Introduction

Ahead of the 7 June 2009 parliamentary elections in Lebanon, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) established the Lebanese Election Violence Risk Assessment (LEVRA) Project, the objectives of which are:

- to establish an objective, accurate and ongoing tool for assessing the risk of violence to the elections;
- to assess, map and track the level of risk in each of the 26 parliamentary electoral districts in order to identify ‘hot-spots’ where there may be an increased level of risk;
- to promote the use of the risk assessment as an early-warning mechanism so that effective preventative measures against violence can be taken;
- in particular, to assist Lebanon’s Ministry of Interior & Municipalities (MOIM) of Lebanon to integrate risk assessment tools into its security planning for the elections
- to reduce the risk of violent incidents and wider conflict during the 2009 elections

The project, which was funded by the British Embassy in Beirut, ran from September 2008 to April 2010. Specific technical advice on issues related to strategic and operational security planning was generously provided by the Metropolitan Police Service.

Background: Electoral Violence in Lebanon

Since 1923, Lebanon has regularly held elections except for the period of the civil war (1974-89). The following table identifies the factors of violence that can be associated with political, confessional and electoral violence in Lebanon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors of Political Violence</th>
<th>Risk Factors of Confessional Violence</th>
<th>Risk Factors of Electoral Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Although there has been limited historical instances of violence directly related to elections in Lebanon, there are connections between elections and violence in 1966-69, 1972-74 and 2005-08.</td>
<td>There have been limited episodes of confessional based hate speech</td>
<td>The electoral system is a ‘winners take all’ system that produces highly disproportionate results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political parties have links with militia and are dominated by clan leaders</td>
<td>Shia and Sunni MPs and voters are divided along political bloc lines</td>
<td>The law requires elections to be held on one day for the first time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian districts have fragmented political groups with longstanding familial rivalries.</td>
<td>Seats allocated to a minority confession are determined by the majority confession</td>
<td>There will be high spending and intense campaigning, including allegations of vote-buying and intimidation</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is deep polarisation between political blocs</td>
<td>Some districts have no representation of resident confessions</td>
<td>There will be many accusations of violations of the election law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some incumbents face strong challenges</td>
<td>Some districts have recent incidents of confessional violence</td>
<td>The framework for the resolution of electoral disputes is very weak and lacks credibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many districts have recent incidents of political violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Constitutional Council is not functioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a risk of regional conflict and/or regional interference in the election</td>
<td></td>
<td>The security agencies have limited personnel and resources</td>
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Methodology

The LEVRA project applied a four-step methodology for the gathering and analysis of data that indicate the risk of election-related violence.

**Step One**
Analysing data that can indicate risk of political, confessional or electoral violence in an electoral district.

**Step Two**
Assessing whether data indicate a risk of violence in that district

**Step Three**
Integrating the risk assessment into stakeholders’ security plans

**Step Four**
Reviewing whether preventative measures are taken and have an impact on the level of risk
Step One: Analysis of Data

The LEVRA Project team at IFES gathered relevant qualitative and quantitative data on the risk of violence in an electoral district through desk research, field visits and interviews. This data included:

* the historical and political contextual background to the electoral district, including the key political actors and previous election results
* security incidents occurring in the electoral district since 2005
* demographic information, such as numbers of registered voters and confessional composition
* issues specific to the election (announcement of candidates, etc).

Step Two: Assessment of Risk

Risk Indicators

Each electoral district was assessed to see whether the available data indicated any risk of violence in that district.

To provide a consistent framework, the LEVRA project identified ten indicators of risk within three categories of violence (political, confessional and electoral). The more indicators that were present, the higher the assessment of the risk of violence.

Assessing Level of Risk for the 26 electoral districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of Risk of Political Violence</th>
<th>Indicators of Risk of Confessional Violence</th>
<th>Indicators of Risk of Electoral Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o There is no dominant political party in the district</td>
<td>o There are “influenced seats” in the district.</td>
<td>o The results of the election are likely to be very close, increasing the possibility of post-election challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o There is likely to be intense political competition for all/some seats</td>
<td>• A dominant confessional group in the district can determine the winners of seats reserved for other confessions</td>
<td>o There is an increased possibility that weapons, undue pressure and/or bribery may be used as part of the campaign in the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There will be significant personalities standing as candidates (e.g. Ministers)</td>
<td>• Different confessional groups can coalesce to determine the winners of seats reserved for another confession</td>
<td>o The district includes a significant confessional group that does not have parliamentary representation in that district.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The incumbents will face a strong challenge</td>
<td>• There are lingering political and/or family rivalries in the district</td>
<td>o The district has a history of confessional tension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• There will be significant levels of campaigning</td>
<td>o There have been recent incidents of political tension/conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o There are specific ‘flashpoints’ of tension in the district</td>
<td>o There are specific ‘flashpoints’ of tension in the district</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Risk Assessment on each of the 26 electoral districts
A detailed risk assessment was made for each electoral district, gathering all relevant data together (the example shown is the ‘hot spot’ of Zahle).

