

Reducing Electoral Conflict:

A Toolkit

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The EMN comprises:

- Idasa,
- South African Council of Churches,
- Western Cape Centre for Conflict Resolution,
- Black Sash,
- Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum,
- Alternatives to Violence,
- Quaker Peace Centre,
- Action for a Safe South Africa,
- Justice and Peace Commission

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Section 1

Overview of the Toolkit

Introduction

International best practices and standards stipulate certain requirements for a successful democratic election.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the integral role that transparent and open elections play in ensuring the fundamental and universal right to democratic participatory government.

In the spirit of these universal principles, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) agreed in 2001 that "Africa undertakes to respect the global standards of democracy, which core components include political pluralism, allowing for the existence of several political parties and workers' unions, fair, open, free and democratic elections periodically organised to enable the populace to choose their leaders freely".

The South African constitution provides for elections to be held every five years. In April South Africans will be going to the polls to cast their ballots. It is hoped that the elections will be an expression of the will of the people. This could, however, be limited if the conditions surrounding the run-up to the elections and the election days themselves are flawed and conflict-ridden.

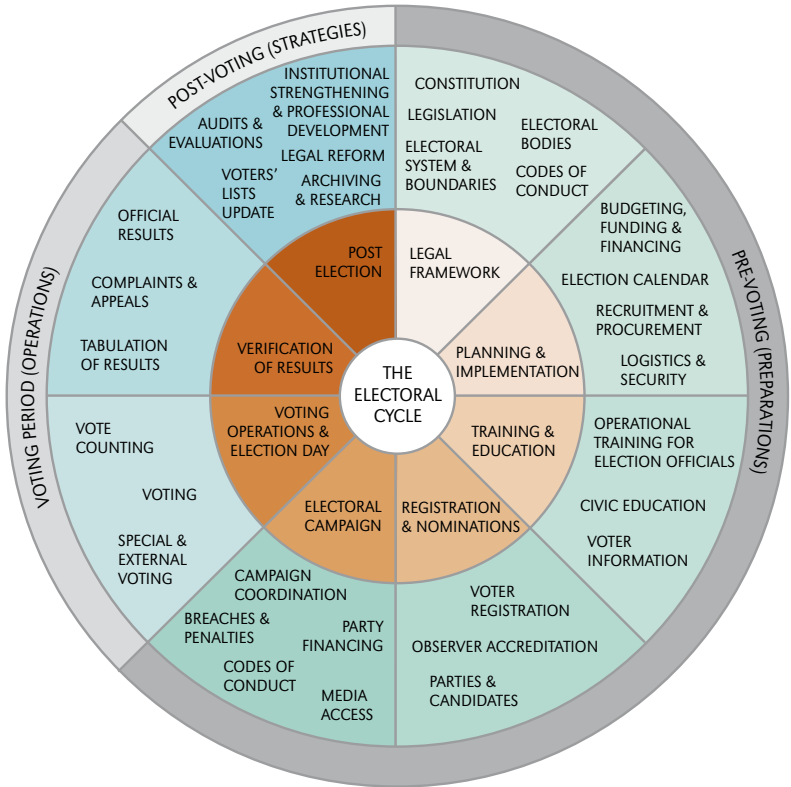
This toolkit has been prepared as a basic guide for South African organisations to contribute to the prevention, management and mitigation of violence when and where it occurs over the election period.

The Election Monitoring Network (EMN) will work in partnership with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), security forces and other electoral agencies during the pre-election, election and post-election phases (see Electoral Cycle diagram on page 6). As a civil society monitoring body, the EMN will be able to intervene in situations that could lead to political violence.

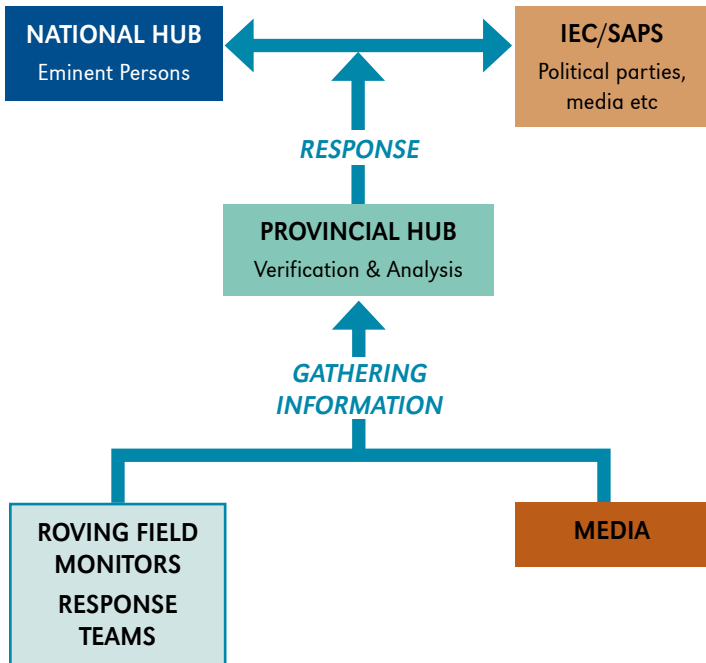
The focus of the EMN is to:

