



Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections |CECOE



**Assessment on the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia's
Directive on Voter Education Accreditation and Code of
Conduct Directive No. 4/2020**

and

**Assessment of Voter Education Activities by Ethiopian Civil
Society Organizations During the Sixth Ethiopian General
Elections**



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Part I

Assessment on the National Election Board of Ethiopia's Directive on Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020

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Executive summary

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) is a coalition of over 175 civil society organizations across Ethiopia. It is established to support and promote inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability in Ethiopia's elections through non-partisan election observation, voter and civic education, monitoring, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building activities. Following the preparation of its comprehensive Elections Strategic Plan for 2020–2021, the CECOE has been engaging in activities related to voter and civic education, election observation and monitoring, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, research, and building the capacity of its members.

The CECOE was the first civil society coalition to monitor the 2019 Sidama Referendum. Similarly, the CECOE recruited and trained 3495 election observers to observe the pre-election, election day, and post-election phases of Ethiopia's Sixth National Election held in June and September 2021. The CECOE's Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) in Addis Ababa also monitored the media landscape, misinformation, and hate speech in five local languages. In addition, as part of its voter education intervention, the CECOE launched the I-Vote campaign, a comprehensive digital media platform that provided information and guidance on polling locations, voting procedures, and safety tips on peaceful voting, in four local languages via social and mainstream media advertisements. Through the I-Vote campaign, the CECOE reached over 40 million Ethiopians by running 1040 advertisements on 36 different television and radio channels.

The CECOE is currently working on various activities related to elections, good governance, and peacebuilding. According to the CECOE's strategic plan, the first thematic area is research and advocacy for research-based policy reforms. This assessment can be viewed as a part of the CECOE's efforts to inform the policy-making process through research findings and evidence. This assessment on the directive of voter education was carried out to spell out the legal and practical challenges of voter education and to proffer recommendations to the NEBE. The findings of the assessment will also help the NEBE and other stakeholders develop effective strategies and policies.

Key recommendation

The Coalition for Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) made the following recommendations based on the findings of the research:

- The mandate for voter education with the NEBE, CSO, and higher education is insufficient, and we recommend the NEBE conduct research on stakeholders with the potential to implement voter education.
- The NEBE should bolster the regional offices' capability and devolve direct authority to regional branch offices so that they can carry out accreditation and other responsibilities.
- The NEBE's directive on voter education must specify when and how voter education should be prepared or delivered, and it should outline the timeline for accreditation.
- Given the critical importance of voter education to the quality and outcome of an election, the board must clarify the directive's main objective.
- The directive must include provisions for multiple delivery platforms, including non-face-to-face platforms such as broadcast, social media, and other channels.
- To benefit from their experience and expertise, educational institutions should be included in the development of voter education training manuals and materials.



- For the benefit of clarity, the directive on voter education should clarify the distinction between voter education, civic education, and voter information.
- There should be a provision in the directive requiring civil societies and educational institutions to provide voter education on a constituency-by-constituency basis. Constituency-based voter education would increase the accessibility of voter education in all constituencies. It would also prevent redundancy and duplication of resources by various CSOs and educational groups.
- Ethiopia has a high voter turnout and a large number of constituencies, so it would be a good idea to get more broadcast and print media involved in voter education



Chapter One: Background of the Study

Overview

Elections are an essential component of a representative democratic system. They are the primary means of putting the principle of popular sovereignty into action. The authority of a state and its government is created and sustained by the consent of its people, through their elected representatives.¹ Periodic election allows citizens to reelect or replace incumbents and change governments.² Elections may also be used to determine public opinion on certain prepositions that require the direct participation of citizens, *referendums*.³ Because of the unique role of elections in a democratic system, voting is at the heart of human rights compared to other forms of political participation that citizens might engage in to influence their government.⁴

Elections are challenged by several structural, cultural, and economic variables in different contexts. Among others, electoral apathy and parochial political cultures are challenges that many states currently face. To mitigate those problems, especially among first-time voters,⁵ states implement a range of policy prescriptions, the most important of which is voter education. Voter education is required to guarantee that all citizens understand their rights and duties in the context of elections. Voter education programs provide the public with information on electoral issues that are required for eligible citizens to participate in the electoral process effectively.

Voter education typically focuses on who is eligible to vote, where and how to register to vote, what types of elections are being held, where, when, and how to vote, who the candidates are, and how to file complaints.⁶ Many agree that voter education is foundational because it acquaints citizens with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities,⁷ the main electoral rules set forth in legislation,⁸ and the essential steps in election days.⁹

In Ethiopia, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (hereafter NEBE), is the primary institution responsible for voter education.¹⁰ In the Sixth national election of Ethiopia, NEBE conducted three waves of voter education campaigns, at national and regional levels, using public and private digital and print media platforms. According to the IRI-NDI Limited Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia Report, the NEBE was able to reach around 32.7 million people via voter education activities.¹¹ In addition, the NEBE has the mandate to accredit local civil society organizations and educational institutions¹² to provide civic and

1 Youth Voter Participation (International IDEA 1999) pp. 13

2 Ibid

3 Election | History, Polls, Results, Date, & Facts' (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022) <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/election-political-science>> accessed 13 April 2022.

4 Youth Voter Participation (International IDEA 1999) pp. 13

5 'Election Officials In Voter Education —' (Aceproject.org, 2022) <<https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/vea04/vea04d>> accessed Accessed 13 April 2022

6 'Chapter 5' (Un.org, 2022) <<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm>> accessed 13 April 2022

7 Ibid

8 'Voter Education' (polyas.com, 2022) <<https://www.polyas.com/election-glossary/voter-education>> accessed 13 April 2022

9 Ibid

10 Article 7(2) of proclamation 1133/2019

11 International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), 'Ethiopia June 21, 2021 National Elections Report' (2022) <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/leome_report_of_the_june_21_elections_final_final.pdf> accessed 10 February 2022. at pp. 12

12 Article 7(2) of proclamation 1133/2019

voter education should they meet the requirements within its legislations. To administer this process of accrediting civil society organizations, the NEBE issued a directive titled **“Directive on Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020”** ahead of the Sixth General Elections. CECO E assessed the directive using various parameters to spell out international best practices and areas for improvement in voter education.

The Rationale of the study

The 2021 Ethiopian elections were held following an important reform that allowed political parties and civil organizations to emerge as electoral actors.¹³ Ethiopians elected members of the House of People’s Representatives and respective regional and city administration councils on June 21, 2021, and September 30, 2021, respectively. A total of 38,234,910 voters were registered to vote in the Sixth General Election.¹⁴ Out of the registered voters, 35,134,398 voters voted in the election.¹⁵ In line with its mandate under Article 7 (11) of its establishment proclamation,¹⁶ the NEBE issued numerous directives to administer particular aspects of the election. Among these, the Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020 was issued on February 24, 2020, to govern the involvement of local civil society organizations in delivering voter education. According to the Board, 167 civil society organizations were accredited to provide civic and voter education during the Sixth General Elections.¹⁷

Given the immense importance of voter and civic education for the quality of a given election, creating an enabling and conducive legal framework for civil society organizations and educational institutions for the conduct of voter and civic education is vital. Taking that into account, this research attempts to unpack recurrent challenges and problematic issues associated with the NEBE’s directive on voter education.

Objectives of the study

General objective:

The general objective of this assessment is to identify the normative and practical challenges in applying the NEBE’s directive on Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020.

Specific objectives:

- To assess the directive’s relevance in enhancing public confidence in the electoral process.
- To evaluate the directive’s compatibility with the universal human rights principles, election laws, and standards on civil and political rights.
- To examine the role of the directive in enabling accredited CSOs to provide voter education in a simple and non-discriminatory procedure.
- To assess the mandates of the NEBE in voter education, and the requirements for the accreditation of CSOs to deliver voter education.
- To identify best voter education practices that could easily be adopted into the Ethiopian context.
- To analyze the implications of voter education in the wider electoral process in Ethiopia

13 International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), ‘Ethiopia June 21, 2021 National Elections Report’ (2022) <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/leome_report_of_the_june_21_elections_final_final.pdf> accessed 10 February 2022. at pp. 2

14 NEBE, The announcement of the NEBE election results (2021) at, <https://nebe.org.et/en/electionresult>, [Last Accessed 10 February 2022]

15 Election Result | National Election Board Of Ethiopia’ (Nebe.org.et, 2022) <<https://nebe.org.et/en/electionresult>> accessed 10 February 2022.

16 National Election Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Article 7(11)

17 Election Result | National Election Board Of Ethiopia’ (Nebe.org.et, 2022) <<https://nebe.org.et/en/electionresult>> accessed 10 February 2022.



Research method

This research assessment on the Directive on Voter Education in Ethiopia was conducted in an effort to understand existing opportunities and challenges in the legal framework governing voter education. The research employed a desk-based research review on voter education and the role of civil society organizations in voter education. The research also utilized a comparative method to compare the best practices of different countries. Primary data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with legal experts and representatives from the NEBE, to better understand existing gaps within the NEBE's directive. Furthermore, the CECOE conducted a one-day consultation session with lecturers from 20 different Law Schools in different Universities across the country to examine various aspects of the directive.

Organization of the assessment

This assessment paper entitled: Assessment of NEBE's directive on Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020 assesses the domestic legal framework governing voter education in Ethiopia. This assessment begins with a discussion of theoretical issues related to voter education and dissemination. The focus is on the principles that govern election observation, especially the requirements and standards for accreditation of domestic civil society organizations (CSOs), the role of the Board and CSOs working on voter education and supervision, and the normative and practical challenges that come with it. The paper will end with forwarding recommendations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

In this section of the paper, an attempt has been made to provide a brief overview of the basic ideas and definitions of civic education, voter education, voter information and the importance of voter education.

Defining voter education, voter information and civic education

According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), voter information and voter education form part of the broader scope of civic education. However, there are certain aspects that differentiate one concept from the other.¹⁸ To begin with, **civic education** is defined broadly as the provision of know-how and information to citizens so as to give them all the necessary tools to actively participate in the democratic process of their respective countries.¹⁹ According to McCracken, civic education refers to a wide array of activities aimed at increasing citizen knowledge (understanding of the political system and rights and duties, etc.), citizen skills (monitoring government activities/promises, forming associations for the advancement of certain rights, etc.)²⁰ and civic dispositions (qualities necessary to create a democratic society such as tolerance, active listening, etc.). In most cases, formal education²¹ is used to deliver voter education. Nevertheless, informal approaches to teaching civic education, such as using CSOs, have been deemed essential for the creation of a politically conscious society in any country.

Voter education, on the other hand, is aimed at empowering citizens to make active and meaningful participation ahead of a particular election.²² Voter education is about targeting a specific group of citizens eligible to vote. In a nutshell, voter education is concerned with making sure citizens understand key aspects of elections such as:

- Who is eligible to vote? including age, residence, constituency, and juridical limitations.
- When and how can voters register?
- Where, when, and how to vote on election day? It covers how to cast valid votes, steps to be followed at polling stations on election day.
- Where, when, and how to file complaints during different cycles of the election? It covers complaint filing procedures during voter registration, election day, and post-election periods.²³

Finally, voter information refers to basic information enabling qualified citizens to vote. This includes the date, time, and place of voting, the type of election, identification required to verify eligibility, registration requirements, and mechanisms for voting.²⁴

18 International Foundation for Electoral Support (IFES), Civic and Voter Education, <https://www.ifes.org/issues/civic-and-voter-education> [Last Accessed 13 April 2022]

19 Rietbergen-McCracken J, Civic Education at https://www.civicus.org/documents/toolkits/PGX_B_Civic%20Education.pdf [Civicus]

20 ibid

21 ibid

22 Chapter 5' (Un.org, 2022) <<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm>> accessed 13 April 2022

23 ibid

24 The Electoral Knowledge Network, Basic Ideas and Definitions of Voter Information, Voter Education and Civic Education at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/default> [Last Accessed 12 February 2022]



The key difference between voter education and information is that voter education deals with broader concepts such as the relevance of votes and the validity of ballot papers, whereas information focuses solely on providing information about when and where electoral activities occur. In some circumstances, it may provide citizens with information about candidates running in an election.

The distinction between voter education, civic education and voter information

People sometimes use the terms “voter education” and “voter information” interchangeably, but voter information usually means basic facts about election day, like where, when, and how to vote.²⁵ International IDEA a clear definition of voter information as “typically implemented as short-term programs that focus on specific electoral information, providing relevant factual information on a specific electoral process to voters on a timely basis.”²⁶ Voter education provides more complex information about voting and the electoral process. Voter education is concerned with concepts such as the link between human rights and voting rights; the role, responsibilities and rights of voters; the relationship between elections and democracy; and the conditions necessary for democratic elections; secrecy of the ballot; why each vote is important and its impact on public accountability.²⁷

Civic education is sometimes used interchangeably with voter education, but it is a broader, ongoing process that encompasses activities that inform, equip, and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes in general. Civic education extends beyond the election period and falls primarily under the responsibility of education ministries, schools, and civil society, rather than the EMB.²⁸ The table below summarizes the basic distinctions between voter education, voter information and civic education, based on the audience, message, duration, educational mandate, goals, and approach.²⁹

25 Basic Ideas And Definitions Of Voter Information, Voter Education And Civic Education —' (Aceproject.org, 2022) <<https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/default>> accessed 12 February 2022.

26 IDEA, International Standards for Voter Education, Chapter 11. Civic and Voter Education at https://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/IDEA%20International%20Standards%20for%20Voter%20Education%202014.pdf p,159

27 The Electoral Knowledge Network, Basic Ideas and Definitions of Voter Information, Voter Education and Civic Education at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/default> [Last Accessed 12 February 2022]

28 Ibid

29 saint Anna school of advanced studies, document posted in united nation institute for training and research(UNITAR) (civic and voter education Module 12 – Lesson 1) online class room, archived at <https://learnatunitar.org>

	Voter education	Voter information	Civic education
Goals	motivation and participation in elections	basic information	citizen awareness and participation in all aspects of a democratic society
Audience	voters	citizens qualified to vote	society
Message	link between human rights and voting rights, role of voters, etc	date, time, place, type of election, required ID, registration, messages for each new election	broader concept, responsibility of citizens, significance of elections, citizens' participation
Timing	more lead time required than for information, on-going basis	less lead time required	continual process not tied to electoral cycle
Approach	explanation, not just statement of facts	basic facts that do not require explanation	giving understanding of broader concept, approach depending on institute
Institutional mandate	election authorities, CSOs	election authorities, contestants in election, CSOs	school/university system, CSOs, state agents

Voter education delivery platforms

The United States Election Assistance Commission offers seven recommendations for enhancing voter education programs, boosting voter turnout, and developing well-planned voter motivation and encouragement programs. The commission says that there are many ways to reach voters, such as through TV, radio, print, social media, and other internet platforms.³⁰ In developing countries, voter education is delivered using mass media outlets such as TV and Radio.³¹ Likewise, the Election Systems and Software (ESS), an online resource platform, states that there may be different platforms that can be used to deliver voter education to voters ahead of election day.³² Accordingly, posters and fliers, audiovisual content, equipment demonstrations, and the development of online resources using websites and social media platforms are all possible ways of voter education during elections.

