



Katherine Stalter <kstalter@ndi.org>

Beyond the Ballots | January 2018

1 message

GEPT Newsletter <newsletter@cepps.org>
Reply-To: GEPT Newsletter <newsletter@cepps.org>
To: Katherine Stalter <kstalter@ndi.org>

Tue, Jan 30, 2018 at 4:52 PM

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BEYOND THE BALLOTS

The Global Elections and Political Transitions Newsletter

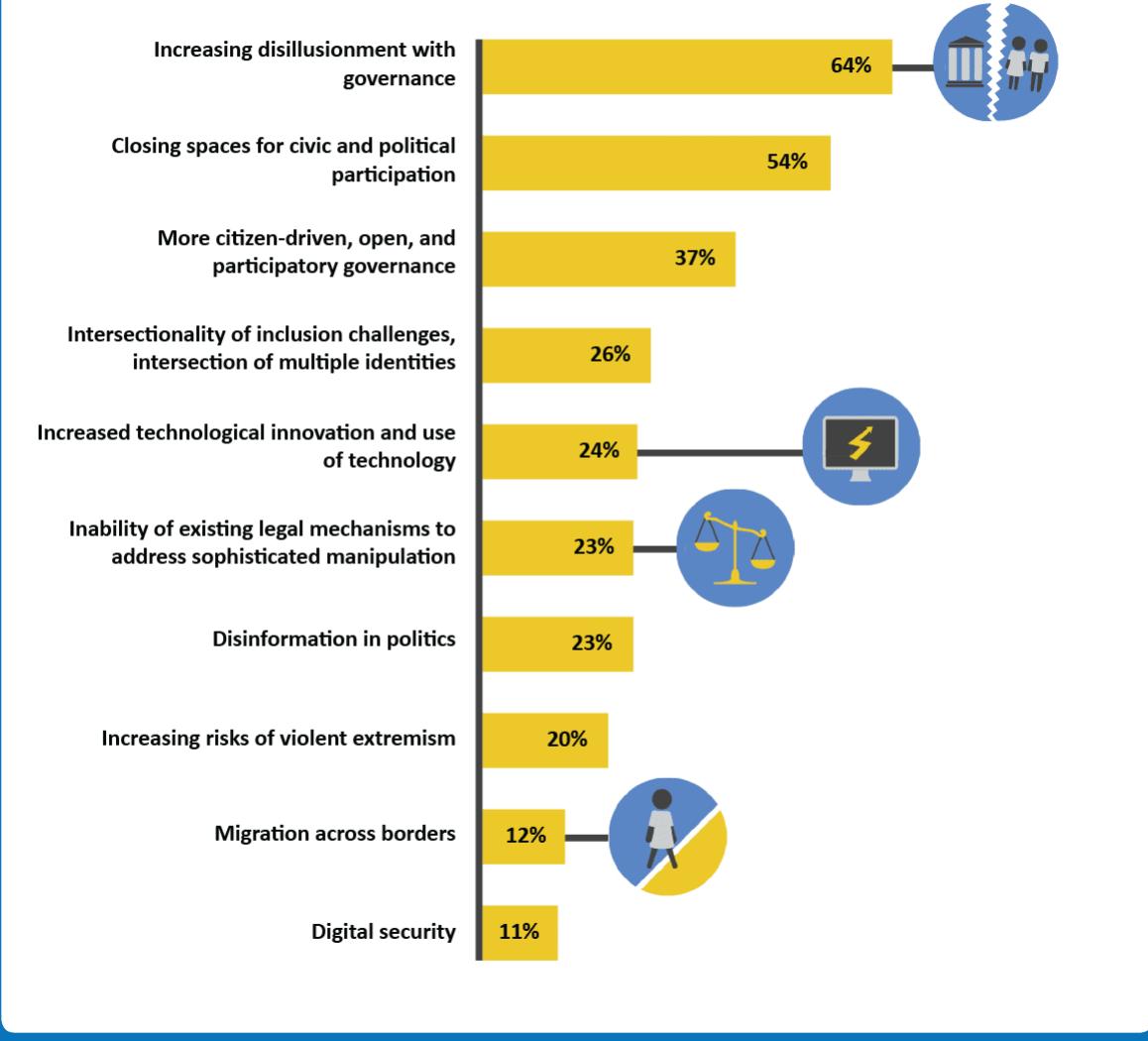


The Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) mechanism is a USAID Leader With Associates award held by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), a joint venture of three partners — the [International Foundation for Electoral Systems \(IFES\)](#), the [International Republican Institute \(IRI\)](#), and the [National Democratic Institute \(NDI\)](#).