After publication of its initial assessment on 1 December 2008, the LEVRA Project team recorded all security incidents and political/electoral developments. Where analysis of data indicated a change to the level of risk, the risk assessment was changed.

Mapping of Incidents

All recorded security incidents were mapped in relation to their location, type and severity.
Step Three: Integrating the Risk Assessment into Stakeholders’ Security Plans

The LEVRA Project was distributed to the primary beneficiary (the MOIM) and other interested stakeholders, including international organisations with security responsibilities (e.g. UN, election observer groups) and Lebanese civil society partners. The analysis was made available in English and Arabic and a secure website (www.levra.info) was established to facilitate access to updated and comprehensive information. In reflection of the sensitivity of some assessments, the LEVRA documentation was not made available to the general public. The software used by the LEVRA Project was developed to enable interactive and sustainable use by beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Following the initial publication of the risk assessment, a link was established between the LEVRA project and the MOIM to discuss measures on how the risk assessment could contribute to the security plan for elections. This included a visit to Lebanon by a senior operations officer at the Metropolitan Police Service in February 2009 and a visit to the UK by senior officials of the MOIM to observe the preparations for the G20 London Summit in April 2009. On 18 May, the Lebanese Government formally endorsed a security plan for the elections based on the overall assessment of risk in each electoral district.

Step Four: The Taking of Preventative Measures

The Electoral Security Plan saw coordinated cooperation between the MOIM and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the deployment of security officers over the election period. Deployment was strengthened in identified ‘hot spots’ where there was an increased risk of violence related to the election.

There was a distinct decrease in the number of violent incidents recorded by the LEVRA Project following the adoption of the Electoral Security Plan (see chart opposite).

A significant contributory factor to the overall low level of violence during the election was a commitment by all leading politicians to a ‘code of ethics’. The MOIM liaised closely with political parties on issues of security concern.

Post-Election Risk

Following the 7 June elections, the LEVRA Project continued to monitor political and electoral developments closely in order to identify possible further risk of violence. These issues included political tension during negotiations on the formation of the Government and challenges to electoral results. Fortunately, there were no related incidents of violence during this period. The LEVRA Project team also tracked developments in the political environment ahead of the calling of local elections, which take place in May 2010.

Conclusion and Areas for Lessons Learned

International observers “found the elections fundamentally peaceful and well-administered” (NDI Report) and noted that the effective and high profile security deployment over the election period, strengthened on polling day, facilitated an inclusive election process. Overall, although tension ran high in key districts where the election results were extremely close, there were fewer security incidents than initially expected. The methodology and relevant information and software have been transferred to the MOIM for their use in future elections, including the 2010 local polls.

The LEVRA Project undertook a comprehensive lessons learned evaluation with the primary beneficiary and other stakeholders, including a review meeting with security colleagues in the United Kingdom. Overall, there was a highly positive reception to the project’s capacity to provide an accurate and credible assessment on the risk of electoral violence in each of Lebanon’s electoral districts, especially through innovative methods of applying political, electoral and demographical contextual factors to the risk of violence. In addition to the risk assessment information, the engagement of New Scotland Yard experts (including the two field visits) contributed significantly to the development of an effective security plan by the MOIM for the full election period, including the establishment of a Security Operations Room. The availability of the project’s detailed maps of electoral districts and the comprehensive tracking of incidents was considered to be especially helpful by secondary beneficiaries, such as civil society organisations and diplomats. The assessment of risk was particularly helpful in identifying key ‘hot-spots’ for the appropriate deployment of security personnel and ensuring additional sensitivity for their management of campaign events, the conduct of polling and increased risks during the results period. For future similar projects, whether in Lebanon or in other countries, it was recommended that there should be peer-review of the methodology ahead of its implementation, as well as broader consultation on the findings before publication.