

BEYOND THE BALLOTS

The Global Elections and Political Transitions Newsletter



GLOBAL / REGIONAL TRENDS



A number of global trends, emerging to various degrees over the past decade, have sharpened during the first year of the Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) mechanism.

These specific trends will be explored further in each issue of this newsletter.

- Closing space for civic and political participation, particularly within populist, nationalist regimes. However, some increased commitment to increasing access to political processes for marginalized communities
- Growing disillusionment with democracy
- Increasing technological innovation, migration and other potentially disruptive dynamics that transcend state borders

- The rise of disinformation as a tool for political manipulation
- The growing trend towards the use of violent extremism as a tool for politics
- New strategies of sophisticated political manipulation in the electoral process

Following the first quarter of the fiscal year, CEPPS conducted a review of results and trends across our associate award countries. One thread that emerged focuses on sophisticated political manipulation in the electoral process, particularly around manipulation of the constitution or legal framework.

Following [local elections](#) in Kyrgyzstan, for example, political parties pressured women and youth to relinquish seats they had won, and amendments were made to the constitution to increase the power of the current head of government.

In Timor Leste, proposed amendments to the legal framework for elections would curtail the supervisory authority of the national election oversight body, and a parliamentary commission will consider whether this is counter to Articles 95 (e) and (h) of the country's Constitution.



TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP

In 2017, work commenced under the Leader Award on the six new technical leadership projects listed below. Future editions of this newsletter will highlight results and share new research products and tools for programming.

- Learning from Emerging Approaches to Party Programming (LEAPP)
- Pro-Youth Legal and Policy Mechanisms: Efficacy and Practical Application Recommendations
- Closing Space Barometer: A Toolkit for Systematically Responding to Closing Contexts
- Electoral Leadership in Crisis: Empirical Research and Scenario-Based Training Tools
- VAWIE Online: How Do Online Threats of Violence Impact Women's Electoral Participation?
- Elections on Trial: Strengthening Electoral Jurisprudence Knowledge and Networks

Three additional technical leadership projects have been underway since 2016, focusing on the following areas of research and programming:

- Abuse of State Resources Assessment and Implementation Framework
- Political Parties in the Digital Age: Winning Elections, Losing Voters
- Election Management Body-Citizen Observer-International Observer Dialogue on Open Election Data

Election Data Academy

From February 20-23, CEPPS/NDI convened 16 electoral experts and data-minded civil society leaders in Kyiv, Ukraine for a four-day, intensive Election Data Academy. As part of

the CEPPS/NDI's [Open Election Data Initiative \(OEDI\)](#), these participants, representing 12 countries*, were led through interactive course modules developed by CEPPS/NDI that highlighted best practices for obtaining and using election data to advance electoral integrity.

Throughout the Academy, participants applied new skills to existing election data analysis challenges as well as broader political process monitoring initiatives. For example, representatives from Burma and Tunisia collaborated in writing an Excel code to compile a comprehensive spreadsheet of the 2014 Tunisia presidential election results that previously existed in more than 200 separate files.

A group of participants also worked to apply election data conversion best practices to web-based legislative meeting notes that can be used to analyze which members of parliament introduce the most and fewest bills. Participants have already begun transferring knowledge gained at the Academy to their peers: a participant from Moldova led a "mini-Academy" on open election data on March 4.

To build on the Academy, CEPPS/NDI will create a platform where participants can continue to exchange knowledge with each other when facing election data issues.

In addition, CEPPS/NDI will soon publish several election data training modules that were used at the Academy on the [Open Election Data Initiative](#) website, and will share the Academy materials with all 248 member organizations of the [Global Network for Domestic Election Monitors \(GNDEM\)](#).

**These 12 countries are Ukraine, Burma, Tunisia, Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Indonesia, Serbia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Lithuania. CEPPS/NDI election experts from the Washington office also attended as lead trainers and organizers of the event.*

Violence Against Women in Elections: Expanding the Toolkit

In the last year, CEPPS partners IFES and NDI have produced complementary tools that are now being used to address an important gap in understanding electoral security: violence against women in elections (VAWIE). VAWIE can negatively impact women's participation as voters, candidates, election officials, and activists, and the barriers it erects undermine the democratic process.

In response, IFES has created a detailed Violence Against Women in Elections Framework that plays a critical role in informing stakeholders about the status of women and the effects of public and private violence on their electoral participation.

NDI's [Votes Without Violence](#) initiative provides election observers with the tools necessary for identifying and preventing violence as it occurs during their formal observation efforts; the [accompanying website](#) also serves as a unique central public platform to publish observation data on VAWIE, creating a baseline and a reference point for those working on the issue. While these complementary efforts have begun to fill the existing data gap, they have also led CEPPS to recognize new areas where the collective understanding of VAWIE remains extremely low.

Through our work in violence against women in elections, it is becoming increasingly clear that cyber-bullying and cyber-threats can have a fearsome effect on those in the direct line of attack.