30 (Eac.gov, 2022) <[https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/28/EducatingVoters\[3\]-508%20Compliant.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/28/EducatingVoters[3]-508%20Compliant.pdf)> accessed 13 April 2022.

31 Mobilizing Mass Media For Voter Education' (UNDP in Nepal, 2022) <<https://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/presscenter/articles/2017/07/15/mobilizing-mass-media-for-voter-education-.html>> accessed 13 April 2022.

32 Educated Voters Equal Successful Elections: Voter Education Best Practices - Election Systems & Software' (Election Systems & Software, 2022) <<https://www.essvote.com/blog/industry-news/educated-voters-equal-successful-elections-voter-education-best-practices/>> accessed 13 April 2022.



Stakeholders in the delivery of voter education

When elections are approaching, one of the main responsibilities of an Election Management Body (EMB) of a given country is to facilitate the provision of voter education.³³ International human rights law suggests that providing voter education is the duty of the state.³⁴ The perspective that requires states to deliver voter education is consonant with the principle of the duty to promote,³⁵ which forms part and parcel of the tripartite human rights duties of states.

Although, the election management body is the primary mandate bearer in most jurisdictions for designing and delivering voter education, civil society organizations, political parties, and the media are also important stakeholders in the delivery of voter information and education based on the EMB's timeline and work. The media, as a platform that reaches millions of citizens through various mediums, and as an independent actor delivering voter education on its own initiative, plays a critical role in the quality and reach of voter education activities. Because of their independence and ability to deliver targeted and community-level messages to voters within the community they serve, CSOs are also important actors in the design and delivery of voter education initiatives, alongside the electoral management body. Civil society organizations are expected to play a big role in educating voters because they are not part of the electoral management body (EMB), they can put all of their resources toward educating voters (unlike the EMB, which is also expected to run elections), and they know the needs and context of the communities they serve.

The Ethiopian experience

Following the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, Ethiopia's newly enacted 1995 constitution included key international human rights principles including important political rights. The Constitution guaranteed the freedoms of "speech, religion, the press, and assembly, and the right to petition the government."³⁶ In the years following the promulgation of the Constitution, civil society organizations seized the relative opening and participated in various activities. For instance, in its final report in 2005, the Carter Center said that civic and voter education programs were run by a group of more than 20 local civil society organizations.³⁷

This trend, however, did not last long. Following the 2005 election. The Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation severely restricted the role of Ethiopian civil society organizations in the electoral process.³⁸ According to the law, no organization can be considered local if it receives more than 10% of its funding from foreign sources. Furthermore, only local organizations were permitted to work in the fields of human rights and democratization. The adoption of this proclamation and other subsequent obligations imposed on CSOs shifted the focus of many local organizations away from human rights and democratization.

33 Domenico Tuccinardi and others, *International Obligations For Elections* (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2014) at pp.159

34 *ibid*

35 UN Committee On Human Rights, General Comment 25, "The Right To Participate In Public Affairs, Voting Rights And The Right To Equal Access To Public Service," 1510Th Meeting (Fiftyseventh Session)' (Osce.org, 2022) <<https://www.osce.org/odhr/elections/19154>> accessed 14 March 2022., para 11-12

36 FDRE Constitution, Article 29,30,31

37 Cartercenter, *Observing The 2005 Ethiopia National Elections Carter Center Final Report*, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/ethiopia-2005-finalrpt.pdf [Last Accessed 14 March 2022] pp. 19

38 Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009



By that time, the proclamation was justified by the government's repeated declarations that human rights advocacy is a matter of commitment rather than funding. The EU believes that the conditions imposed by the law jeopardized the rights of free association and derailed the capacities of local civil society organizations.³⁹

The 2018 political opening revised the laws that previously stifled CSOs. Following the relative political openness, the incumbent declared its commitment to uphold free, fair, and credible elections, encouraging many CSOs to engage in elections. Due to the relatively favorable environment for CSOs, 169 CSOs were accredited by the NEBE to provide voter education.⁴⁰

39 'Challenges Facing Civil Society Organisations Working On Human Rights In The EU' (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/challenges-facing-civil-society-organisations-working-human-rights-eu> > accessed 15 April 2022.

40 Election Result | National Election Board Of Ethiopia' (Nebe.org.et, 2022) <<https://nebe.org.et/en/electionresult> > accessed 10 February 2022.



Chapter Three: Voter Education in International, Regional and Domestic Legal Instruments

International and regional legal instruments

To begin with the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), in its General Comment No. 25 stated that:

Voter education and registration campaigns are necessary to ensure the effective exercise of article 25 rights by an informed community⁴¹ and that competent authorities should take “positive measures ... to overcome specific difficulties, such as illiteracy, language barriers, poverty, or impediments to freedom of movement, which prevent persons entitled to vote from exercising their rights effectively.”⁴² The UN Human Rights Council recommends that “Information and materials about voting should be available in minority languages (local languages). Specific methods, such as photographs and symbols, should be adopted to ensure that illiterate voters have adequate information on which to base their choice.”⁴³

In Africa, according to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG), the states shall commit themselves:

To implement programs and carry out activities designed to promote democratic principles and practices as well as consolidate a culture of democracy and peace.⁴⁴ Furthermore, state actors “shall promote the participation of social groups with special needs in the governance process, including youth and people with disabilities, and shall ensure systematic and comprehensive civic education in order to encourage the full participation of social groups with special needs in democracy and development processes.”⁴⁵

The charter places responsibilities for voter education and election processes on government institutions and statutory bodies like the Electoral management bodies.

41 UN Committee On Human Rights, General Comment 25, “The Right To Participate In Public Affairs, Voting Rights And The Right To Equal Access To Public Service,” 1510Th Meeting (Fiftyseventh Session)’ (Osce.org, 2022) <<https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/19154>> accessed 14 March 2022., para 11

42 Ibid, Paragraph 12

43 Ibid

44 ‘African Charter On Democracy, Elections And Governance | African Union’ (Au.int, 2022) <<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-democracy-elections-and-governance>> accessed 16 February 2022.

45 Ibid, article 31

The domestic legal framework for voter education in Ethiopia

The FDRE Constitution

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has a parliamentary system of government with the federal House of Peoples' Representative (HoPR) and regional State Councils as the highest legislative organs. It follows the first-past-the-post electoral rule based on universal suffrage, direct and secret ballots.⁴⁶ It has been almost 27 years since the 1995 FDRE Constitution came into effect.⁴⁷ Since then, six national elections were conducted in the country, including the 2021 elections. Elections in Ethiopia is regulated by a number of legislative instruments.

The value of the constitution begins with its preamble. It shows the Constitution's strong commitment to ensuring a democratic order. To realize democracy, the Constitution enshrined the full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights.⁴⁸ The Constitution also declares political rights such as the right to equality and non-discrimination,⁴⁹ freedom of thought, opinion and expression,⁵⁰ the right to assembly, demonstrations and petition,⁵¹ freedom of association,⁵² the right to vote and to be elected, and to take part in the conduct of public affairs directly or through freely chosen representatives. It also recognizes the right to be a member of a political organization, associations, and trade unions. The constitution further recognizes and domesticates international human rights norms ratified by the country as an integral part of the laws of the land.⁵³

Other legislations governing elections in Ethiopia

In addition to the constitutional provisions governing elections in Ethiopia, there are various legal documents that have been prepared for the proper conduct and execution of elections. Recently, the previous three primary proclamations were merged into two legislations in 2019, namely, the National Election Board of Ethiopia Establishment proclamation (No 1133/2019) and the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct Proclamation (No. 1162/2019) commonly referred to as Electoral Law.

The NEBE also approved various directives to facilitate the smooth implementation of the electoral process. To mention some: Local Election Observers' Accreditation, Working Procedure and Code of Conduct Directive no. 5/2020, the directive on Accreditation, Working Procedures and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, the directive on Candidate Registration, Collection of Endorsement Signatures and Selection of Symbols, the directive on Meeting Procedures of the Management Board of National Election Board of Ethiopia, the directive on Recruitment of National Election Board of Ethiopia's Regional Branch Office Heads, the directive on the Obligations of Registered National and Regional Political Parties (under Proclamation 1162/2019, Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No.

46 Proclamation No.1/1995, The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995 (FDRE Constitution), Article 54.

47 The FDRE Constitution, Proclamation no. 1 1995, adopted December 1994 and came into force on the 21st day of August 1995.

48 FDRE Constitution, Preamble, paragraphs 1, 2 and 5.

49 FDRE Constitution, Articles 25 and 35(2) and (3).

50 FDRE Constitution, Article 29

51 FDRE Constitution, Article 30

52 FDRE Constitution, Article 31

53 FDRE Constitution, articles 9(4) and 13(2).



4/2020, the directive on Re-election Procedures, the Directive on Voting, Counting and Announcement of results, Election Reporting Code of conduct of the Media and Journalists, and the directive on COVID 19 Mitigation during Elections.

The National Election Board of Ethiopia Establishment, Proclamation No 1133/2019:

The National Election Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation contains detailed sections on the powers and functions of the Board, the appointment of Board members, and the Code of Conduct which applies specifically to election observation and voter education. Article 7 (2) of the Proclamation states that the NEBE's powers include granting permission, following up and supervising civil society organizations, providing voter education,⁵⁴ issuing licenses, and following up and supervising their activities⁵⁵ To carry out these duties appropriately, the board has the power to issue directives as required by this Proclamation and other laws.⁵⁶

The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election Code of Conduct Proclamation 1162/2019 (Electoral Law)

The law governing election registration and related conduct of political parties is called the "Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Electoral Code of Conduct No. 1162/2019". This law came into effect on the 24th of August 2019, by repealing and merging three separate laws into one comprehensive legal document. The three laws that were combined were: the Electoral Law of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 532/2007, Political Parties Registration Proclamation No. 573/2008; and Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties Proclamation No. 662/2009.⁵⁷

The legislation has many sections that highlight election principles, political parties, election observers, voter education, voter complaints, election disputes, and an election code of conduct. The preamble of the proclamation states that the legislation seeks to guarantee the participation of every Ethiopian in free, fair, and peaceful elections held at all levels on the basis of universal suffrage. The directive aims, among other things, to allow political parties to freely participate in elections by peacefully expressing their viewpoints to the people.⁵⁸

The National Election Board of Ethiopia's directive on Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020

This directive details rules and procedures in accreditation, rights, duties, responsibilities, and ethical principles that trainers and civil societies involved in voter education should abide by. Pursuant to article 7 of this directive, the NEBE is responsible "to granting permission, and supervising civil society organizations providing voter education." Additional NEBE's tasks include issuing licenses to other bodies engaging in civic and voter education and following and supervising their activities.

54 Article 7(2) of proclamation 1133/2019

55 Article 7(7) of proclamation 1133/2019

56 Article 7 (11) proclamation 1133/2019

57 Election Laws | National Election Board Of Ethiopia' (Nebe.org.et, 2022) <<https://nebe.org.et/en/election-laws> > accessed 16 February 2022.

58 Preamble, proclamation 1162/2019



Organizations seeking to provide voter education must get NEBE's accreditation as outlined in Proclamation No. 1162/2019:⁵⁹

- Must be a legally registered local civil society organization or accredited institution of higher learning.
- Must meet the criteria set out for voter education.
- Must have the capacity to carry out its duties.
- Must be non-partisan.

Before providing organizations with identification cards that prove their accreditation, the Board requires them and their representatives to sign a Voter Education Code of Conduct.⁶⁰ Furthermore, according to Article 124 (3) of the Electoral Law, organizations accredited by the NEBE must first receive civic and voter education training using manuals prepared by the NEBE.⁶¹

59 Article 125 of proclamation 1133/2019

60 Article 8 of Directive No. 4/2020

61 Article 124 of proclamation 1162/2019



Chapter Four: Assessments of strengths and limitations of existing legal frameworks in voter education

Strengths of existing legal frameworks in voter education

Interviewed legal experts and electoral rights experts agreed that the directive is compatible with international principles on domestic voter education and electoral standards. In many ways, the new electoral law and directives on voter and civic education differ from previous acts. For instance, the new law lifted the restriction on civil organizations engaging in both election observation and civic or voter education activities. The inclusion of international civic and voter education principles in the new law is another departure from the previous laws. The emphasis on the inclusion of women, people with disabilities, minority languages, and respect for gender equality are new ruptures⁶² in the law. Another significant change in the revised electoral law is that CSOs and higher education institutions can seek judicial review,⁶³ if the Board rejects their application for accreditation.

To sum up, the amendments to the laws governing voter education encouraged many CSOs to engage in voter education activity. In addition to the amendments on voter education, the opening of the civic space following the amendments introduced in 2020 to the legislation governing the establishment, operation and funding of non-governmental organizations significantly eased restrictions in place since 2013.

Limitations of existing legal frameworks in voter education

I. The mandate

The NEBE is responsible for voter education. Pursuant to Article 124 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019,⁶⁴ the National Election Board of Ethiopia shall develop a strategy, involving the use of multiple media platforms to provide civic and voter education to Ethiopians. Furthermore, the NEBE can accredit civil society organizations and educational institutions to provide civic and voter education if they have a legal personality.

Even in countries with a separate state institution for voter and civic education, such as Ghana and Gambia,⁶⁵ the statutory responsibility for voter education is almost always vested in electoral management bodies. Outside of Africa, Germany established the Federal Agency for Civic Education to receive and grant funds to foundations, regional centers, and non-governmental organizations for the purpose of conducting

62 Article 13 of directive o4 2020

63 Article 125(2) of Ethiopian Electoral Proclamation Number 1162/2019

64 Article 124 of proclamation 1162/2019

65 'EISA Civic And Voter Education' (Eisa.org, 2022) <<https://www.eisa.org/wep/ghaeducation.htm>> accessed 16 February 2022. And Gambia: NCCE, Partners Validate Bill' (allAfrica.com, 2022) <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202109090119.html>> accessed 17 June 2022.

formal and non-formal voter and civic education.⁶⁶ In Asia, a bill to establish a “National Civic Education Commission” is making its way through Pakistan’s Parliament.⁶⁷

The responsibility for voter and civic education varies from country to country. Some legislatures delegate it to election management bodies, others to educational institutions or other entities. According to ACE’s comparative data, in more than 200 countries⁶⁸, provide voter and civic education using various institutions, as shown in the table below(The percentage is calculated based on the total number of countries):

Who conducts voter education and information campaigns for national elections	Total number of countries	Percentage
a. National Electoral Management Body	163	72%
b. Regional Electoral Management Bodies	25	11%
c. Local/County Electoral Management Bodies	34	15%
d. National Government	44	19%
e. Regional Governments	12	5%
f. Local Governments	26	11%
g. NGOs/ Civic Organizations	53	23%
h. Political parties/ candidates	35	15%
i. Media	59	26%
j. Religious Institutions	5	2%
k. Other	20	8%

This shows that voter education is not the sole responsibility of a single institution. In a country like Ethiopia, the mandate given to only three stakeholders to conduct voter education appears to be insufficient. We recommend that NEBE conduct research on other potential stakeholders capable of implementing voter education activities and include more actors other than civil society organizations and higher education institutions.