- Ensure that lives are not lost in the election process;
- Maintain a stable context for elections to occur;
- Ensure that the election process is legitimate.

The Electoral Cycle



EMN Information Hub Process



The election conflict intervention strategies involve information gathering, analysis, verification and response, based on the information gathered, at national and provincial levels.

Section 2

Electoral Competition

What is Electoral Competition?

Electoral competition implies implicit and explicit engagement by political actors for political space in an electoral period. This competition for political space generates conflicts of interests, which could be healthy or unhealthy. Sometimes, electoral competition may provide opportunities for positive change or assume violent dimensions.

Examples of electoral competition can emerge during:

- Political party formation;
- Registration of political parties;
- Voter registration;
- Party primaries;
- Electioneering;
- Civic and voter education;
- Polling or balloting procedures and conduct;
- Vote counting.

What is Electoral Violence?

Electoral violence is violence that threatens the political process. It is the manifestation of negative behaviour that could derail democratic or electoral processes.

What are the Possible Acts that Constitute Electoral Violence?

- Assassination;
- Attempted assassination;
- Assault (including battering and threats of violence);
- Torture;
- Sexual assault (including rape and sexual harassment);
- Abduction;
- Confinement;
- Obstruction;
- Hijacking;
- Threats and intimidation;
- Defamation/character assassination/damage to reputation/insults;
- Hate speech;
- Political thuggery (private militia);
- Arson;
- Looting;
- Destruction of property;
- Damage to property;
- Displacement through violent acts;
- Disruption of public meetings (violent or physical);
- Disruption of campaign rallies or civic education activities;
- Closure of opposition offices;
- Destruction of posters (removal or damage);
- Creating no-go areas for opposition.

Section 3

Analysing Conflict

Conflict analysis is the practical process of examining and understanding a conflict. The information gathered through the analysis phase informs an understanding of the situation, which in turn forms the basis on which strategies can be developed and action planned.

The benefits of conflict analysis include:

- Understanding the background and history of the situation as well as current events;
- Identifying all relevant groups involved, not just the main or obvious ones;
- Understanding the perspectives of all these groups and knowing more about how they relate to each other;
- Identifying factors and trends that underpin conflict;
- Learning from failures as well as successes.

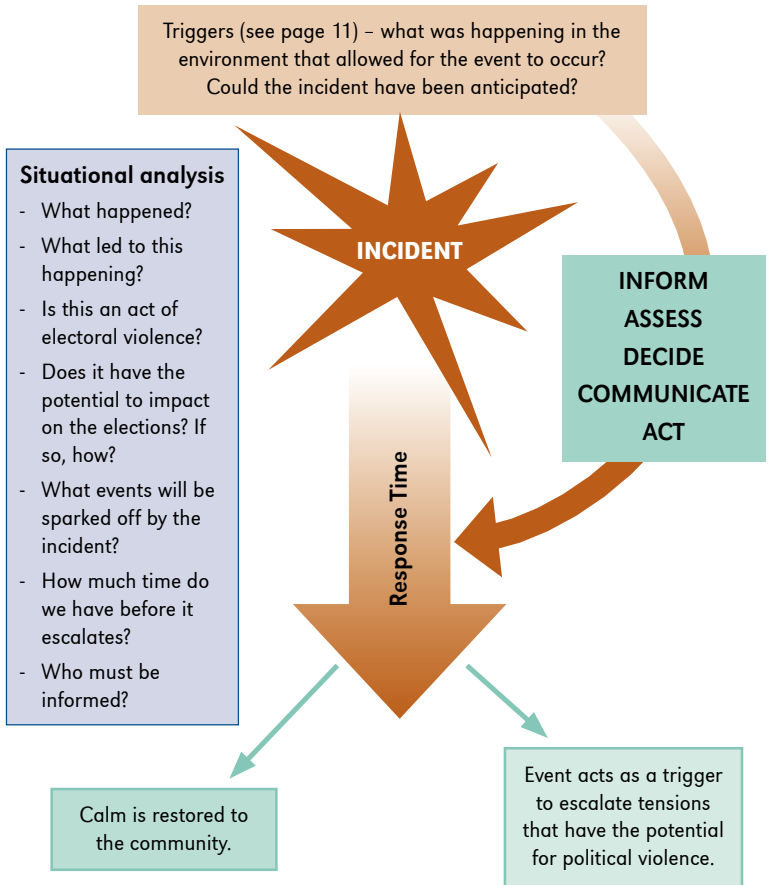
(Fisher et al. 2000, p17)