GLOBAL / REGIONAL TRENDS

GLOBAL TRENDS FROM 2017



Throughout 2017, CEPPS analyzed existing GEPT projects to identify emerging regional, global, and political trends. Drawing on trends identified through desk review, CEPPS and USAID fielded a joint survey of their experts to determine the extent to which these trends are affecting programming. For CEPPS, a total of 212 experts from IRI, IFES, and NDI received the survey, and 99 responded (response rate of 46.7%).

According to the survey results, the two trends most affecting programming are (1) an increasing disillusionment with governance; and (2) closing space for civic and political participation.

Interesting regional differences emerged as part of the survey. For example, all Middle East and North Africa experts (100%) and nearly all Latin America and the Caribbean experts (93%) identified increasing disillusionment with governance considerably higher than experts in other regions; while Europe and Eurasia experts (43%) mentioned the effects of disinformation most frequently.

CEPPS experts also listed other trends and challenges that impact their programming through open-ended responses, including: general apathy and disengagement of youth from politics; increased and sophisticated forms of corruption; and challenges posed by decentralization. CEPPS will use the results from the survey to inform new technical

leadership projects and to guide ongoing implementation and dissemination of existing research, learning, and assessment initiatives.



TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP

CEPPS Takes a Closer Look at Closing Space

Across the [globe](#), illiberalism is rising and democratic norms are weakening. This has focused the attention of scholars and policymakers on democratic backsliding or “closing space,” which is the rise of authoritarian tactics in previously democratic or democratizing countries. This trend represents an important empirical puzzle, but closing space also hinders development, democracy, and governance, and interrupts a once-expanding global norm of individual freedoms.



To stem the tide of backsliding, donors and domestic actors in closing spaces need early-warning systems that portend repressive political trends. Yet, as recent developments in [Turkey](#), [Venezuela](#), [Russia](#), and elsewhere show, in many countries neither domestic democratic forces nor the international community have been able to sufficiently protect and preserve liberalism. This is due at least in part to an [inadequate understanding](#) of the indicators and process of backsliding, which may delay countervailing action as the process unfolds.

To help address this gap in understanding, CEPPS/IRI is developing the Closing Space Barometer, which has two components. Under the first component, using predictive modeling, CEPPS/IRI is building a tool that aims to identify the conditions that may help best predict closing space. This will be used to create an annual index that ranks countries according to risk of closing space.

The second component of the barometer examines the tactics, triggers, and sequencing of closing within eight democratic spaces (civic, political, digital, media, economic, ideational, individual, and governance).

This data will be used to create a diagnostic tool that scores the level of ongoing closing within a country. CEPPS/IRI presented this ongoing research at the Northeastern Political Science Association's annual meeting (Philadelphia, November) and the Southern Political Science Association's annual meeting (New Orleans, January), and published an [overview](#) of the research to date in Open Democracy in November.

For more information on the Closing Space Barometer, please contact [Geoffrey Macdonald](#) or [David Sands](#).



SELECTED RESULTS

Spotlight on Timor-Leste

In late 2017, CEPPS partners conducted a joint midterm evaluation of the GEPT project in Timor-Leste to assess the program's results following the 2017 presidential and parliamentary elections and to identify needs for programmatic adaptation. The evaluation found that CEPPS' support helped fill critical gaps in technical capacity in several areas.

Media Support

CEPPS supported the National Electoral Commission (CNE) to manage a Media Center for the 2017 elections, which improved the CNE's messaging and media engagement by introducing single point messaging as well as the systematic development of press releases and other media engagement tools.



Training

CEPPS provided key guidance to the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) on the design of training manuals, including introducing an emphasis on access for persons with disabilities.

Campaign and Election Observation

CEPPS' technical assistance to *Observatorio da Igreja Para Os Assuntos Sociais* (CET-OIPAS), a local monitoring organization, allowed for a comprehensive campaign period and election day domestic observation during both the elections.



Women's Participation

CEPPS' efforts to elevate women's political inclusion resulted in CET-OIPAS adding questions on the observer checklist related to the participation of women in electoral processes.

Data-Centered Campaign Messaging

CEPPS provided national level polling data to political parties and assisted parties to utilize this data to shape campaign messages and target voters more than in previous electoral cycles. Through CEPPS' polling data, Timorese political parties identified key issues for citizens and developed grassroots campaign strategies, based more on specific issues rather than personalities as in years past.

Technical Support

Beyond polling data, CEPPS provided extensive technical support to political parties ahead of the elections and party officials attributed their increased capacity for issue-based, technically sound campaigning to CEPPS' pre-election support.



PROGRAM FOCUS

Jordan: Turning out the Youth Vote and Empowering Women

The GEPT program in Jordan seeks to increase trust in political and electoral institutions and better incorporate civil society into decision-making processes. Recent efforts by CEPPS have focused on sub-national elections and women's political engagement.



