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Beyond the Ballots | October 2017

1 message

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Tue, Oct 3, 2017 at 3:36 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



Voters wait to cast their ballots in the August 2017 Kenyan general elections

As part of the Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) Leader Award, CEPPS monitors global trends that present opportunities or challenges for programming. **Closing space** for civic and political participation continues to be a pattern. CEPPS witnessed a [chilling of the pre-election campaign environment](#) in Cambodia, followed by post-election threats and the expulsion of NDI. In Georgia, the only [opposition-aligned television station is in legal limbo](#). **Disillusionment with governance** continues to rise. In Tunisia, people feel that [promises made during the revolution have not been kept](#), while in the Balkans, [citizens' enthusiasm for democratic reforms seems to be waning](#) partly due to stagnant or declining standards of living.

Disinformation remains a serious challenge for political and civic actors. Notably, [claims of fake news](#) featured prominently in Kenya's August 2017 elections while in Georgia, [disinformation is stoking divisive rhetoric](#). At the same time, concerns about **digital security** are rising. In Kenya, amidst [claims of the manipulation of election technology](#) and other irregularities in the transmission of results, the opposition secured an [annulment of the presidential election](#). CEPPS has witnessed another emerging trend: the **rise of independent election candidates** in various countries including The Gambia, Kenya and [Kyrgyzstan](#). This may add further complexity to CEPPS programs that encourage issue-based campaigning by political parties. Finally, despite huge challenges, **notable achievements are being made by democratic institutions, even those under attack**. For example, election management bodies (EMBs) in [The Gambia](#), [Timor Leste](#) and [Pakistan](#) have shown resilience by overcoming political challenges to protect and advance the integrity of the electoral process.



TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP

CEPPS Tackles the Use and Abuse of State Resources in Elections

Around the world, news from such countries as [The Gambia](#), [Kenya](#), [South Africa](#) and [Timor-Leste](#) is rife with allegations that state resources have been used (and abused) to support election campaigns. These abuses of state resources (ASR) unfairly confer advantages on incumbents. Further, the diversion of state resources away from their intended purposes erodes the quality of democracy, the functioning of state institutions and the delivery of public services. Despite the prevalence of such abuses, the subject is understudied and ASR allegations are often litigated in the media for lack of a meaningful judicial remedy.

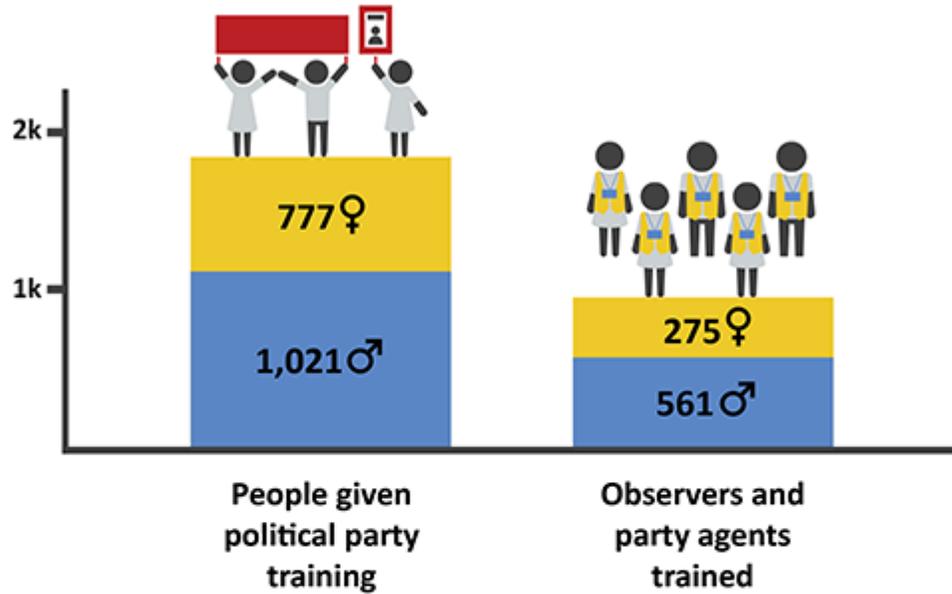


To address this gap, over the last two years CEPPS/IFES has been researching legal frameworks that regulate the use of state resources. Based on these findings, the team designed a peer-reviewed assessment methodology that measures the effectiveness of laws to combat ASR and determines common barriers to implementation. In May, a CEPPS/IFES/NDI team conducted a pilot test of the methodology in Georgia, where ASR is a recurring feature of the electoral process despite recent gains in combatting large-scale corruption. Lessons learned from this pilot will be incorporated into the final assessment methodology. For more information, please contact [Erica Shein](#) and [Heather Szilagyi](#).



SELECTED RESULTS

SELECTED RESULTS FROM THIRD QUARTER 2017



22
Public forums
involving
MPs and
the public



1.18
million
People receiving
civic & voter
education
materials



PROGRAM FOCUS

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Parties Join Together to Combat Corruption



Representatives of the Republika Srpska National Assembly launch the Parliamentary Anti-Corruption Club

CEPPS/NDI's public opinion research shows that voters of all backgrounds consistently rank corruption among the top problems facing Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), yet voters express very low levels of trust in the ability of political parties to address the issue. Further, the diversity of parties in BiH's legislatures (in both entities and at the state level) requires elected officials to work across party lines to pass reforms.

Within the Republika Srpska (RS) entity, CEPPS/NDI has been supporting efforts to identify cross party anti-corruption initiatives. As a result of this technical assistance, the Party of Democratic Progress and National Democratic Movement recently decided to establish an anti-corruption caucus in the RS National Assembly to address such issues as conflicts of interests and corruption in public procurement.

The Parliamentary Anti-Corruption Club, launched in June, is the first issue-based caucus in the RS legislature. In the few months since its establishment, the club has already expanded its membership and successfully pushed for amendments to the criminal code. The reforms will require judges and prosecutors to act swiftly on anti-corruption cases or face prosecution themselves.

The Gambia: A Window Opens in Africa in an Era of Closing Political Space



Polling agents count 'tokens' (marbles) in the 2017 parliamentary elections (courtesy Peter Erben)

Following 22 years of dictatorship, Gambian President Yahya Jammeh lost the December 2016 presidential elections to Adama Barrow. In January, after a protracted and uncertain transition period, Jammeh relinquished power and left The Gambia. This presented an unprecedented opportunity to support the transition to what citizens have called “a new Gambia” — a truly democratic political system.

CEPPS is using targeted rapid response initiatives to provide holistic ‘transition’ support. In April 2017, CEPPS/IFES conducted a technical observation of the legislative elections to examine electoral integrity vulnerabilities, and to help the election management body to prepare for a new period of competitive elections that encourage democratic resilience and integrity. Experience shows that poorly managed transitions can weaken effective governance, especially when citizen expectations for change are high.

CEPPS/NDI continues to promote a smooth executive transition by working with the new administration on ensuring effective public outreach and communication. In addition, CEPPS/IRI is supporting newly elected members of the National Assembly, many of whom are serving in office for the first time, and key committees to address urgent reforms through responsive policy-making.

Moldova: “Tours of Hope” Foster Intraparty Dialogue



A national party leader connects with citizens and members to discuss local issues in Balti, Moldova.

Through a comprehensive assessment conducted earlier this year, CEPPS/IRI identified a deep disconnect between regional- and national-level party leaders in Moldova. Regional party representatives felt ignored by national leaders and many national party messages were lost on regional members. To help close the communication gaps, CEPPS/IRI facilitated seven intra-party listening tours for four different political parties. CEPPS/IRI's assistance enabled national party leaders to travel to their parties' regional offices and meet their regional colleagues. During the listening tours, national party leaders gained a better understanding of regional priorities and regional representatives learned about their role within the party's development and long-term strategies, first hand from national party leaders. By providing the opportunity for national and regional party leaders to meet face-to-face and share openly with each other, CEPPS/IRI is laying the foundation for continued intra-party dialogue and closer collaboration in the future. CEPPS/IRI has already begun to see further results from this effort; three of the four parties have continued to independently conduct listening tours across the country, with one party dubbing them "Tours of Hope."

Shortly after the 2018 parliamentary elections, CEPPS/NDI will launch a program to formally include mayors and their perspectives in their parties' national policy-making processes and policy positions. Modeled on mechanisms such as the Conservative Party Forum in Britain, the program will provide political parties with channels for regular and substantive communication between the parties' local elected officials and their counterparts at the national level.



READING LIST

- A new paper examines drivers of violent extremism and [potential rule of law responses](#).
- CEPPS GEPT's guidance note provides tips on [designing effective LGBTI democracy and governance programming](#).

- After 70 years of experimentation, African states still face challenges in making [constitutional principles](#) a reality for all their citizens.
- Recent election petitions in Zambia provide opportunities for drawing lessons learned and identifying recommendations for improving [electoral justice](#).
- [Election audits](#) are one of the many tools that watchdogs can use to advance the integrity of elections.
- Today's youth need real opportunities to participate in political processes. Here's [how programs can help](#).
- In order to raise awareness and find solutions, the international community needs better [data on violence against women](#).
- Women's perspectives are a missing link in the [fight against violent extremism](#).
- An Ideathon equipped [Panamanian youth](#) with new skills and opportunities to improve their communities and engage in local government processes.



CEPPS IN THE NEWS

- US Senate Appropriations Committee: Albright & Kolbe [appeal for continued U.S. support for democracy](#).
- The Economist: [New methods and technology can make elections fairer](#).
- The Economist: How foreign and local [observers help build popular trust in elections](#).
- Devex: Why men and boys should be included in [the fight for gender equality](#).
- Democracy Audit UK: How violence against women in politics [threatens democracy itself](#).
- Atlantic Council: #DisinfoWeek events address [the global threat of false information](#).



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