II. Accreditation and electoral calendar

The accreditation process for CSOs was a major issue during the Six General Election. As all decisions were centralized, accreditation badges were issued by the NEBE’s central office in Addis Ababa.⁶⁹ Such a centralized accreditation process, however, reduces the needed flexibility and expediency. Apparently, the directive on voter education, in article 7, grants the NEBE the right to transfer the responsibility of accrediting voter education to regional offices when it deems it necessary. Nonetheless, despite the legal latitude granted by the voter education directive, the NEBE did not assign such obligations to regional offices during the 2021 elections. To expedite delays in accreditation process, we recommend the decentralization of the delegation of accreditation powers to regional NEBE branches. To realize this the NEBE should empower the regional branch offices by providing the required training, logistics, and skilled human resources.

Furthermore, a tight election schedule also made it hard for CSOs to effectively provide voter education.⁷⁰The research conducted by another team from the CECO shows that preparation and delivery of voter

66 ‘Responsibility Of Civic Education Among National Institutions —’ (Aceproject.org, 2022) <<https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/veb/veb03/veb03b>> accessed 16 February 2022.

67 National civic education commission act, 2017 (Senate.gov.pk, 2022) <http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1520327436_320.pdf> accessed 16 February 2022.

68 ‘Comparative Data —’ (Aceproject.org, 2022) <<https://aceproject.org/epic-en/>> accessed 16 February 2022.

69 International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), ‘Ethiopia June 21, 2021 National Elections Report’ (2022) <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/leome_report_of_the_june_21_elections_final_final.pdf> accessed 10 February 2022. pp. 24

70 Ibid



education did not start early enough to have a lasting impact on targeted voters.⁷¹ The majority of the respondents in the research (48%) implemented programs for less than one month, while 14% carried out voter education for a period more than three months.⁷² Most CSOs commenced voter education activities in the final weeks of Election day. As stated earlier, the NEBE did not accredit CSOs in time for them to start voter education earlier. The directive makes no mention of when or how voter education should be prepared or delivered. If the directive was clear about how to get accredited and how long it takes, it would help CSOs get ready for voter education earlier.

III. The directive does not specify the relevance of the voter education to the election process

The directive misses clearly stating the need for and importance of voter education. The preamble of the directive only mentions the regulatory power of the board and its power to enact directives to regulate voter education and the accreditation process.⁷³ Given the enormous importance of voter education in the quality and outcome of a given election, the board has to explain the major goal that the directive is meant to achieve.

IV. Lacks of provision for multiple delivery platforms

The directive only mentions face-to-face voter education platforms and fails to recognize the provision of voter education through different delivery platforms. In the course of implementing and overseeing voter education programs during the Six National Elections, the NEBE mainly focused on the face-to-face approach. Various studies conducted on the subject matter have indicated that using multiple delivery methods increases the likely success of voter education campaigns. Be that as it may, both the NEBE and Ethiopian CSOs paid little attention to this aspect. In this regard, one of the showcases is the NEBE's monthly voter education performance reporting template, which was prepared only for CSOs that educated voters through face-to-face approach. As the CECOE was mainly engaged in digital voter education, it was difficult to report its monthly activities using the aforementioned reporting template. As internet penetration and the number of active social media users are growing at a swift rate, the NEBE should reframe its policy towards the use of digital media and other voter education delivery approaches.

V. The Role of the NEBE in the preparation of voter education materials

According to article 5 of directive 4/2020, the NEBE has sole authority over the development of training materials and guides. As indicated earlier, the CECOE's research shows⁷⁴ that 44.2% of respondents believed that the manual was relatively easy to understand, while 3.8% of respondents said it was not. Additionally, 72.2% of the respondents believed that the manual included all the relevant information to guide voter education activities, while 25.9% said the manual contained some key pieces of information but was lacking in other areas. Concerns with NEBE's voter education manual included the manual's bulkiness and the use of difficult terminologies to express some issues. Likewise, the guidebook was only available in a limited number of languages. We suggest that the NEBE should work with higher education institutions to prepare the manual and translate it into different languages.

71 CECOE, Assessment of Voter Education Activities by Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations During the Sixth General Elections, 2022

72 Ibid

73 Preamble of NEBE's directive on voter education accreditation and code of conduct directive No.4/2020

74 CECOE, Assessment of Voter Education Activities by Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations During the Sixth General Elections, 2022

VI. The directive does not differentiate between voter education, civic education, and voter information

In its definitional section, the directive makes no distinction between voter education, civic education, and voter information. For the benefit of clarity, the directive should expound on and distinguish between these categories and activities. These three concepts need to be differentiated in order to fully understand the educational enterprise, establish the educational mandate, evaluate the context in which the program will be delivered, develop an effective strategy, design and implement the program, and monitor and evaluate the program.

VII. The need for constituency-based voter education

According to our research, many voter education activities were unavailable to residents living in rural and peri-urban areas. There should be a provision in the directive requiring civil societies and educational institutions to provide voter education on a constituency-by-constituency basis. This would increase the accessibility of voter education in virtually all constituencies. It would also prevent redundancy and duplication of resources by various CSOs and educational groups.

VIII. Limited role of the media in voter education

The NEBE grants sole authority to local civil society organizations and educational institutions to deliver voter education, relegating media institutions to the status of mere transmitters.⁷⁵ The role of the media is limited to broadcasting voter education content provided by the CSOs or educational institutions.⁷⁶ The NEBE should confer the media the right to participate in voter education activities due to the media's vast reach. Other countries also allow the media to provide voter education. For instance, Kenya's Voter Education Regulation Act⁷⁷ grants media houses the authority to provide voter education. Ethiopia has a high voter turnout and a large number of constituencies, so it would be a good idea to get more broadcast and print media involved in voter education.

⁷⁵Article 7 and 8 of the directive

⁷⁶ Article 13(2) of the directive

⁷⁷Article Election voter education regulation 2017, arrangement of regulation/ the election act 24 of 2014



Chapter Five: Conclusion

The goal of voter education is to get more people to vote and reduce the number of invalid votes. In this way, voter education is needed to make sure that people know their rights and responsibilities, the political system, the candidates they can choose from, how and where to vote, and what their choices are. In the Sixth National Elections, voter education was a very important part of the process. Compared to previous elections, the NEBE and civil society groups have done a great job of educating voters.

This assessment revealed that the NEBE's voter education handbook was replete with flaws. Other than the typical face-to-face technique, the voter education directive does not acknowledge the usefulness of other media channels in providing voter education. Another outcome of this research is the necessity for constituency-based voter education. Penultimately, the research indicated that the accreditation process is beset by delays due to the over-centralization of the NEBE's activity. Finally, the research spelled out issues of clarity, defining terminologies, obligations, and other processes.

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Part II

Assessment of Voter Education Activities by Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations During the Sixth Ethiopian General Elections

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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Executive Summary

The Coalition is a broad-based network of over 175 civil society organizations operating in the ten regional states and the two city administrations, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. On February 4, 2020, CECO E got a certificate of registration from the FDRE Civil Society Organizations Authority with the registration number 4748. The CECO E was established with the objective of coordinating civic engagement, increasing citizen participation in the 2021 Ethiopian General Elections, and bolstering a long-term civil society engagement in Ethiopia's electoral process in a sustainable manner.

During the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia, the CECO E recruited and deployed over three thousand long-term and short-term observers in nine regional states and two city administrations. Furthermore, the Coalition undertook a media monitoring initiative that monitored election related information on seven selected mass media outlets, 40 political party social media accounts, and 40 CSOs. In addition, the coalition also reached over 25 million online users and 40 million citizens using mainstream media outlets in its voter information and education program. The CECO E also coordinated the financing of voter education (VE) campaigns implemented by its members, raising over ETB 1,200,000.00 for VE activities in different regions.

Currently, CECO E is working on a wide array of short-term and long-term programs related to elections, good governance, and peacebuilding in Ethiopia. Based on the work it has done during the Sixth National and Regional Elections, the CECO E has been engaging stakeholders in the public and CSO sector on several advocacy issues emanating from its findings via observation, media monitoring, and voter education activities. In line with this, the following study has explored the voter education and information activities conducted by local civil society organizations under the new legal framework for elections and civil society engagement in Ethiopia. As voter education is an integral element of all democratic elections, the CECO E has assessed voter education programs implemented by CSOs. To that end, the coalition collected data from CSOs, trainers and other participants of voter education initiatives during the Sixth General Elections. It also conducted semi structured interviews with key informants from the NEBE, the CSO sector, and the media to gain insights into the strengths and shortcomings of voter education activities conducted by local CSOs.

CHAPTER ONE: Background of the Study

Background of the study

Voter Education (VE) is a program that teaches voters about the basic concepts of democracy and the role of elections in a democratic government. Voter education emphasizes the importance of voting and encourages voters to participate in the entire electoral and governance process. Specifically, VE communicates basic voter information that every voter must be aware of in order to arrive prepared at the voting station and vote on the scheduled voting day(s).

The following are some of the overarching goals of voter education programs:

- To encourage voters to participate in the whole electoral and governance process.
- To promote a participant political culture by educating voters about the importance of exercising a range of political rights.
- To acquaint the electorate with the basic concepts of democracy and the role of elections in democracy and governance.
- To encourage informed political choices and voter rationality.
- To advocate for the inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and other minority groups in elections and the governance process.

In most democracies, civil society organizations are one of the key actors involved in the delivery of voter information and education. During the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia, local civil society organizations played critical roles as agents of voter education and election observation. In this respect, in February 2021, the NEBE requested local CSOs that met the legal requirements to seek accreditation to conduct voter education activities. Following this call, 167 local civil society organizations were accredited to undertake voter education activities in different regions and city administrations within the country. 96 of the 167 registered CSOs conducted voter education activities using various means and platforms. Drawing on its seminal experience with voter education during the Sixth General Elections, the CECOE conducted this research to identify the best practices and point out areas of improvement in voter education activity in Ethiopia.

Statement of the problem

The Electoral Knowledge Network notes that elections are one of the most important events in which civil society organizations should be involved because they have special resources, have a wide range of skills, and can reach people on a local level.¹ Voter education could be conducted by organizations with targeted mandates directly linked to conducting electoral activities (*i.e. CECOE is a local coalition working directly on elections*). CSOs with special interests in issues or a minority group, on the other hand, may engage in voter education activities during elections (for example, organizations working with women voters, ethnic minority voters, internally displaced voters, or voters in rural or remote communities).²

¹ The Electoral Knowledge Network, *Organized Civil Society as Stakeholders in the Voter Education Mandate* <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vec/vec03/vec03a/vec03a03> [Last Accessed 09 February 2022]

² *ibid*



Despite the immense relevance of civil society organizations, local civil society organizations operating in Ethiopia have contributed little during previous elections in the country. Notable in this respect is the 2009 legislation. Following the controversial Third General Elections of Ethiopia in 2005, the government enacted “draconian” electoral and civil society legislation that severely restricted the participation of CSOs in elections. The financial and mandate limitations in the 2009 CSO proclamation³ prohibited “Foreign” and “Ethiopian Resident” civil society organizations from carrying out any work related to human rights and democracy. In the same vein, the 2009 electoral legal framework required CSOs to choose between voter education and election monitoring activities, with participation in both prohibited during the same electoral cycle. Under these restrictive conditions, Ethiopia held the 4th and 5th national elections, limiting the potential contributions of CSOs to the democratization process.

However, the introduction of reform initiatives by PM Abiy Ahmed’s (PhD) administration removed these restrictive circumstances ahead of the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia. After assuming office in 2018, the Prime Minister established the Legal and Justice Affairs Advisory Council of Ethiopia (LJAAC) within the Attorney General’s Office, tasked with revising previous legislations, including the electoral and civil society proclamations. The council revised draconian provisions in previous electoral and civil society proclamations, lifted financial and bureaucratic barriers, and limited the power of the Agency of Civil Society Organizations.

During Ethiopia’s Sixth National and Regional Elections, engagement by civil society groups grew as a result of the repeal of restrictive laws. Remarkably, local civil society organizations deployed over 40,000 observers and, the NEBE accredited 167 CSOs to conduct voter education activities.⁴ However, as noted in the Election Observation Report from the NDI-IRI Limited Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia, Ethiopian CSOs faced challenges related to legitimacy, capacity to design effective VE programs, and ability to raise funds to carry out VE activities. Due to such challenges, only half of the accredited CSOs were engaged in VE activities.⁵ According to the LEOME report, these challenges were worsened by the shifting timelines of the Sixth National Elections and ineffective means of accreditation by the NEBE.

Recognizing the importance of using the relatively open civic space for local civil society organizations, CECOE believes that it is imperative to study, record, and highlight the opportunities and challenges encountered during the delivery of voter education by local civil society organizations during Ethiopia’s Sixth National and Regional Elections. The Coalition also hopes that this study will provide insights to local CSOs, partners, and stakeholders, on possible areas of improvement and cooperation for future voter education activities and the broader picture of CSOs’ role in the delivery of civic education.⁶

Objectives of the Study

General objective

The objective of this study is to conduct an assessment of voter education programs during the 6th National Elections based on plans and outcomes of selected CSOs’ VE programs.

³ Amended Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009

⁴ IRI-NDI Limited Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia (LEOME). Ethiopia June 21, 2021 Election Observation Report (August 2021) https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/leome_report_of_the_june_21_elections_final_final.pdf (Last Accessed: 09 February 2022) at pp. 24

⁵ *Ibid* at pp. 24

⁶ *Ibid* at pp. 13

Specific objectives

Based on the above general objective, this research has the following specific objectives:

- To identify factors that hinder the smooth implementation of voter education programs.
- To evaluate the role of voter education in raising voter awareness and improving participation in the election processes.
- To assess the level of awareness on voter education among relevant stakeholders (CSOs leaders, experts and partners).
- To assess communication channels and methods used by CSOs in delivering VE.
- To figure out how much creative channels, technologies, and social media platforms were used in VE delivery.
- To measure the reachability and efficacy of various VE programs implemented by CSOs.
- To assess the challenges that CSOs encounter when implementing VE programs.

Methodology of the assessment

An ideal assessment of voter education initiatives implemented during a particular electoral cycle would link activities to indicators of impact on voter turnout, mitigation of voter apathy, inclusion of minority groups, and other indicators related to the content and reach of voter education activities. In line with the above ideal parameter of assessing voter education, the coalition attempts to assess the quality and inclusivity of voter education initiatives. Apparently, the lack of accurate information on previous and current voter turnout rates and a dearth of research on voter apathy makes this research an unprecedented endeavor.

