

Annex D: Greening Elections

As responsible public service institutions, it is important that EMBs consider the environmental footprint of their institution's routine functions as well as the environmental impact of election processes, often the largest peacetime civic exercises in which a country engages. EMBs should consider whether their plans, policies, procurement and practices are environmentally sensitive. Such considerations might relate, for example, to the transport of people/materials, sustainable procurement, waste handling, information technology, printing and communication, office space and warehousing and the life cycle of products and services.

IFES believes that EMBs have a role to play in reducing environmental degradation and adapting processes to account for the effects of the climate crisis. To become effective champions, EMBs might need to adjust their internal practices and proactively engage other state institutions, civil society and private sector to meet these new challenges.

"Greening elections" refers to implementing environmentally conscious decisions, policies and processes throughout the electoral cycle. These could include a range of steps, from analyzing the environmental impact of the election budget and implementing sustainable/environmentally conscious green procurement policies especially in the transport, electricity source and use, IT infrastructure, printing and publication.

In addition to considering the environmental impact of elections, EMBs should also consider the effect of the environment on elections. Environmental challenges such as fires, droughts, floods, hurricanes and rising sea levels intensified by climate change are affecting elections and electoral rights of vast numbers of people each year. Displacement is a large-scale environmental impact on elections, although not the only one. Destruction of electoral property, curtailment of campaigns, postponement of elections and deaths of electoral participants are also ways in which environmental disasters could affect elections.

Displacement is a particularly relevant challenge. There has been a dramatic rise in numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as externally (cross-border) displaced persons in over the past decade. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 59.1 million people were internally displaced across the world at the end of 2021, 53.2 million due to conflict and violence and 5.9 million due to disasters. Disasters triggered more than 60 percent of the internal displacements recorded worldwide in 2021. More than 94 percent of these were the result of weather-related hazards such as storms and floods.²⁸ According to the World Bank, unless concerted action is taken at national and international levels, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America may have to "cope with more than 143 million internal climate migrants by 2050."²⁹

International agreements and institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasize the importance of ensuring that those affected by environmental challenges maintain their fundamental human rights and are involved in decision-making.³⁰ One of the most effective ways for

²⁸ Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, [Global Report on Internal Displacement \(GRID\), 2022](#).

²⁹ Rigaud, K.K., de Sherbinin, A., Jones, B.R., Bergmann, J.S., et al. (2018). [Groundswell: preparing for internal climate migration \(Vol. 2\)](#): Main report (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

³⁰ Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

environmentally affected persons to be involved in decision-making is through electoral participation. Those affected by environmental problems need to be able to vote, run for office and engage with candidates and elected representatives to influence agendas, challenge policies and hold governments accountable in an inclusive and safe manner. EMBs have a significant role to play in ensuring electoral rights are protected for all people. For an in-depth discussion of this topic, see IFES' [Electoral Rights of Environmentally Displaced Persons](#).³¹

Environmental challenges can exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, including marginalization. Widely ratified international treaties and resolutions obligate the state to provide accessible electoral processes, including special measures for women, persons with disabilities, youth, Indigenous peoples and minorities who may be at increased risk of marginalization as well as be critical agents to address the consequences of climate change.

Electoral operational planning should incorporate the environmental effects of organizing elections as well as how climate change will affect elections of the country in question systematically. Climate-proofing elections will require a clear commitment by the EMB in its strategic plan with additional detail in the EMB's operational plan. Planning may need to consider special modalities for displaced persons to vote and run as candidates. These may require changes in legislation and in registration processes, for example. EMBs may also need to proactively undertake research on possible modalities for election participation by displaced persons, including their respective advantages, risks and costs; and establish an early warning mechanism within the EMB to assess and/or map risks and threats posed by climate disasters to support early preparedness and maximize resources. EMBs could also consider establishing a focal point or an internal unit to promote communication and consultation on environmental disaster and displacement issues and needs of different EMB departments, as well as to liaise appropriately with other ministries.

³¹ Mohan, V., Roberts, H., (2021). [Electoral Rights of Environmentally Displaced Persons](#). International Foundation for Electoral Systems.