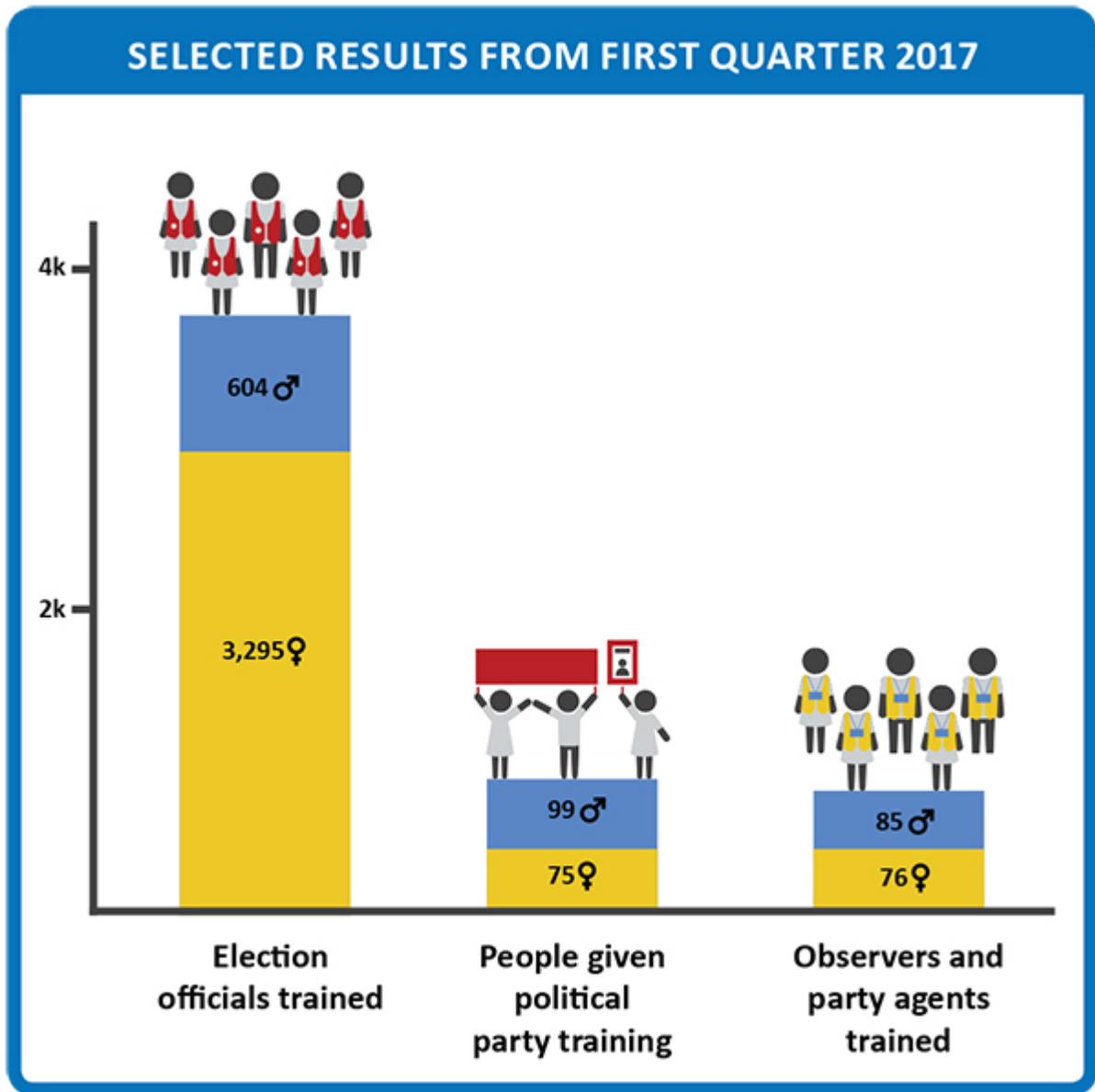
Additionally, these threats can have a devastating impact on women's desire to enter into politics. However, this issue has been historically overlooked as a serious threat.

Through the VAWIE Online Technical Leadership project, IFES will work with NDI and local partners to fill that void using sentiment analysis, and draw on previous lessons learned with this type of tool, including those compiled under NDI's Votes Without Violence initiative. The sentiment analysis will produce lessons learned and guidelines for analysis of VAWIE online that will be applicable generally and it will also produce information specific to the GEPT country selected for analysis.

The final report and recommendations will be constructed as a global tool, to be disseminated across all GEPT countries and to USAID, as well as publicly for other practitioners to apply to future electoral contexts. These recommendations will also be incorporated into broader CEPPS work on VAWIE, with tactical recommendations for implementation at all stages of the electoral cycle and through specific tools IFES and NDI use to address this issue.