For the purpose of this study, the CECO E used qualitative and quantitative data (descriptive statistics), drawing on previously collected data on voter education in Ethiopia, and data on the execution of voter education activities from CSOs that conducted VE activities during the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia. The Coalition reviewed literature (both theoretical and empirical) on global voter education practices, the history of voter education in Ethiopia, and worldwide indicators for assessing voter education activities. The CECO E also used questionnaires and key informant interviews to collect empirical data from several stakeholders on the delivery of voter education during the Sixth General Elections of Ethiopia. During the data gathering process, CSOs working in seven regions and two city administrations, officials from the NEBE, partner or donor organizations, were targeted. Experts and international donors were also interviewed to corroborate some of the findings from the qualitative data obtained from various stakeholders involved in voter education.

Moreover, the CECO E collected the details of accredited CSOs from the NEBE for the purpose of this study. Lastly, the CECO E hosted a one-day consultation with 26 groups that engaged in VE activities during the Sixth General Elections on April 8, 2022, to gain a deeper understanding of the problems experienced by CSOs. Some thoughts from the consultation session were incorporated into the findings of the research.



CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining voter education

High voter turnout is one of the primary indicators of a successful election. Examining the percentage of eligible voters who participated in a particular election indicates the level of universal suffrage and enfranchisement of voters.⁷ The participation of citizens largely determines the proper representation of citizens and the viability of a democratic system anchored in citizen participation.⁸ Voter education is one of the most effective means to acquaint citizens with knowledge of elections, legislations and rights. In his analysis of voter apathy in Botswana, Adam Mufundisi, argues that voter and civic education is a critical activity as it has a direct correlation with the meaningful participation of citizens in elections, with significant implications for citizen representation in the political system of the country.⁹

The United Nations defines voter education as a series of activities or campaigns aimed at increasing voter turnout and universal suffrage by providing information to all constituents as well as targeted members of the community who are disadvantaged for varying reasons.¹⁰ The Electoral Knowledge Management, on the other hand, defines voter education as:

An enterprise designed to ensure that voters are ready, willing, and able to participate in electoral politics," also adding that it "...entails election literacy and confidence that the electoral process is appropriate and effective in selecting governments and promoting policies that will benefit the individual voter.¹¹

Voter education is usually confused with voter information¹² and civic education.¹³ This may be because voter education includes but is much more than voter information and falls short of the complexity and continuity of civic education. Situated somewhere between voter information and civic education, Voter education is defined as a series of activities or initiatives aimed at providing basic information to address the motivation and preparedness of voters during elections. In the sections below, the difference between voter information, voter education, and civic education will be discussed. Additionally, the literature review includes a summary of the correlation between voter education and the quality of elections and assesses the role of the state in providing voter education.

7 Mufundisi A, Chapter Nine: Civil Society and Voter Education in Botswana: 1965-2004 in Mauandi Z (ed.), *Forty Years of Democracy in Botswana (1965-2005)* (Democratic Research Project, 2005) at pp. 165 <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/botswana/04917.pdf#page=170> [Last Accessed 8 February 2022]

8 Ugwonna G.O et.al, *Enhancing Voter Education Knowledge of Adolescents Through Social Interaction Instructional Models*, Volume 12, Number 5 (May 2020) at pp. 1

9 Supra note 8, 164

10 United Nations, *Why Educate Voters* at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm> [Last Accessed 13 February 2022]

11 Electoral Knowledge Network, *Basic definition and ideas on Voter Education, Voter Information and Civic Education* at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/vea03> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

12 According to The Electoral Knowledge Network, voter information refers to a series of activities aimed at providing citizens with basic information about the timeline and eligibility criteria of a particular election such as when to register and vote, where to register and vote and how to register and vote. See more at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/vea03>

13 Civic education is a broader concept that is aimed at providing citizens with long term education using formal and informal means of education in order to enhance their political participation in the long run. Usually part of formal education, civic education is intended to promote the participation of citizens in good governance and the democratic process of the country. See more at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/vea/vea03>

Voter education vs Voter information¹⁴

Voter information and voter education may appear to be similar activities conducted in the period leading up to an election by the election management body or civil society actors. However, the purpose, audience, content, and objectives of the two activities are different. Voter education includes key aspects of voter information but is broader than the latter because of its complexity and depth. In simpler terms, voter information aims at relaying basic information surrounding elections, while voter education highlights to voters the importance of voting, the role and rights of voters, the link between voting and human rights as well as the role of elections in building democratic communities. Voter education focuses on the motivation and preparedness of voters to cast informed and valid ballots on election day. Therefore, voter education requires more time and planning as compared to voter information.

Voter education vs Civic education¹⁵

If voter education is an extension of voter information, the opposite is true for civic education. Civic education, unlike voter education and information, is a continuous process of raising citizens' political awareness of wider principles underpinning a democratic society, such as the role and duty of the government, citizens, the media, and other stakeholders. Voter education and information often appear as part of the many topics of civic education.

As such, while voter information and education target eligible voters, civic education is targeted at all members of the society, including minors not yet eligible to vote. Voter education, on the other hand, is strictly linked with an electoral cycle, giving it a narrower scope as compared to the activities of civic education.

The relevance of voter education and its relations with quality of elections

In an article titled *"Education for Democracy: reasons and strategies"*, Wolfgang Edelstein argues that the importance of learning about democracy emanates from the manner in which societies are currently operating.¹⁶ By this, he is referring to the varying levels of awareness between pupils in varying geographical, characteristic, and financial contexts.¹⁷ This, in turn, causes a state of crisis, which is typically characterized by varying understandings and tendencies of exercising political rights within a given society.¹⁸ Therefore, it is necessary to use education as a means of correcting stereotypes and creating citizens who are well aware of their rights and responsibilities regardless of their backgrounds.

However, in addition to the relevance of education to enhance democratic cultures, the relevance of voter education is directly linked to key indicators of the quality of an election such as voter turnout, universal suffrage, and the inclusivity of a particular electoral cycle.¹⁹ Voter education is critical for motivating

¹⁴ The Election Knowledge Management Network, Basic Ideas and Definitions of Voter Information, Voter Education and Civic Education: Basic Voter Information at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/onePage> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

¹⁵ The Election Knowledge Management Network, Basic Ideas and Definitions of Voter Information, Voter Education and Civic Education: Basic Civic Education at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/onePage> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

¹⁶ Edelstien W, Education for Democracy: reasons and strategies, European Journal of Education, Volume 46, Number 01 (February 2011) pp. 127 - 137

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ The Election Knowledge Management Network, Civic and Voter Education: Why Educate Voters: Why Educate Voters? at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/onePage> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]



individuals to actively engage in political processes by providing information on the value of votes, the relationship between voting and human rights, and the positive impacts of voting on citizen agency in governance.²⁰ Voter education, when targeted towards disadvantaged members of the community, also helps in increasing the inclusivity of the election by motivating women, persons with disabilities, minority groups and other disadvantaged members of the community to participate in a particular electoral process.²¹

In varying contexts, the relevance of voter education is usually associated with voter turnout rates. In Ethiopia's context, the lack of reliable information on voter turnout rates for previous elections, including the Six General Elections in Ethiopia, made it difficult to draw a direct correlation between voter turnout and voter education during elections. Nevertheless, the 2005 election was an exception, with some attributing the extensive voter education campaign to an all-time high record of more than 90% voter turnout.²² However, when it comes to voter age group turnout (VAP Turnout), Ethiopia has a much lower rate of turnout in previous elections, as well as the 2021 Elections.²⁴ According to, the International IDEA, while voter turnout is in the upper 90 percent for most elections in Ethiopia, the VAP turnout remains below 76% in all six elections held between 1995 and 2021.²⁵ This shows that a considerable number of eligible voters did not register for previous elections, highlighting the need for voter education in the country to bolster not only voting on election day but also to implement voter education activities aimed at increasing the number of registered voters a head of election day.

Voter education delivery platforms

Election Systems and Software (ESS) is an online resource platform focusing on elections. ESS states that there may be different platforms that can be used to deliver voter education to voters ahead of election day.²⁶ The ESS identifies posters and fliers, audiovisual content, equipment demonstrations, and creating online resources using websites and social media platforms as potential means of delivering voter education during elections.²⁷ Mass media outlets such as television and radio stations are also essential platforms for the delivery of voter education, especially in developing countries.²⁸ However, the emergence of cost-efficient social media platforms makes them suitable platforms to deliver voter education, particularly among urban users.²⁹ The Election Knowledge Network also identifies the media, circulation of printed materials, the use of arts and culture, organizing face-to-face sessions, commercial advertising, and the use of alternative means such as telephones, mass SMS platforms, and postal services as platforms that may be used to deliver voter education.³⁰

20 United Nations, Voter and Civic education: Why Educate Voters at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

21 *ibid*

22 International IDEA Website, Ethiopia: Election Data at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/104/40> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

23 Voter turnout is the rate of voters who cast their votes on election day as compared with the number of voters who registered prior to election day.

24 Voter Age Group Turnout (VAG Turnout) refers to the number of voters who cast their votes on election day as compared with the total population estimated to be eligible to vote. Not the age group that has registered.

25 *Supra* note 24

26 Election Systems and Softwares, Educated Voters Equal Successful Elections: Voter Education Best Practices, at <https://www.essvote.com/blog/industry-news/educated-voters-equal-successful-elections-voter-education-best-practices/> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

27 *ibid*

28 UNDP Website, Mobilizing mass media for voter education at <https://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/presscenter/articles/2017/07/15/mobilizing-mass-media-for-voter-education-.html> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

29 Ibang T et al., Voter Education through Social Media: An Analytical Study of Independent Electoral Commission's Twitter and Facebook Platforms, SSRG International Journal of Humanities and Social Science (SSRG-IJHSS) Volume 7 Issue (May 2020)

30 The Election Knowledge Management Network, Civic and Voter Education at <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/onePage> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

Voter education as a duty of the state

The provision of voter education is usually understood to be the primary mandate of the election management body of a given country.³¹ In line with this, international human rights law suggests that the provision of voter education is part of the duty of the state to enhance the political rights of citizens.³² The first justification for the above assertion is related to the duty to promote, which forms part and parcel of the tripartite human rights duties of states.³³ Literature defines the promotion of human rights as the duty of the state to teach citizens about their rights and responsibilities, the manner in which they enjoy their rights and the duty of the state to advocate for the enhancement of human rights.³⁴ Based on this notion, it can be argued that the relevant institutions within the state have the duty to conduct voter education activities in order to advance and make sure citizens enjoy their right to participate in elections as voters and candidates. To conclude, it can be argued that the state has the general responsibility to take the necessary steps to give effect to the rights of citizens to vote by engaging in voter education activities.

However, in addition to the conceptual duty of the state to provide voter education as part of its duty to promote, there are also provisions within different international treaties and general comments made by human rights committees on the duty of the state to provide voter education. According to these provisions, the state is obliged to ensure transparency, access to information, universal suffrage, equality before the law, and freedom from discrimination, in the entire election process. For instance, General Comment 25 of the ICCPR stipulates that the provision of voter education campaigns is of paramount importance for the effective enjoyment of Article 25 of the ICCPR, which defines the right to vote, to be elected, and the right to participate directly or indirectly in the conduct of public affairs.³⁵ Likewise, General Recommendation 3 of CEDAW urges states to adopt education and public information initiatives to overcome prejudice against women in the enjoyment of political rights.³⁶ Similarly, General Comment 25 of the CCPR calls on states to make information and voting materials available in minority languages, while also emphasizing the importance of making voting information and materials available to persons with disabilities, so that they can exercise their fundamental rights.³⁷

CSOs as stakeholders in the delivery of voter education

CSOs are increasingly playing a role in the development process, as they are responsible for delivering services, implementing donor-funded projects, and participating in governance processes. For example, the EU defines CSOs as “an organizational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens”. CSOs are recognized as having a role in the good governance of the EU, which includes talking with CSOs when making proposals for EU laws. According to the EU, examples of CSOs include social partners (trade unions and employers’ groups), NGOs, and grassroots organizations (e.g., youth and family groupings). In contrast, the African Development Bank’s definition of civil society includes reference to CSOs as comprising

31 Tuccinardi D (Ed.), *International Obligations for Elections: Guidelines for Legal Frameworks (International IDEA, 2014)* at pp.159

32 *ibid*

33 Human Rights Committee General Comment 25, para 11-12

34 *ibid*

35 *ibid* at 11

36 CEDAW General Comment 3

37 *Supra* Note 30



“the full range of formal and informal organizations within society.”³⁸ The term civil society is also coined in the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Proclamation as:

Organizations of Civil Societies” (hereafter called ‘Organization’) means a non-governmental, nonpartisan entity established at least by two or more persons on a voluntary basis and registered to carry out any lawful purpose and includes non-governmental organizations, professional associations, mass-based societies, and consortiums.³⁹

For the purpose of this study, civil society is defined as the realms of organized social life that **is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules.**⁴⁰ More specifically, this study contends that civil society organizations are key actors in the delivery of voter and civic education in democratic societies.

While it is true that the primary mandate bearer to design and deliver voter education in most jurisdictions lies with the election management bodies, civil society organizations, political parties, and the media are also important stakeholders in the delivery of voter information and education based on the timeline and work of the EMB. An independent media, as a platform reaching millions of citizens through different modalities, plays an integral role in the quality and reach of voter education activities. CSOs are also important actors in the design and delivery of voter education initiatives alongside the electoral management body, because of their independence and ability to deliver targeted and community level messages to voters within the community they function in.⁴¹ While there are numerous arguments to justify the role of CSOs in delivering voter education, their increased independence from the electoral management body, their ability to gear all resources towards voter education (as opposed to the EMB, which is also expected to administer elections), and their understanding of the specific needs and context of the community they function within, make civil society actors an ideal means of delivering voter education. More in this perspective, the fact that CSOs consist of members from the local community lends them high levels of trust and legitimacy among stakeholders. Their neutral status also enables them to bring stakeholders together with a common purpose, reducing the terrain of differences that may cause conflict.⁴²

38 Cooper R, What is Civil Society? How is the term used and what is seen to be its role and value (internationally) in 2018? (KELD, 2018) at pp. 7 https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/14242/488_What_is_Civil_Society.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Last Accessed 18 February 2022]

39 Organization of Civil Societies Proclamation No. 1113/2019, at Article 1

40 Diamond L, Rethinking Civil Society, Journal of Democracy, Volume 5 Number 3, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)

41 USAID, Electoral Assessment Framework: A Tool to Assess Needs, Define Objectives, and Identify Program Options at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/The_Electoral_Assessment_Framework-508-compli.pdf [Last Accessed 19 February 2022]

42 Mottiar S., The Role of Civil Society in Elections, The KwaZulu-Natal Democracy and Elections Forum – reducing conflict dynamics and promoting peace, Journal of African Elections, Volume 1 No. 1, (University of KwaZulu-Natal) at pp. 124 <https://www.eisa.org/pdf/JAE9.1Mottiar.pdf> [Last Accessed 19 February 2022]

CHAPTER THREE: The Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia: Context and Need for Voter Education

Background: the 2021 Ethiopian Elections

Ethiopia held the Six National and Regional elections in June 2021. The elections, which were initially slated for May 2020, were postponed many times for various reasons. The first decision moved election day to August 2021, following the announcement by the NEBE that it wouldn't be able to hold elections in May. After this, the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic resulted in the indefinite delay of elections in July 2020. The elections were later scheduled to take place on June 5, 2021, following recommendations by the Ministry of Health to Parliament.

The Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia were held in two rounds of voting. The first round for House of People's Representatives(HOPR) and Regional Councils were held in the Afar, Amhara, Gambella, Oromia, Sidama and SNNP Regional States, and in the Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa City Administrations, on June 21, 2021. After three months, on September 30, 2021, voting for HoPR and regional councils took place in the Harari, Somali regional states, and in some parts of the SNNP region. The September 2021 elections also included voting for the Harar National Assembly (including in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa), and areas of the SNNP regional state participating in the Southwest Ethiopia People Referendum.

The need for voter education during the 2021 Ethiopia Elections

Since the downfall of the military regime in 1991 and the adoption of the current Constitution in 1995, Ethiopia held six national and regional elections. In a country where the literacy rate is 55.7 percent as of 2017⁴³ and 78.3⁴⁴ percent of the population lives in rural or remote locations, voter turnout rates have exceeded 90 percent in almost every election.

For instance, a survey conducted by the CECOE in 2020 ahead of its voter education campaign (I-Vote! እኔ መርጣለሁ!) disclosed that even though citizens had positive expectations ahead of the Sixth National and Regional Elections, they lacked basic knowledge regarding the registration and voting processes in the country. Furthermore, the study also found out that potential women voters residing in Harari, Somali, Oromia, and Gambella Regions were perceived to be less active compared to Benishangul Gumuz, SNNP, and Afar Regions. This and other findings from the report show that there is a great need for the delivery of voter and civic education in Ethiopia.

43 World Bank, Literacy Rate, Adult Total (% of People ages 15 and Above) at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=ET> (Last Updated in 2017)

44 World Bank, Rural population (% of total population) - Ethiopia at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ET> (Last Updated in 2022)



One of the primary problems of the Sixth General Election was the shifting timeline and repeated postponements of election days by the NEBE. The Six General Elections featured enormous gaps in communication and delivery of voter information due to the recurrent postponement of election day schedules and subjective administration of elections. Because there were so many problems with the election, the NEBE and CSOs had to fill in the gaps and give voters education.

Ethiopian CSOs' engagement in previous elections

Albeit legal and financial challenges, CSOs in Ethiopia have previously engaged in election observation, civic, and voter education activities. In this respect, Ad-Net/E95, which was a consortium of five Ethiopian NGOs, conducted monitoring and voter education during the 1995 elections. Members of the consortium were IAG, ABUGIDA, APAP, the Ad Hoc Committee for Peace and Development, and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. The goal was to mobilize human rights activists and educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities in a democratic system.⁴⁵ Similarly, organizations such as Civic and Voter Education Association (CVEA), Council for Democracy and Human Rights Association (CDHRA), Christian Relief and Development Association, Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Vision Ethiopia Congress for Democracy, and Fafen Development took part in election related work in previous elections.⁴⁶ However, the active participation of CSOs was not welcomed by the previous ruling government, which accused them of supporting opposition parties.⁴⁷ In 2009, the government enacted Charities and Societies Proclamation 621/2009, significantly stifling CSOs' involvement in the country's democratization process. Although CSOs' efforts were frustrated by the decision of the former NEBE and the subsequent litigation, "some 30 domestic organizations planned to field well over 3,000 observers prior to the May 15 2021 election date."⁴⁸

Ethiopian CSO engagement in the 2021 Ethiopian Elections

For local civil society organizations, the recent Ethiopian elections presented immense opportunities for participation in the electoral process. This is because of two key changes in the legal framework governing their activity within the electoral process. The first one was the introduction of a revised civil society proclamation, which lifted administrative, mandate-related and financial constraints that had kept local CSOs at bay from engaging in areas of democracy, good governance, and human rights. Under the newly revised legislation, CSOs are able to raise much needed funds from foreign sources, as long as the funding is linked CSOs' aims, and are encouraged to engage in democratization, good governance, and human rights activities. The second change is the introduction of new electoral legislations. The new legislation granted the NEBE much-needed institutional autonomy. The legislation also allowed local CSOs that meet certain requirements to deliver voter education in their respective communities. These specific changes, combined with the opening of civic space following the 2018 reform, allowed CSOs to play a significant role in voter education during the 2021 elections.

45 Clark J, Civil Society, NGOs, and Development in Ethiopia A Snapshot View P.10)

46 Emilio W (et. al), Updated Mapping of Non-State Actors in Ethiopia at https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/ethiopia/documents/eu_ethiopia/ressources/main_report_en.pdf, European Commission Civil Society Fund in Ethiopia (September 2008), pp 135

47 Dires K., The 2009 and 2019 CSO Laws in Ethiopia: From Hinderance to Facilitator of CSO Activities?, International Institute of Social Studies (The Hague, 2019)

48 Carter Center, Observing the 2005 Ethiopian National Elections: Final Report at https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/ethiopia-2005-finalrpt.pdf (December 2005) pp 19



In accordance with the changes, the NEBE tendered an invitation in February 2022 to interested local CSOs, to submit their application to participate in voter education for the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia. Following this announcement, numerous local civil society organizations applied for accreditation to engage in voter education activities using face-to-face campaigns, mainstream media and social media platforms. The NEBE accredited 167 local CSOs, of which 96 participated in voter education activities.

The participation of many CSOs in voter education during the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia was an important milestone in the progress towards democratic politics. Nevertheless, CSOs' engagement in voter education was not free from challenges. A considerable number of accredited CSOs failed to deliver voter education activities. According to the representatives of CSOs, lack of technical capacity, lack of funds, time constraints, and the absence of a clear legal framework for the delivery of voter education negatively impacted their voter education activities.

The next chapter unpacks the legal and practical challenges faced by CSOs in the design and delivery of voter education during the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia. To do this, the Coalition looked at the coverage and inclusiveness of VE activities, the financial and logistical challenges of VE activities, the tools and platforms used to deliver VE activities, and other opportunities and challenges in delivering VE activities in the Ethiopian Elections of 2021.



CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and Analysis

Introduction

Voter education campaigns are assessed using typical VE impact measurements and indicators such as voter turnout and validity of votes on election day. The indicators could be further subdivided into metrics measuring voter turnout vis-a-vis the informed participation of target groups such as first-time voters, female voters, persons with disabilities, and elderly voters. However, due to the lack of reliable information on voter turnout rates during previous elections, including the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia, it is difficult to assess the impacts of VE activities on election turnout. According to IDEA, Ethiopia has declared over 90% voter turnout in five of its six elections, with only the 2005 elections registering 83% voter turnout on election day (which is still a high turnout).⁴⁹ Furthermore, as can be inferred from the chart below, reported voter turnout for the last three elections is 93%, making it difficult to measure the effectiveness of voter education activities in relation to voter turnout in the current assessment report

Ethiopia: Voter Turnout Data 1995-2022 G.C (International IDEA)

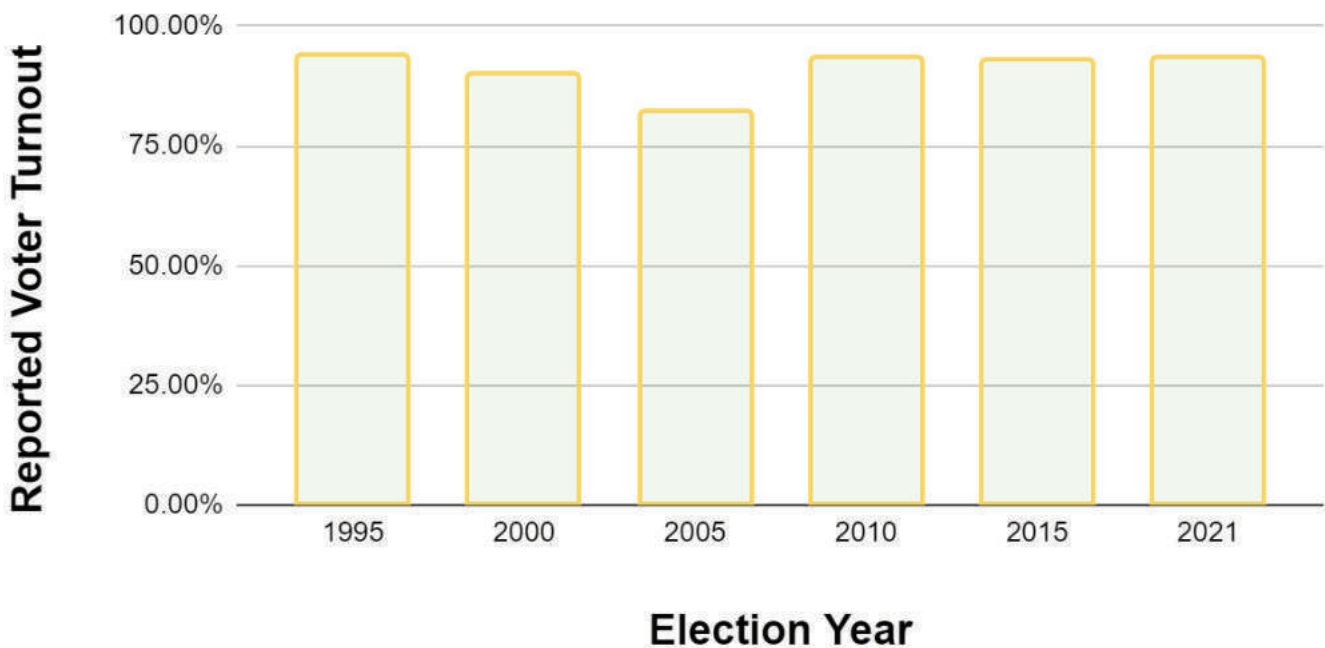


Chart 1 Ethiopia Voter Turnout Data 1995-2022 G.C (International IDEA).png

⁴⁹ International IDEA Website, Ethiopia: Election Data at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/104/40> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

Leaning on the general indicators, the CECOE has identified six main indicators to evaluate the quality and coverage of voter education initiatives implemented by CSOs participating in this study. The following parameters were used in this assessment:

- Previous experience in delivering voter education in past election.
- The educational competence, diversity and representativeness of recruited officials and staff assigned for the delivery of voter registration activities.
- Clarity and inclusiveness of the voter education manual prepared by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia.
- The scope and reach of voter education activities implemented by interviewed civil society organizations during the Sixth General Elections of Ethiopia.
- The modes and languages of delivery of voter education activities implemented by civil society organizations during the Sixth General Elections of Ethiopia.
- The challenges encountered by civil society organizations during the delivery of voter education and the solutions adopted to address the challenges.

Findings

For this study, the CECOE surveyed 65 respondents from CSOs that conducted voter education and expert trainers involved in the delivery of VE trainings ahead of the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia. CECOE collected data from representatives of 20 civil society organizations based in five regional states and two city administrations.⁵⁰ To gain further insight into the voter education activities implemented by CSOs during the Sixth General Elections, CECOE also interviewed ten expert respondents⁵¹ representing the NEBE, civil society organizations, the media and donor organizations. Most of the respondents were male (72.9%) compared to female participants in the survey (See Chart 2 below). This shows the underrepresentation of women in the implementation of voter education activities continues to be an issue, pointing on a lack of inclusivity in CSOs.

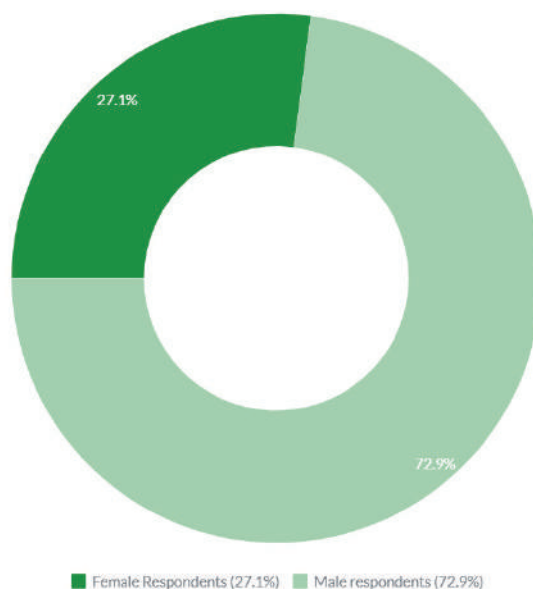


Chart 2 CECOE Voter Education Assessment respondents by Gender.png

⁵⁰ The CECOE collected data from CSOs which conducted voter education activities in the Amhara, Harari, Somali, SNNP and Sidama Regions as well as the Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa City Administrations.

⁵¹ The CECOE interviewed representatives from the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) European Center for Electoral Support (ECES), South Region Teachers Association, Zeleman Production, Ahadu TV and Radio, The Ethiopian Media National Support (ENMS) and International Republican Institute (IRI) and other local civil society organizations which implemented voter education activities.



In terms of age cohort, 32% of the respondents were under the age of 30, whereas 68% were above 30, implying low youth representation in the assessment. In terms of respondents' profile, out of 59 respondents who completed the assessment questionnaire, 55.4% were trainers who delivered voter education programs, 41.1% were project coordinators, and 10.7% served as board members in their respective CSOs. Only 1 respondent was a media and communication officer.

The NEBE's manual for voter education

Summary: *Civil society organizations used a newly designed voter education manual prepared by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia in October 2019. The manual was described as comprehensive and clear to understand. However, several respondents stated that the manual was repetitive, used difficult technical terms (jargon) and was not available in braille for visually impaired voters.*

As part of its mandate to come up with codes of conduct and training manuals for voter education in its establishment proclamation,⁵² the NEBE issued a directive on defining the code of conduct for CSOs delivering voter education⁵³ in February 2020. The NEBE also issued a training manual for voter education in October 2019, some three months before the directive was issued.⁵⁴ The manual includes sections on definitions of democracy and elections, the government structure, and electoral system, and specific sections dealing with election related issues (i.e. registering and voting, the role of electoral officers, the role of observers, and complaint hearing procedures). According to the NEBE expert interviewed for this study, several trainings were conducted to familiarize CSOs with the content of the manual, of which four were focused on mainstreaming gender issues, the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and internally displaced persons.

The CECOE surveyed the experience of respondents in using the manual for the delivery of voter education in their respective regions or city administrations. 51% of the respondents believed that the manual was easy to understand for trainers and other program implementers. However, 23 respondents (44.2%) agreed that the manual was easy to understand, pointing out key areas of improvement in its content. To the contrary, two respondents (3.8%) said that the manual was not clear. Content wise, 72.2% of the respondents stated that the manual included all relevant information to guide voter education activities in Ethiopia, while 25.9% said the manual included only key pieces of information but lacked information in some areas. One respondent said that the manual did not include any information relevant to voter education at all. Respondents who liked the manual's content also liked that it was available in more than one language, which made it more useful to more people.