CEPPS/NDI provided support to the Independent Election Commission's (IEC) voter education campaign for the August 2017 municipal and governorate council elections. Through the *Ana Usharek* Elections component, more than 1,600 young Jordanians went door-to-door to explain voting rules and procedures. They visited 222,153 households across Jordan, reaching 583,266 voters. To promote youth turnout, CEPPS/NDI organized discussions between IEC experts and students, explaining voting procedures and encouraging youth participation.



To further women's engagement in politics, CEPPS/IRI continued its Empower Initiative, bolstering the professional and political skills and increasing the civic participation of women from Jordan's government-designated impoverished areas. 121 Jordanian women recently graduated from the program's fourth iteration, joining nearly 400 national Empower alumnae. Among the many accomplished graduates was a mother of five who, thanks to the skills gained through Empower, went from not participating in political life to deputy head of her local council in a year.

Haiti: Understanding Drivers of Change



As part of the GEPT systematic approach to use robust data and evidence to inform program design and implementation, the CEPPS partners carried out a comprehensive baseline assessment at the start of the Elections and Political Processes Support Activity (EPP) program in Haiti.

In August 2017, CEPPS partners conducted this baseline assessment to document and understand the development context and institutional dynamics that could impact programming. This assessment also sought to identify risks to achieving program objectives, validate the theory of change for the program, and identify and collect data for performance indicator baselines. The baseline assessment used several analytical tools to develop the programmatic approach and work plan and establish an evaluation framework for use in mid-term and end-line evaluations.

First, a Political Economy Assessment (PEA) — a field-research methodology used to explore not simply how things happen in a given context but why — helped to identify the incentives and challenges that key institutional stakeholders could face in the electoral reform process. This assessment also yielded a clearer vision of how the program could fashion its approaches to address these socio-political factors. Together, CEPPS designed guiding questions for the PEA to explore often ignored but important drivers of socio-political change including: politics, laws and norms, social and cultural practices, beliefs and values, and historical and geographical determinants.

Second, the assessment used findings from the Electoral Process Diagnostics (EPD), a systematic methodology for measuring electoral management body management capacity, to identify capacity gaps in the Electoral Provisional Council.

Third, CEPPS used semi-structured key informant interviews to answer specific questions related to the program's design and barriers key stakeholders face in participating in and reforming democratic processes.

Fourth, CEPPS implemented a national survey and focus groups to provide data which furthered understanding of the Haitian citizenry's views of the political and electoral process in the country, and also aided CEPPS partners to establish baselines for key performance indicators for the project.

This approach highlights CEPPS partners' commitment to use collaborative evidence-based practices in Haiti and other GEPT programs, to foster learning that informs program adaptation and implementation.



READING LIST

- A new article looks at the [drivers of extremism in Tunisia](#) as the country tries to deepen its democracy.
- Learn why increasing [trust in electoral technology](#) is critical to electoral integrity.
- This article examines the nexus of [disability rights and election observation](#).
- In order to stem the tide of [democratic backsliding](#), it is necessary to understand what it looks like and how it takes shape.
- After [tumultuous elections in Kenya](#), the U.S. can help its ally to find sustainable solutions.
- Learn more about the state of [Ukraine's political parties as they prepare for elections next year](#).

- Is Kosovo the next big recruiting ground for ISIS? Read more about [Terrorism on the Eastern Front](#).
- A new incident [report](#) collects information about violence against women and girls in politics as part of the [#NotTheCost initiative](#).



CEPPS IN THE NEWS

- USAID: [Party Poll Watching and Voter Education in Nepal](#)
- U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee: [Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa](#)
- U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee: [Upcoming Elections in the Western Hemisphere: Implications for U.S. Policy](#)
- The Washington Post: [Four Challenges Facing Liberia](#)
- Newsweek: [The Forgotten Proxy War Putin Is Fighting Against the US and Europe](#)
- Democracy Digest: [Cuba's 'Transition to Immortality' Aims to Guarantee Regime Continuity](#)
- Democracy Digest: [Cambodia's Descent](#)



NEW TECHNICAL DIRECTOR FOR CEPPS



CEPPS is delighted to introduce Jerry Lavery as its new Technical Director. Jerry is a Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) expert with a Ph.D. in Comparative Politics and more than 15 years of experience managing, evaluating, and improving complex assistance programs by building consensus to forge lasting partnerships, inspiring team members to realize their full potential, and using evidence to maximize impact. Immediately prior, Jerry worked at USAID's Office of Policy in the Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL). [Contact Jerry](#).



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Associate Partners

**American Bar Association's
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**Electoral Institute for
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Africa (EISA)**
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1225 I St, NW, Suite 700
 Washington, DC 20005

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