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RESULTS



 magnifying glass icon

PROGRAM FOCUS

Burma



Voter education motivational poster

On April 1, Myanmar held [by-elections for 19 vacant seats](#) in national and regional legislative assemblies. The 2017 by-elections were the first electoral event since the historic 2015 national elections, and were be an important step for the Union Election Commission (UEC) to demonstrate [improvements to the electoral process](#).

In total, 95 candidates sought votes from 2.1 million eligible voters, with the majority in ethnic states where voters do not speak the Myanmar language.

This diverse distribution of contested seats was an issue CEPPS/IFES and the UEC confronted squarely when developing a voter education strategy.

CEPPS/IFES and the UEC collaborated with civil society organizations and ethnic language institutes to translate voter education materials into five ethnic languages. Important information related to by-elections have also been shared on social media through the ["Let's Go Vote"](#) Facebook page.

In a complementary effort, CEPPS/IRI supported three civil society organizations from its Civic Education Network to conduct voter and civic education activities in 17 of the 19 by-election locations. In addition to developing inclusive voter education materials, CEPPS/IFES also worked with the UEC to revise operational manuals to administer electoral procedures and polling, and develop an electoral calendar, as well as enter corrections to and improve the sorting of the voter list.

Finally, to better understand the specific barriers and challenges faced by women interested in becoming candidates or upper level election administrators, CEPPS/NDI provided technical

and financial assistance to two Burmese organizations, Phan Tee Eain (Creative Home) and Rainmaker (Women Empowerment), to conduct a gender-focused observation of the April 1 by-elections. Phan Tee Eain conducted post-election focus group discussions with polling officers and Rainmaker observed and interviewed 16 women candidates during their campaigns.

Kyrgyzstan



MP Elvira Surabaldieva, WMP Forum Chair, debriefing the Parliament on the Osh trip (Press-service Jogorku Kenesh)

Members of Parliament (Forum) and the Women's Democracy Network (ZDS), facilitated a two-day series of events in Osh, Kyrgyzstan for more than 100 recently-elected women local council members and eight women members of parliament. The public hearings, site visits, and trainings were designed to encourage greater solidarity and governing capacity among women leaders, and provide national-level leadership with a better understanding of issues facing women outside the capital.

Through facilitated dialogues, a public hearing at the Osh Mayor's office, and a site visit to a crisis center, local council women and local residents raised concerns directly with Forum members.

Issues concerning residents included poor access to education for children, the effects of migration on gender equality and the family, domestic violence and credit repayment and mortgages.

The outreach efforts were an important opportunity for local and national women leaders to gain public trust and work together in their struggle for equality.

According to Forum Chair Elvira Surabaldieva, "Hearing directly from citizens and local leaders gives Forum members direct knowledge of the issues facing people in Osh. We are committed to bringing your concerns to the parliament and advocating for solutions."

Timor-Leste

CEPPS/IRI released its fifth [public opinion poll](#) in Timor-Leste to provide political parties, the public and government officials with empirical data on the top issues occupying Timorese citizens. The poll provided Timorese political parties with valuable insights into the national mood, ranked preferred methods of voter outreach and gauged attitudes towards political participation by women and youth.

Polling information has been indispensable for Timor-Leste's political parties as they formulate their platforms, develop campaign strategies and conduct outreach to likely voters.

The Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) and the National Electoral Commission (CNE), have also used the poll results to disseminate information on voter registration and conduct civic education activities in coordination with CEPPS/IFES. The poll was well-publicized by Timorese media outlets as well as Portuguese news agencies. CEPPS will continue to incorporate polling data into project activities and provide individualized party platform strategy sessions as the parties prepare for elections.

CEPPS/NDI brought in three experts from Jamaica, the Philippines and the United States to advise Timorese stakeholders on debate structure, production concerns and other debate preparations. In addition, CEPPS/NDI supported its domestic election observation partner, *Observatorio da Igreja Para Os Assuntos Sociais* (OIPAS), to field 265 observers for the presidential election.



READING LIST

- [She Votes](#) is a new methodology for assessing individual, governmental, and societal barriers to women's participation in elections as voters and candidates.
- New language guidelines highlight an evolving concept: [disability and the vocabulary used to discuss it](#).
- In Kosovo, a remarkable group of [women and youth activists](#) are bringing about change in their communities.



CEPPS IN THE NEWS

- *The Hill*: For decades, promoting democracy around the globe has been a [bipartisan endeavor](#).
- *Kathmandu Post*: Like other countries, Nepal faces the challenge of making its [political system more responsive to citizens](#).
- *Democracy Digest*: NDI President [Ken Wollack](#) and IRI President [Mark Green](#) make the case on the Hill for U.S. leadership in democracy and human rights
- *Worldview*: Elections around the world continue to face "[increasingly sophisticated political manipulation](#)" notes IFES Vice-President for Programs [Michael Svetlik](#)
- *The Hill*: [Policymakers should not ignore the progress and hopes of the Ukrainian people](#).



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