election or referendum conducted in accordance with the electoral law.

Article 4. Gender reference

In this directive, provisions set out in the feminine gender shall also apply to the masculine gender.

Chapter Two **Provision of Voter Education**

Article 5. The responsibility to provide voter education

1. The Board shall have the responsibility to provide voter education in accordance with the electoral law and this directive.
2. The Board shall provide voter education by devising a strategy for creating voter awareness and using various communication platforms.
3. The Board shall issue accreditation to local civic society organizations and educational institutions that have legal personality to conduct voter education.
4. Education and training provided by the Board or through institutions and organizations accredited by the Board shall be based on teaching materials developed by the Board in consultation with civil society organizations.
5. The Regional Branch Office of the Board shall, in cooperation with local civil society organizations and institutions accredited by the Board and in accordance with the direction given to it by the Board, provide, facilitate, follow up on and monitor voter education.
6. No person shall provide voter education and information without accreditation from the Board. Provisions set forth under article 7 of this directive shall be applicable to any person that provides voter education without accreditation from the Board.

Article 6. Responsibilities of the Regional Branch Office of the Board

1. Where, through its own investigation as part of the monitoring and follow up that the Regional Branch Office of the Board conducts pursuant to sub-article (5) of Article 6, or based on reports by third parties, the Regional Branch Office ascertains that an organization or institution is conducting voter education without accreditation by the Board, it shall send a letter to the organization or institution requesting it to apply to the Board for accreditation. It shall also send a copy of the letter to the Board.
2. Where the organization or institution does not apply for accreditation within a week after being requested by the Regional Branch Office pursuant to sub-article (1) of this Article, the latter shall notify the Board of this. It may also order the organization or institution to cease conducting the training temporarily until the Board reaches a decision. If the organization or institution does not cease providing education as ordered, the the Regional Branch Office shall notify the Civil Society Registration Office in the area or the authority which registered the organization or other appropriate government body.
3. The Regional Branch Office of the Board shall present a report to the Board at least once a month on challenges that arise during voter education. However, if the challenge or problem needs to be resolved urgently, the office shall send the relevant information to the Board immediately. It shall take measures in accordance with the instructions issued by the Board regularly to resolve voter education-related challenges based on information received.

Article 7. Applying for accreditation for voter education

1. To apply for accreditation for voter education, any local civil society organization or educational institution that meets the requirements for providing voters education under the electoral law or Article 8 of this directive shall:
 - a) Present to the Board a completed application form prepared by the Board for this purpose and

- attach evidences therewith.
- b) Prepare and present to the Board, attached with the application, a document containing details on the money it allocated for conducting the voter education; medium/language of instruction; the number of citizens it plans to teach; its human resource allocation and the region, city, sub city, zone, Woreda and Kebele in which the provision of such education is to take place.
 - c) Submit to the Board, along with the application and additional related evidence, a list of the persons designated to take part in voter education as leaders, facilitators, and in similar other roles, as well as an affidavit signed by the head of the organization or institution attesting that none of these persons are members of any political party; a complete list of trainers filled out in the form prepared by the Board in accordance with Article 10 of this directive (applicable to face to face training only).
 - d) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-articles (a) to (c) of this Article, for voter education that the organization or institution provides only on television, radio and other media, or if the education is provided entirely on television, radio and other media, the application must be accompanied by a document that indicates the money the organization or institution allocated for conducting said voter education, the medium of instruction and the education it plans to provide using the media outlined in this sub-article and the strategy devised to provide it.
2. A local civil society organization applying for accreditation to provide voter education shall present to the Board with evidence showing that the organization is operational having been legally registered.
 3. Applications presented in accordance with this article shall be certified by the signature of the head of the organization and its seal.
 4. The Board may, when it deems it necessary, give the responsibility of accrediting for voter education to Regional Branch Office.

Article 8. Issuance of accreditation

1. When an organization seeking to provide voter education applies for accreditation, the Board shall have the organization and its trainers attest, through their signature, adherence to the Board's Voter Education Code of Conduct Directive and issue voter education accreditation and a trainer's identification card, after ascertaining that the applying organization fulfills the following criteria:
 - a) is a legally registered local civil society organization or an accredited higher learning institution that works on elections and related matters in accordance with its by-laws;
 - b) meets the requirements for voter education set forth in this directive;
 - c) Has the capacity to discharge its responsibilities.
 - d) The organization, its leader or its trainers are independent of any political activity and, after ensuring that the requesting organization and its representatives have accepted and signed to abide by the code of conduct for voter education, issue a voter education accreditation.
2. The Board shall not issue accreditation to any organization that does not meet the requirements set in this article. It shall notify the applicant of the reason for such decision in writing
3. Any institution or organization providing voter education shall not use for voter education money received from an illegal source, a political party or a source that suggests political partisanship.
4. Any institution or organization providing voter education shall prepare an education plan and teaching materials for providing voters education and utilize them in conformity with the voter education manual adopted by Board.