According to CSOs, the bulky volume of the manual and esoteric jargon that repleted the manual were some of the concerns that cast a negative shadow on utilizing the manual. In line with this, respondents stated that due to the short period of time after accreditation, it was very difficult to fully cover all the contents of the bulky voter education manual prepared by the NEBE.

CSOs who attended CECOE's consultation session also remarked that in addition to the repetition of contents, the manual lacked any pictorial or interactive sections that one would expect from a guidebook designed for the informal education of voters. Similarly, participants pointed out that the manual was not widely distributed, with some organizations obtaining only one copy in each language. CSOs complained

⁵² Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, at Article 124(2)

⁵³ Voter Education Accreditation and Code of Conduct Directive No. 4/2020 (February 2020)

⁵⁴ National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, Civics and Voters Education Manual (October 2019)



that “this was a very small number of copies when compared to the number of voters that CSOs are supposed to reach. Apparently, distributing guidebooks appears to be tough for CSOs as they were operating with a meager funding. Furthermore, respondents expressed their exasperation over the limited availability of the manual in braille format, which hindered the delivery of voter education to visually impaired voters. Finally, due to the mentioned gaps in the manual, 64% of CSOs stated that they developed their own voter education manual based on the NEBE’s manual, whereas 36% said they used the NEBE manual as it is. This may have significantly affected the inclusiveness, uniformity, and consistency of voter education activities implemented by CSOs during the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia.

Institutional and human resource capacity

Summary: *Due to years of inactivity in the area, civil society organizations lacked fundamental technical and financial capacities, impacting their ability to design effective voter education initiatives. Most organizations surveyed did not have any prior experience delivering voter education in previous elections. The lack of expert professionals to design and deliver voter education activities was reported by both CSOs and donor organizations interviewed for this study. The NEBE also delivered limited training to CSOs on the matter.*

To begin with, the institutional experience and human resource capacity of surveyed organizations, Ethiopian civil society organizations implemented voter education activities after decades of inactivity due to legislative constraints. Lack of prior experience and insufficient information on previous election activities to learn from, hampered CSOs’ ability to deliver inclusive and effective voter education. In this regard, only two⁵⁵ of the surveyed organizations had previous experience in voter education. The majority of organizations did not conduct similar activities in previous elections due to legal and financial limitations. Furthermore, 19.6% of respondents identified a lack of previous experience as the most fundamental challenge they faced in implementing their voter education initiatives. In its March 2019 pre-election assessment study, USAID noted the lack of experience of CSOs in voter education as one issue that might undermine the quality of Ethiopia’s elections. USAID recommended capacity building training programs for CSOs to strengthen and empower their institutional and human resource capabilities so that they can deliver successful voter education.⁵⁶

With respect to basic and advanced training delivered to CSOs by NEBE prior to voter education activities, 64% of surveyed respondents reported that they only got training for a few days before engaging in voter education activities. On the other hand, 18.6% of those who answered the survey had at least two weeks of training before putting voter education programs into place (see chart 3).

Regarding the frequency and scope of the training provided by the NEBE for CSOs, the NEBE provided little training to CSOs, most of which were aimed at increasing accredited CSOs’ grasp of the contents of its newest training manual. Experts interviewed by CECO E stated that only four trainings on the contents of the manual were provided to CSOs, two of which focused on delivering voter education initiatives to women, people with disabilities, and internally displaced people. Arguably, the number of training provided to CSOs was severely limited, and it is probable that CSOs would have performed better if the NEBE and other key stakeholders had provided additional training sessions.

When it comes to the qualification and educational competence of the staff of CSOs that engaged in voter education, only 16% had formal training (Certificate, Diploma or more) on the subject, highlighting

⁵⁵ One of the surveyed organizations stated that it delivered voter education in 20 selected woredas in the Oromia and SNNP Regional States during the Third General Elections of Ethiopia (2005 GC).

⁵⁶ USAID, Ethiopia Pre-Election Technical Assessment 2020 General Elections: Assessment Report (March 2019) at pp. 40



the lack of capacity among the staff of surveyed civil society organizations. This may have culminated in the already existing lack of capacity for conducting voter education amongst the staff of local civil society organizations in Ethiopia.

Many CSOs planned to reach hundreds of thousands of citizens through voter education by hiring a sufficient number of trained people. Nonetheless, 57.5% of the CSOs have deployed experts and training teams, each constituting fewer than 25 members (See Chart 4 Below). The SNNP Region Teachers' Association was an anomaly in this respect. Many member teachers from all localities were dispatched to deliver voter education in many rural and remote communities throughout the SNNPR, Sidama, and the Southwest Regions.

Key informants from the NEBE also highlighted the lack of human resource capacity as one of the challenges CSOs have faced in delivering voter education ahead of the Sixth General Elections. Likewise, the International Republican Institute, which supported 30 CSOs, noted that the **"lack of well-equipped human resources to manage the project"** was one of the shortcomings of CSOs. An interview with officials of the European Center for Electoral Support (ECES) revealed that the ECES also identified similar institutional challenges among CSOs. The IRI, on the other hand, identified financial management and project reporting as key areas that CSOs engaged in voter education need to improve.

The lack of strong financial capacities and alternative funding avenues also hampered CSOs' voter education campaigns during the Sixth General Elections of Ethiopia. According to the IRI-NDI Limited Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia (LEOME) report, accredited CSOs failed to undertake voter education due to a lack of funds and the high cost of airtime and logistics to arrange face-to-face events (42 percent of accredited CSOs did not perform voter education activities).⁵⁷ In line with this, 65.2% of the respondents raised the lack of adequate finances as a constraint on their activities. The NEBE, on the other hand, alluded that CSOs' absolute dependence on NEBE's funding, rather than searching for alternative funding, derailed their activities. CSO such as the SNNP Region Teachers Association, on the other hand, mobilized limited resources, including membership contributions and funding from local sources such as universities, to conduct rather successful voter education activity.

The research found that there was a lack of willingness of partners to fund voter education activities, compounding the lack of financial capacity of local CSOs. CSO representatives who attended the consultation session prepared by CECOE reasoned that the donors were not willing, or reluctant to fund local CSOs, because there were doubts that the elections might not take place.

Another problem raised by CSOs was the competitive posture of the NEBE in seeking funds. The new creation proclamation⁵⁸ grants NEBE the power to solicit funds from donors. According to representatives of CSOs, the NEBE has drawn more financing to itself, while drying out potential funds from donors to CSOs. To resolve such financial loggerheads, participants stated that coalitions such as the CECOE can play a pivotal role in coordinating funding from international as well as local sources.

Finally, during the consultation session held with CSOs, representatives of CSOs noted that the findings of this research are congruent with their own assessment. The representatives also emphasized the need to bridge such gaps in the future by collaborating with donor organizations and other stakeholders.

57 IRI-NDI Limited Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia (LEOME). Ethiopia June 21, 2021 Election Observation Report (August 2021) https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/leome_report_of_the_june_21_elections_final_final.pdf (Last Accessed: 09 February 2022) at pp. 13

58 National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Article 25(4)

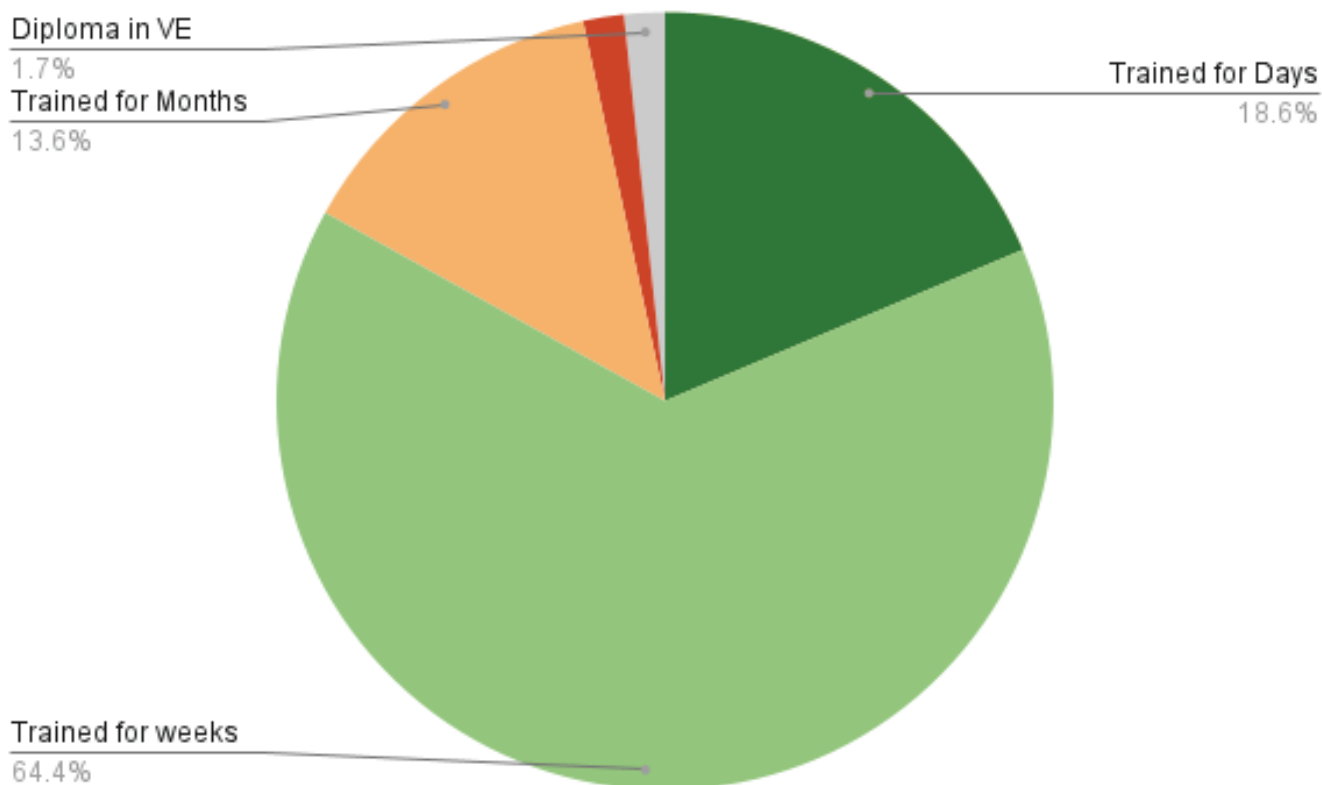


Chart 3 Length of Training on Delivering Voter Education.png

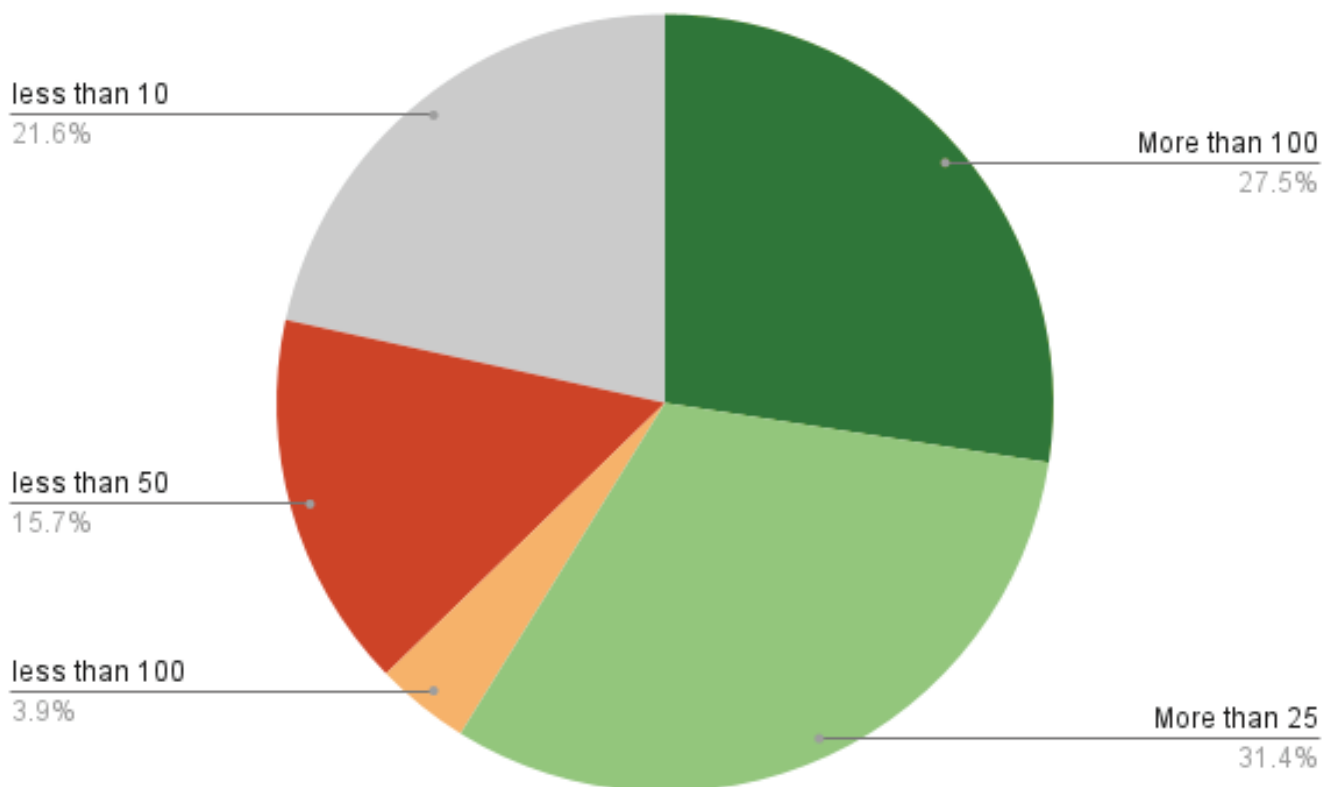


Chart 4 Number of Staff involved in delivering Voter Education Programs.png



Duration of Voter Education Activities

Summary: Only a quarter of the surveyed organizations carried out voter education activities for more than three months, despite experts recommending initiatives start much earlier than that. Findings from this study and observation reports by different groups, including the CECO E shows that preparation and delivery of voter education did not start early enough to have lasting impacts on targeted voters.

According to an article on Election Systems and Software's (ES&S), one of the key determinants for the successful implementation of voter education initiatives is how early such programs are started.⁵⁹ According to the article, it is critical that such programs begin early and escalate in the 30 days running up to voting day, in order to maximize the possibility of voters remembering election-related material and clarify any misconceptions they may have.⁶⁰ Such an approach is especially helpful in giving first-time voters enough information on their first experience as eligible voters.⁶¹

Contrary to the above norm, 24% of respondents participated in voter education for more than three months and only 14% of the respondents stated that they started voter education activities at least three months before election day. The majority of the respondents (48%) implemented programs for less than one month, whereas 14% of the respondents carried out voter education for a period more than three months.