The EMN approach to monitoring the 2009 general election in South Africa is based on an Early Warning System/Rapid Response approach. This model provides the framework for monitors to identify, analyse and respond to incidents that could have a negative impact on the election process.

The six key areas that EMN will focus on are:

1. Intolerance;
2. Incitement;
3. Disenfranchisement;
4. Political posturing;
5. Manipulation/discrediting of bodies such as the IEC;
6. Utilisation of state resources.

EMN Early Warning System/Rapid Response Model



Section 4

Tracking Conflict in your Community

This section outlines what to look for to track the life of an election conflict. Use these simple tools to track and understand political/electoral issues, before, during and after the elections, based on the electoral cycles.

Indicators for a Likely Increase in Conflict

- Ricochet violence;
- International events;
- Disenfranchised voters;
- A history of conflict;
- Racial tensions;
- Religious/ethnic differences;
- Emergence of new political parties;
- Reactions to the media;
- Campaign rallies;
- Rumours that may create suspicion about the movement of sensitive electoral material.

What to Look for When Analysing Media Stories

- What causes or history of the conflict does the article/report give?
- Is the article biased towards one party involved in the conflict?
- What does the article say set off the violence?
- What types of violence and weapons does the report say were used?
- Who are reported to be the players in the conflict/incident?
- How does the article say it unfolded over time?
- Does the article cover external events that may generate strong community reactions?
- How will the article be received by the parties?
- Is the article true?

What to Look for in the Community

- An event or behaviour that triggers feelings of being threatened, thwarted, or in danger of losing something valuable;
- Alliances being formed;
- Issues proliferating;
- Communication between parties becoming increasingly distorted, and communication mostly taking place between people of the same persuasion;
- Positions becoming rigid and extreme;

- The goal becoming hurting or destroying the other person emotionally, psychologically or even physically.

What to Look Out For on Election Day

In the Community

- Large movements of people;
- People wearing political party apparel who are aggressive;
- Suspicious movement of people, including strangers, in the area;
- Large build-ups of security forces;
- Rumours that cause anxiety about electoral maladministration.

At the Polling Stations

- Long lines of people waiting to vote;
- Increasing frustration and anxiety levels among voters;
- Polling stations not running smoothly;
- Logistical arrangements at the polling stations not running smoothly;
- Once the result is announced, adverse reactions within the community (this extends to the post-election period).

Section 5

Conflict Intervention

Intervening in conflict situations requires thorough research and analysis of the conflict (see diagram on page 7). Once this has been done, there are different ways to intervene. These can be divided into short- and long-term strategies. Short-term strategies are used when there is a crisis that requires immediate action and usually deals with things that spark off the violence. Long-term strategies are used when there is time and space to bring parties together to deal with the deeper causes of conflict.

Short-Term Intervention Strategies

Short-term strategies attempt to prevent a conflict from flaring up. If the conflict has already flared up, they are focused on minimising the impact of the conflict and maintaining a level of openness to ensure that citizens' choice and will is freely expressed without intimidation. Short-term strategies also aim to prevent loss of life and property.

- Positive community mobilisation strategies;
- Engaging other agencies in the peace process such as security agencies and state governments to put the lid on a brewing crisis;
- Providing sufficient, accurate information to reduce the risk of retaliatory attacks in other areas;
- Consulting different parties at local level to condone intervention activities and provide a safe space for those involved in the local or provincial conflicts;

- Using mass-based groups, such as women's groups or unions;
- Pro-active approaches: when rumours are confirmed, stakeholders on the different sides of the conflict must be approached with extreme caution. Initially the interventions must be conducted speedily to arrest the potential conflict, and then followed up by longer-term strategies;
- Checkmate initiatives: anticipating and blocking potential disruptions;
- Preventing the use of incentives to win over voters, appealing to reason instead of incentives;
- The Roadshow approach, using loadhailers to prevent violence where the potential for it has been identified.