Article 9. Voter education trainers

1. Any trainer deployed to provide voter education shall:

- a) be 21 years old or above;
 - b) not be stripped of his electoral rights by law;
 - c) have the professional skills and experience to undertake the task and shall be trained in fields related to voter education.
 - d) have the ability to speak and comprehend the language spoken in the region he/she will be deployed in;
 - e) have not been previously barred by the Board or the court from providing voters education.
2. Notwithstanding what is provided under sub-article 1(d) of this provision, if it is not possible to find within the locality a trainer that can provide voter education in the local language, the Board may allow provision of voter education through the help of a translator.
 3. Where an accredited organization or trainer is found to be behaving in contravention with the code of conduct directive and outside the scope of the obligations they entered into, the Board may, as appropriate, cause the mistake to be rectified by issuing a warning to the trainer as well as the organization s/he represents or take measures which may extend to cancellation of accreditation.

Article 10. Informing the Board about the identity of trainers

If an organization accredited to provide voter education provides face-to-face training, it shall:

1. Have trainers that provide voter education and inform the Board of the identity of the trainers.
2. The form used by the organization to inform the identity of trainers to the Board shall be prepared by the Board.

Article 11. Changing of trainers

Where organization accredited to provide face-to-face voter education changes its trainer, it shall inform the Board within 7 days of such change and obtain the latter's approval.

Article 12. Issuance of accreditation for voter education identification card

1. The Board shall issue accreditation/license to educate to the organization it accredited in accordance with Article 125(1) of the electoral law and this directive and an identification card to its trainer, if it has one.
2. All voter education accreditation and identification cards issued are valid for one election period only.

Article 13. The Provision of voter education

1. The Board may prepare written, visual/pictorial or recorded or other similar education materials for voter education; or it may have another person prepare such materials or it may, after verifying the contents and quality of the writings, visual and audio prepared by another person, cause such materials to be used in the education process.
2. Any organization or institution accredited to provide voter education may implement the following methods of education:
 - a) Preparing and providing to the concerned bodies or persons a face-to-face training; and /or
 - b) Preparing various writings, visuals/images, and dramas for training or having these materials prepared by others; or training through media such as radio, television newspapers, magazines, posters, billboards, leaflets and the internet.
3. An accredited organization or institution shall device a procedure to help it oversee the

implementation of the methods set forth under sub-article (a) and (b) of this article. When necessary, it may take corrective measures. The Board shall in the future issue a manual to help it oversee this.

4. The Board shall prepare or translate the voter education and other similar teaching methods to different languages so as to ensure that voters have sufficient knowledge regarding election activities.
5. Any organization or institution providing voter education shall emphasize on the equality of women and men regarding the right to vote and be voted or other democratic rights. Any organization, institution or trainers it deploys shall utilize teaching methods, languages, documents or materials that encourage women's participation and shall not reflect stereotypical societal views.
6. The provision set forth under sub-article 4 of this article shall also apply to people with disabilities.
7. Any organization or institution providing voter education according to Article 9 of this directive shall provide the training as per the lesson plan it provided to the Board and the training materials prepared or approved by the Board.
8. Any organization or institution that uses training materials other than those prepared by the Board must ensure that the materials it uses are compatible with those prepared by the Board.

Article 14. Persons that may receive voter education

1. The Board shall ensure that voter education trainings are prepared considering the educational levels of the trainees and other circumstances.
2. Without prejudice to sub article (1) of this Article, the Board may provide or, as per this directive, have another organization permitted by other relevant laws, provide education regarding voters and elections to election officials at different levels, election observers, journalists, political parties duly registered under the country's laws, governmental organizations, trade unions and public organizations.

Chapter Three

Code of Conduct to be Followed by People Providing Voter Education

Article 15. Carrying out voter education duties responsibly

Any organization accredited to provide voter education or a trainer it deployed shall educate:

- a) any citizen who is of voting age to exercise his/her right to vote;
- b) voters to actively follow the election campaigns of political parties and candidates; to evaluate alternative policies and programs presented by such parties, and that, where appropriate, they have the right to request for explanations;
- c) voters to cast their votes for the political party or candidate of their choice, after assessing the policies and programs presented;
- d) voters that they shall respect the law and refrain from engaging in acts that instigate conflicts or disrupt peace.