According to the survey, late starts in voter education activities overwhelmed CSOs with many tasks, posing significant challenges in raising the awareness of voters in a very short period. This is in line with the IRI-NDI report which claimed that most CSOs commenced voter education activities in the final weeks of registration,⁶² affecting the impact of their initiatives in their respective communities.

However, it must be noted here that the NEBE did not accredit CSOs in time for them to start voter education earlier. During the consultation session, CSOs stated that they were unable to undertake extensive VE projects because accreditation was delayed by the NEBE. The NEBE accredited CSOs in February 2021. Once accredited, the CSOs were expected to submit a funding request to donors. The application process for funds and planning for VE activities on the part of CSOs consumed much time, leaving little time for voter education activities. As a result, most CSOs' engagement in voter education was limited to one month before the elections.

59 Supra Note 23

60 ibid

61 ibid

62 Supra Note 47

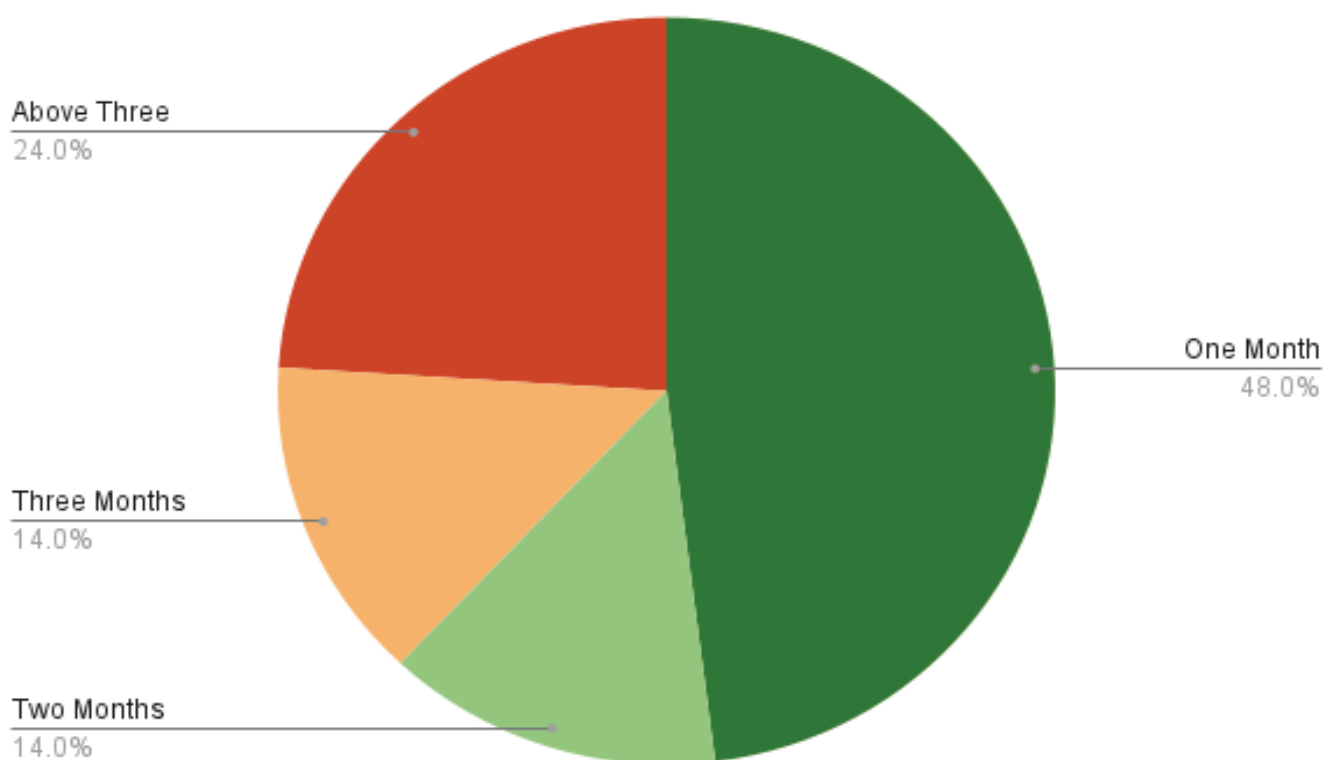


Chart 5 Duration of Implemented Voter Education Activities.png

Reach and Inclusiveness of VE Activities

Summary on Reach of CSOs: according to observation reports and key informant interviews with donors, most of the CSOs' voter education activities were limited to urban areas for several reasons, including COVID19, and security concerns. However, two-thirds of the voters trained by the surveyed organizations were in rural or remote areas. The NEBE and ECES have commended CSOs for their grass-root reach during the Sixth General Elections. The 20 surveyed organizations claimed that they reached over 24.5 million voters. However, the bulk of the CSOs claimed to have reached less than 50,000 voters apiece.

Summary on Methods and Language used: Most of the surveyed civil society organizations used singular mediums to reach their voters, despite literature suggesting that using multiple mediums to deliver voter education is more effective. Most of the organizations surveyed used only one language (mostly Amharic), with a considerable amount also giving VE in Afaan Oromo. One CSO, however, used 21 languages to deliver voter education in the SNNP Regional State. The majority of CSOs used face-to-face training and campaigns to deliver their messages. However, the COVID 19 rule of holding meetings with a maximum of 50 participants limited the reach of CSOs.

Another important indicator to measure the quality of voter education initiatives is the inclusiveness and reach of the designed programs. Successful voter education programs must be implemented in a manner that includes urban and rural communities as well as different vulnerable groups within these communities. In Ethiopia, where nearly 85 percent of the population lives in rural areas, the reachability and inclusiveness of voter education is an important indicator of effective voter education activity. Also, due to the large number of languages spoken (more than 80), linguistic considerations in voter education activities are essential.



According to data collected by the CECOE, approximately 24,955,261 people received some sort of voter education through the 20 organizations surveyed for this study. Interestingly, the majority (15,483,164 or 62%) of the voter education delivered by these organizations was in rural or semi-rural areas, while 38% (9,472,097) were located in urban areas (See Chart 6 Below). Contrary to this, key informant interviews with IRI revealed that most CSOs are based in Addis Ababa or major regional cities, limiting their reach in urban areas. This lack of reachability of CSOs was also highlighted in an earlier pre-election assessment conducted by USAID.⁶³

On the other hand, despite the high concentration of CSOs in urban areas, respondents from the NEBE, IRI, and ECES, recognized CSOs' efforts in mobilizing local resources and reaching remote areas during the 2021 elections as one strength of CSOs. For instance, key informant interviews with the IRI revealed that many CSOs were familiar with local communities and had relevant networks to mobilize their targeted communities. Despite those efforts by CSOs to reach out to rural communities, a considerable number of CSOs lacked funds to implement voter education activities.

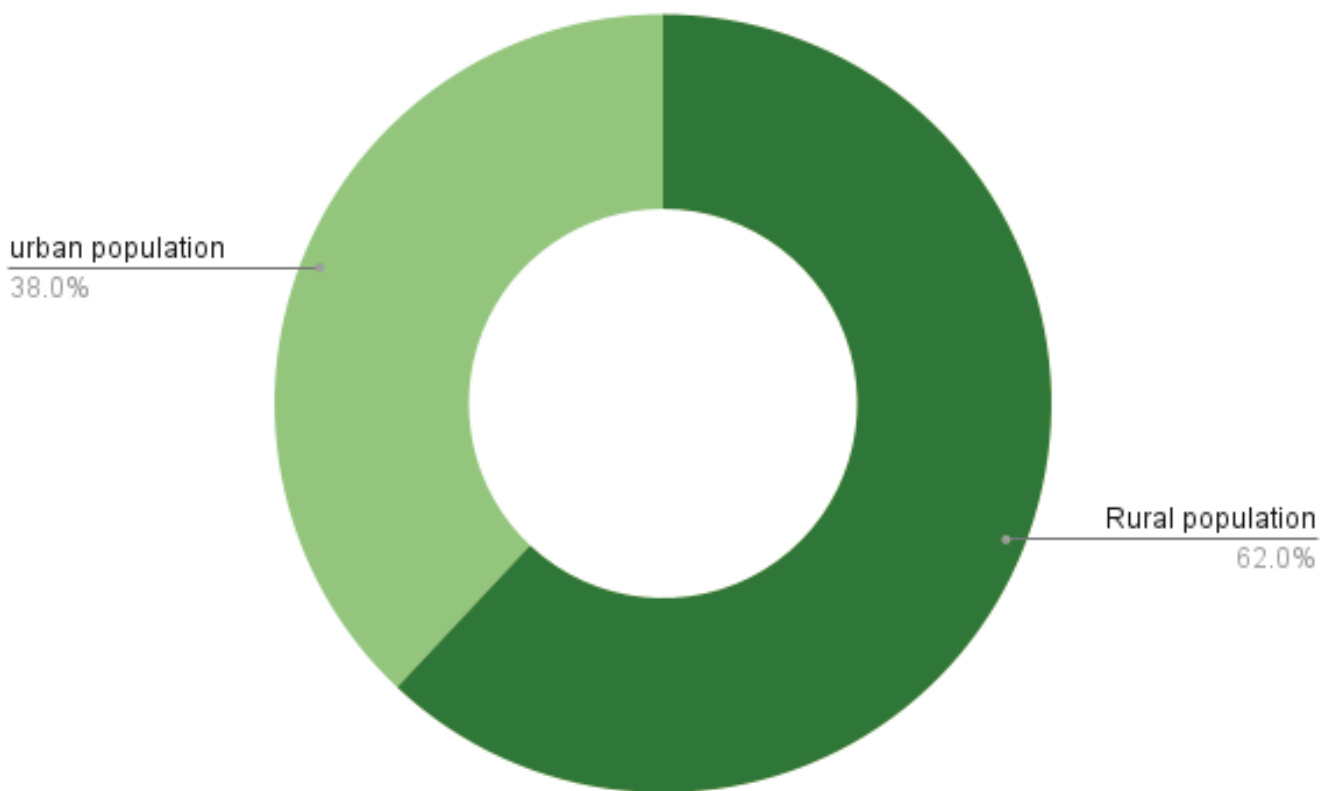


Chart 6 Citizens Reached Using Voter Education Activities (Rural vs Urban Distribution).png

Another important finding is that eight organizations were able to reach over 50,000 participants, and the remaining reached a small number of voters, with 10 organizations reaching less than 10,000 voters each. This shows that some organizations have reached large numbers of voters, yet, the majority of the organizations reached only a small number of electorates. This is a fairly small amount when compared to Ethiopia's estimated 59,878,624⁶⁴ eligible voters.

Among the CSOs and trainers who completed the survey, 84% of them used face-to-face training sessions and campaigns to reach their target group of voters. In addition, the data also suggests that 59% of surveyed CSOs reached their target group only using face-to-face methodologies. Considering the limitation on

⁶³ USAID, Ethiopia Pre-Election Technical Assessment 2020 General Elections: Assessment Report (March 2019) at pp. 24

⁶⁴ International IDEA Website, Ethiopia: Election Data at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/104/40> [Last Accessed 11 February 2022]

large gatherings imposed by COVID19 rules, CSOs' excessive reliance on face-to-face methodologies of voter education limited the amount of electorate reached in their respective programs. In addition to this, CSOs did not use multiple platforms to give voter education. This hampered the quality and quantity of voter education activities. In this respect, only 25% of respondents used more than one method to deliver voter education. CSOs that participated in CECO E's consultation session stated that they chose face-to-face methods to deliver voter education activities as it is less costly than other methods such as mass media and social media platforms.

Few CSOs used mass media (12 respondents) and social media platforms (15 respondents) to reach the electorate. This shows that there was a gap in diversifying voter education modes of delivery. Notably, using multiple communication platforms would have broadened the CSOs reach and effected attitudinal change among the electorate.

Table 1: Summary of Methodologies used to deliver voter education activities

No	Method of Delivery	Number of CSOs
1	Face to Face Only	35
2	Mass Media Only	2
3	Social Media Only	3
4	More than One Method	36
5	More than Three Methods	14
6	Other Methods	7

Looking at the VE projects from a linguistic diversity perspective, most of the respondents (34) participated in programs that used only one language to deliver their activities, with Amharic being the most used. (See Chart 6 for more). Afaan Oromo was the second language most used by CSOs surveyed by CECO E, with 17 respondents stating that they participated in programs that used Afaan Oromo. Four respondents said that the voter education programs they partook in were delivered in Somali language. Although the bulk of voter education was delivered in Amharic, the SNNPR Region Teachers Association used 21 different languages to deliver voter education in the country's most diverse region, SNNPR. Considering the numerous challenges faced by CSOs surveyed for the study, the experience of the SNNPR Region Teachers Association was an encouraging endeavor. More approaches like the SNNPR Teachers Association are required to ensure the inclusiveness of voter education activities in future elections.

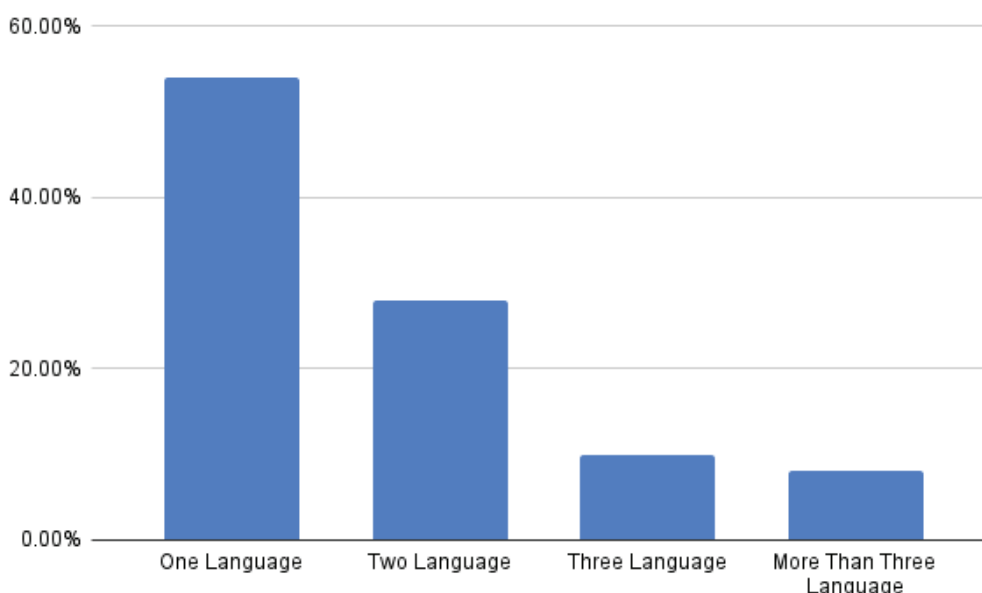


Chart 7 Type of Language used to deliver Voter Education.png



Another important assessment metric is the inclusiveness of voter education activities for women, first-time voters, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and other disadvantaged groups. CSOs ability to include marginalized and politically disadvantaged groups determines the quality of voter education initiatives implemented ahead of elections. Apparently all respondents stated that their initiatives were inclusive. Yet they were not able to present evidence to support their claim, with a considerable number of respondents (16 out of 41) merely stating their initiative was all inclusive. On the contrary, three CSOs stated that they have targeted first-time voters, while eight respondents participated in voter education activities that targeted internally displaced persons. One respondent also stated that they provided door-to-door voter education to visually impaired, hearing impaired, and pregnant voters who were not able to leave their homes to attend public training. Concurrently, the NEBE expert stated that NEBE gave two rounds of training for CSOs on voter education delivery to vulnerable groups. Nonetheless, it appears that the NEBE's two rounds of training were less effective in bridging the inclusivity gap among CSOs, calling for more work on the part of CSOs and the NEBE to make upcoming elections more inclusive.

Challenges to Voter Education Activities

Summary: *Civil society organizations were asked to share the key challenges they faced during the delivery of voter education. Most CSOs reported financial challenges as the primary challenge in implementing voter education activities. Additionally, they also stated challenges such as pressure from local authorities, lack of capacity, reporting gaps, and inability to meet project requirements.*

As noted earlier, despite getting accreditation from the NEBE to give voter education, a significant number of CSOs were not able to give voter education. CECO E collected data on the major challenges faced by CSOs that gave voter education and those that didn't give voter education (See Chart 7 Below). Most of respondents (71%) stated that financial difficulties were one of the key challenges encountered by CSOs, followed by pressure or lack of cooperation from local authorities, which was reported by 38.1% of respondents. Respondents mentioned technological limitations (28.6%) and a lack of previous experience in delivering voter education (21.4%) as serious challenges. Other challenges reported were the legal framework for the delivery of voter education (7.1%) and other reasons (14.3%).

Based on interviews with key informants from the NEBE, IRI, ECES and selected CSOs, the research found institutional and program limitations in the delivery of voter education. The IRI stated that CSOs supported by its voter education program struggled to meet reporting requirements and program indicators in their proposals. The ECES representative concurred that some of the CSOs supported by the European Center were not able to deliver on project activities due to several factors. The NEBE, on the other hand, criticized CSOs overdependence on the board for all kinds of support, rather than searching for alternative means of technical and financial support. Contrary to NEBE's criticism of CSO's, this research found out that the majority of the CSO's (78.1%) looked for alternative sources of support or sought other sources in addition to requesting NEBE's assistance. In other words, only 17.1% sought support exclusively from the NEBE (See Chart 9 Below).

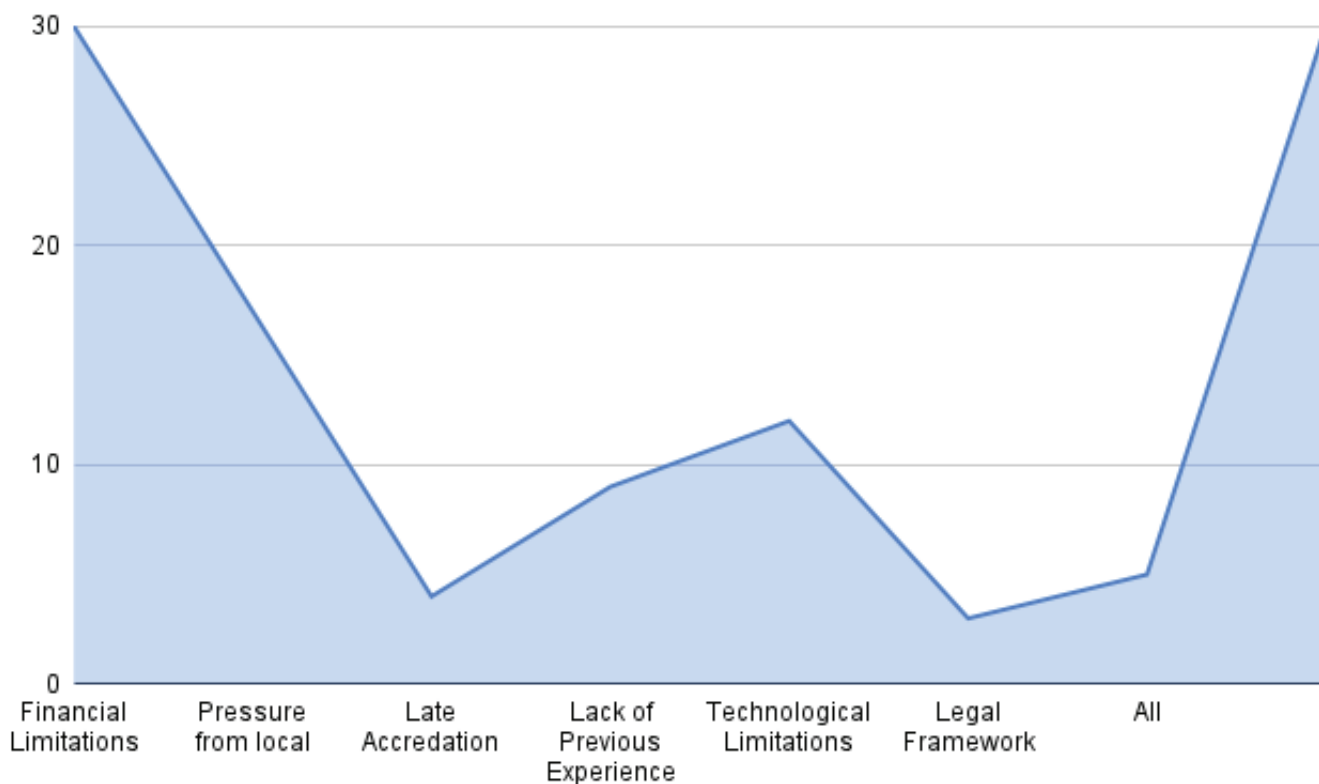


Chart 8 Types of Challenges reported by CSOs during Voter Education Activities.png

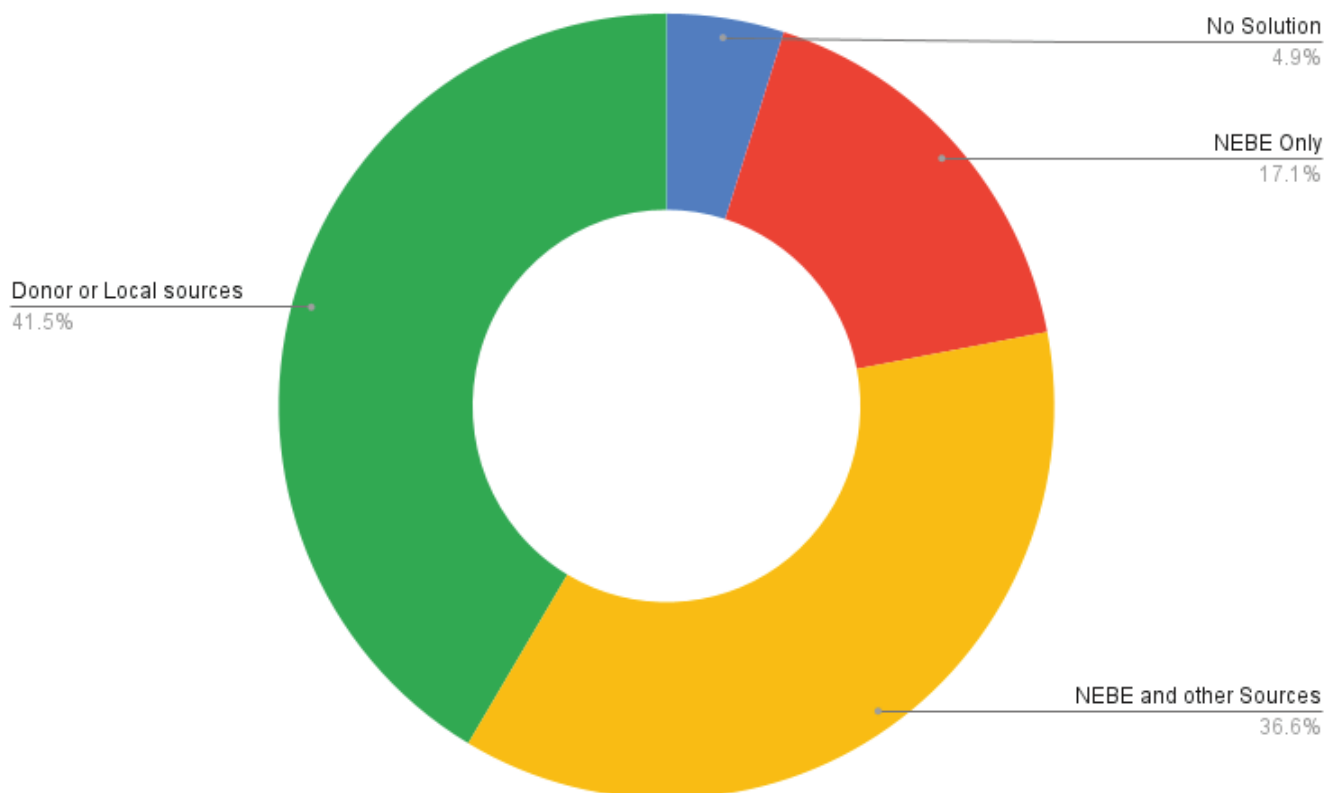


Chart 9 The percentage of CSOs that received support from NEBE vs other stakeholders.png





The NEBE also identified reporting and information sharing gaps as challenges it encountered, during its engagement with local CSOs. The partiality and politically motivated activities of some accredited CSOs posed a similar difficulty. Additionally, when it comes to monitoring and evaluating voter education projects, the CSOs have shown serious gaps that are worth rectifying. Many interviewees stated that they had little or no prior experience in project management before implementing or engaging in the voter education projects. Donor organizations such as IRI, ECES, and the NEBE itself noted challenges associated with CSOs' lack of experience in project planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In fact, the challenges may have been minimized if the NEBE and other stakeholders had trained CSO personnel in areas of budgeting, scheduling and sequencing of project activities before the start of their operations.

Finally, the metrics used by surveyed organizations to evaluate their activity were inconsistent, hypothetical, and devoid of proof. For example, some CSOs claimed to have reached hundreds of thousands of citizens, but when asked how they did so, they stated that their claims were based on assumptions, with no concrete statistical backing or documented record. Furthermore, voter turnout is one of the key measurements of voter education programs, however, the CSOs did not put any mechanisms to measure how voter education had impacted voter turnout. Despite the lack of mechanisms to evaluate the impact of CSOs voter education activity on election turnouts, 42% of CSO respondents believe that their voter education program was very successful.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

For a long time, voter education in Ethiopia's election has been an overlooked activity. Despite their status as key agents of democracy and human rights, for almost a decade, legislative restrictions that established draconian financial and administrative regulations, prohibited CSOs from conducting programs related to democracy and human rights. More specifically, restrictive laws severely limited the work of CSOs in the fields of civic and voter education. In a detour, the legislative and institutional reforms introduced ahead of the Sixth General Elections of Ethiopia opened an unprecedented opportunity for civil society organizations to engage in activities related to elections. In the face of several odds, what the CSOs and NEBE achieved in voter education during the Six National Election was commendable.

This study found several challenges encountered by the CSOs, NEBE, and other stakeholders during voter education activities. In general, the hurdles originated from the institutional, structural, and logistical problems within the CSOs and their operational environment. Lack of financial, technical, and infrastructural capabilities compromised the quality of voter education. Coordination and prior planning problems on the part of the NEBE and CSOs were some of the challenges that this study identified. Nevertheless, despite all these limitations, CSOs implemented laudable initiatives that can be leveraged for the next elections.

Recommendations

Based on the review of the problems identified, the Coalition for Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) sets forth the following recommendations for CSOs, the NEBE, partner and donor organizations, and local administrative bodies.

Recommendations for local civil society organizations

- The attempt by civil society organizations to implement voter education activities during the Sixth General Elections were marred by a lack of technical and financial capacity, and a general lack of experience in implementing democracy and human rights projects. CSOs must build their institutional and financial capacities so as to make more meaningful contributions in upcoming elections.
- According to this research, many CSOs engaged in voter education lacked project and program management skills. Both the NEBE and the CSOs must build their project management expertise. Furthermore, CSOs must develop scientific and tangible project indicators to ensure that their activities can be assessed after completion. Inviting other researchers to conduct similar assessments on the impacts of their programs would be a plus for their effectiveness.
- Even though the VE manual developed by the NEBE provides key insights on voter education, CSOs identified several shortcomings in the manual. To fix the flaws of the manual, CSOs should take the initiative to build on this manual and develop their own VE manual that are tailored to specific contexts.
- Voter education activities should start as early as possible in order to have a lasting impact on voter insight, knowledge retention and political participation.
- CSOs should use more languages to educate voters so that they can reach all of Ethiopia's diverse



ethno-linguistic groups.

- Even though CSOs surveyed said their programs included women, people with disabilities (PWDs), and internally displaced persons (IDPs), it is evident that much more must be done to mainstream such vulnerable populations in voter education activities.
- Another best practice in delivering voter education is using a variety of methods and multiple platforms. CSOs and other bodies engaged in voter education are encouraged to use more than one platform to increase their reach and engagement with electorates.

Recommendations for the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia

- One of the glaring shortcomings noted by CSOs was the NEBE's inability to coordinate capacity building and financing for CSOs ahead of the Sixth General Elections. This might be attributed to the NEBE's lack of institutional strength, given that it was formed months before the election. In future elections, the NEBE should overcome its institutional shortcomings and fulfill its leadership, coordination, and capacity-building responsibilities.
- To broaden its reach, the NEBE should improve the voter education manual's readability and ease of access. In this respect, CSOs complained that the contents of the manual were bulky, esoteric, and redundant. Similarly, the quantity of manual copies was limited, and the handbook's language was likewise confined to a few languages. On top of that, the manual should be converted into braille editions to reach out to the visually impaired electorates.
- Voter education requires early involvement of CSOs to maximize knowledge retention and inclusive project execution. To that end, the NEBE should accredit CSOs as early as possible in future elections, or perhaps permanently accredit selected organizations subject to accreditation renewal near elections times.
- Given the limited experience of local CSOs in voter education, the NEBE should consider permitting international groups to participate in voter education activities. The engagement of international groups in voter education may create a glocal synergy owing to skill and resource sharing.

Recommendations for partners and donor organizations

- Partners and donor organizations should recognize the financial constraints that Ethiopian civil society groups face. Partners are advised to assist local CSOs in their voter education and other activities to foster the growth of strong local CSOs in Ethiopia.
- Partner and donor organizations are encouraged to provide local CSOs with valuable basic and advanced training, mainly in the areas of program monitoring, evaluation, and reporting skills, to increase their efficiency.

Recommendations for the government

- The obstacles posed by local government authorities was one of the challenges to CSOs' VE activities during the 6th National and Regional Elections. Several voter education activities were interrupted by government officials due to lack of awareness and politically driven grounds. In future elections, the government must ensure that its officials do not engage in acts that hinder voter education activities.

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