Long-Term Intervention Strategies

- Engaging the community so it owns the process;
- Using respected and acceptable individuals and organisations who can calm the situation and provide trust in the intervention process;
- Using a multi-track approach for successful intervention: a process that cuts across civil society and government, and across victims and perpetrators; and addresses the economic and political sides of the conflict;
- Using mediation and conflict transformation activities – combining the full range of intervention possibilities. e.g facilitation, mediation, education, reconciliation, collaboration;
- Developing an intervention strategy with long-term sustainable impact.

Structured Intervention Strategies

There are also many interventions that use a more structured approach (e.g. reconciliation and healing processes, conciliation, etc). Here we will consider only two: facilitation and mediation. Both are based on voluntary participation of parties and rely on the same set of skills. However the major difference between these two approaches is:

Facilitation: the primary purpose is to structure constructive discussions and promote the full and active participation of all parties in conflict resolution.

Mediation: the primary purpose is to provide impartial third party assistance and a structured environment for negotiation of a fairly polarised conflict.

The Mediation Process:

Basic Steps

- Assess the willingness of parties to deal with the problem;
- Sit them facing each other;
- Set ground rules that meet the needs of both parties;
- Ask one party to explain the conflict;
- Ask the second party to listen and paraphrase what was said before responding;
- Have each person take the other person's position and explain their perspective;
- Clarify, group and prioritise issues;
- Identify possible solutions that allow participants to control the outcome.

Mediation & Facilitation:

Basic Skills

- Model effective inter-personal and professional behaviours;
- Focus the discussion;
- Clarify when there is confusion, using paraphrasing and rephrasing techniques;
- Summarise the discussion at various points in the process to keep the group focused;
- Pace the discussion and manage time;
- Maintain participation and cooperation;
- Create a positive and accepting environment;
- Build trust in the process and each other;
- Deal directly with apparent problems;
- Redirect the discussion when conflict could become personal;
- Reinforce active listening skills.

Section 6

Report Guide

This is a guide for contacting organisations or people to report events in your community, to ask for assistance. The report must be concise and contain verified facts. It should include the following:

- Who the report is being submitted to;
- Brief statement of events;
- The nature of the problem;
- The actors/parties involved;
- The exact location of the event;
- How many people are involved;
- The best person/organisation to intervene;
- What will happen if intervention does not occur;
- Other resources within the community that can be used;
- Your name and contact details.

Reports should be factual not interpretive to help those who receive it to make accurate decisions.

Section 7

Directory of Election Contacts

Exercise: In the directory below, add your own contact details, e.g.

- The local community groups advancing democracy
- Local & international observer groups
- State and local political parties
- Local police
- State security forces

Name	Address	Number
IEC Head Office	Election House,	Tel : (012) 428 5700
Email: iec@elections.co.za	260 Walker Street,	Fax: (012) 428 5784
Web: www.elections.org.za	Sunnyside, Pretoria	
IEC Eastern Cape	The Mansions,	Tel: (043) 709 4200
	14 Ganteaume Crescent,	Fax: (043) 743 4784
	Quigney, East London	

Name	Address	Number
IEC Free State	NRE Building,	Tel: (051) 401 5000
	161 Zastron Street, Bloemfontein	Fax: (051) 430 4845
IEC Gauteng	1st Floor, A-Block, Empire Park,	Tel: (011) 644 7400
	55 Empire Road, Parktown	Fax: (011) 644 7448
IEC KwaZulu-Natal	Westville Civic Centre (Main Building)	Tel: (031) 279 2200
	William Lester Drive, Westville	Fax: (031) 279 2226
IEC Mpumalanga	Nelplex Building	Tel: (013) 754 0200
	13 van Rensburg Street, Nelspruit	Fax: (013) 753 2564
IEC Northern Cape	MBA Building,	Tel: (053) 838 5000
	20 Currie Street, Kimberley	Fax: (053) 831 8095
IEC Limpopo Province	15A Landros Mare Street,	Tel: (015) 291 0600
	Polokwane	Fax: (015) 295 9609
IEC North West	103 Sekame Street,	Tel: (018) 387 6500
	Mmabatho	Fax: (018) 387 6522
IEC Western Cape	5th Floor, Mutual Centre	Tel: (021) 944 5300
	52-54 Voortrekker Road	Fax: (021) 945 2691
	Bellville, Cape Town	

Name	Address	Number

Name	Address	Number

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Notes