Article 16. Impartiality

1. Any organization accredited to provide voter education or a trainer it deployed shall:
 - a) Be independent from any political activity.
 - b) Refrain from supporting, opposing or criticizing any political party or candidate.
 - c) Not prompt any other person to support one candidate while opposing, criticizing or disparaging another.
2. Any organization or trainer accredited to provide voter education shall:
 - a) Not be found posting, hoisting, waving or holding in any way signs, slogans or the like that

- support or oppose any political organization, its candidate or an independent candidate contesting in the election.
- b) Have the obligation to refrain from expressing personal opinions on an ongoing election.
 - c) Not directly or indirectly announce in public or commit an act that suggests the party they support;
 - d) Provide an absolutely non-partisan voter education.

Article 17. Conflict of interest

1. Any local civil society organization or institution that is accredited to provide voter education shall immediately notify the Board of any conflict of interest involving property, money, consanguineal relation or any other circumstance of relationship with a candidate or political party.
2. Upon receiving such notice, the Board may decide that the person should continue to teach in another locality; or to resume teaching in that place or pass another decision it deems appropriate.

Article 18. Truthfulness

Any organization or institution or trainer accredited for voter education in accordance with the electoral law and this directive shall:

1. At all times provide voter education, distribute information and present reports to the Board that is backed by credible evidence.
2. Conduct voter education preparations, plans, and delivery on the basis of the content and sequence of events adopted by the Board and the election cycle. If it changes this, it shall acquire the Board's approval to do so.
3. Shall, where it receives financial support from the Board in accordance with Article 20(3) of this directive, use the money only for its intended purpose.

Article 19. Respecting the law

1. Any organization and institution that has accreditation for voter education or its trainers shall respect the Constitution, electoral law, as well as other laws of the country and the obligations they entered into under this code of conduct directive.
2. Where the Board finds an organization/institution or trainer accredited to provide voter education operating in violation of obligations they entered into under this code of conduct directive, the Board may, as appropriate:
 - a) Give an official warning to rectify the mistakes; or
 - b) Take measures that may include cancelation of education accreditation and trainers' identification card.
3. Any organization or institution accredited to provide voter education shall:
 - a) Be in possession of a certified copy of the organization's accreditation and its identification card and shall produce it when requested by the appropriate body;
 - b) Provide education solely in accordance with the law;
 - c) Refrain from operating beyond what is permitted by its accreditation and from activities that disrupt the election process; and
 - d) Submit a detailed report to the Board, within the time period prescribed in this directive.
4. Where the Board has issued a warning to a trainer deployed by an organization accredited for voter education for committing an unlawful act or for violating the provisions of the directives, the organization shall inform take swift corrective measures and notify the Board of the same.

Article 20. Source of finance

1. Any organization or institution shall cover its own expense to provide voter education.
2. The Board may, when so requested by the organizations, write supporting letters for organizations and institutions seeking financial support for voter education.
3. Without prejudice to what is provided in sub-article (1) of this Article, the Board may, on the basis of a mutual agreement, provide financial support to organizations and institutions working collaboratively to provide voter education in areas with accessibility challenges.

Article 21. Submitting reports

1. Any organization accredited to provide voter education shall:
 - a. Submit its activity reports and relevant documents requested by the Board to the Board within two months from the completion of training.
 - b. Submit its activity reports to the Board every 3 months.
 - c. Provide, annexed with documents under sub-articles 1(a) and (b) of this provision, written documents, video, pictures and voice recordings that show its activities.
 - d. Notwithstanding what is provided in sub-article (1) of this Article, submit a report to the Board whenever so requested.
2. Any organization or institution that received financial support from the Board according to Article 20(3) of this directive above shall, along with its activity report, submit a financial report on how the money was used.

Chapter Four
Miscellaneous

Article 22. Duty to cooperate

Everyone has the duty to cooperate to implement this directive.

Article 23. Penalty

Any person who acts in contravention to this directive or violates its provisions shall be penalized in accordance with the relevant law.

Article 24. Issuance of manual

The Board may issue a detailed manual to implement this code of conduct directive.

Article 25. Repealed directives and procedures

Any directive or practice that contradicts this directive shall not be applicable on matters covered in this directive.

Article 26. Effective date

This directive shall come into force on February 24, 2020.

Birtukan Mideksa
Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia