My Story

"The Political Violence
Monitoring project … is
something that's never been
done in the Maldives, but
very essential to be done in
order to mitigate the political
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– Fathima Ibrahim Didi,
Acting Executive Director of
the Maldivian Democracy
Network

Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER)

Overview

Violence arising from the inherently competitive nature of elections, as well as existing insecure environments they frequently take place in, is a common challenge to the integrity of elections. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) works to protect the fundamental right of all people to participate in the electoral process in a peaceful and secure environment, as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international commitments. IFES' Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) methodology and projects use this holistic, human-centered approach to support local partners in their efforts to monitor, mitigate and share information on electoral violence. The EVER methodology provides a framework for systematic information gathering, standards for verification, and analysis of tensions and community indicators. Project activities bring together organizations, election officials, government leaders and security bodies to build capacity so they can work together to promote and ensure violence-free elections.

Specific EVER activities have focused on conducting risk assessments, mapping, monitoring and reporting, advocacy, early warning and public education. Training modules, online tools and data management systems, advocacy guidelines, public reporting tips and other tailored products have been implemented based on partner and country needs.

Project Activities

Monitoring: Community-based monitors are trained to document violence, track indicators, measure levels of tension, and build relationships with government, law enforcement, political and community leaders. In Burundi, indicators such as the presence of arms and level of youth group activity gave insight into rising and falling tensions.

Reporting: Collected data is analyzed and published in regular reports with alerts or calls for action as needed. Reporting increases public accountability for those who commit or fuel violence. In 2006 in Guyana, complete monitoring reports were often published in local newspapers, which contributed to the first post-election period without riots since 1991.

Mitigation: IFES often advises partners on mitigation strategies based on available data, country context and needs analyses. IFES has also worked with partners to design and implement targeted street theater programs, advocacy campaigns, rapid response teams and micro grant programs for community peace projects. In Timor-Leste, IFES partner BELUN funded over 20 community peace activities in target areas identified through monitoring data.

Technology: IFES has implemented tools such as SMS, online mapping and early warning communities to facilitate the speed and reach of information gathered by community-based monitors. Monitors in Burundi, Maldives, Nigeria and Senegal were trained to send reports via SMS as well as hard copy, which fed into public websites built on the Ushahidi platform. The sites mapped each incident down to the street level, when possible, and by category of incident, providing an overview of conflict dynamics to stakeholders and the public.

Impact & Benefits

Bangladesh: IFES supported the leading local human rights organization, Odhikar, in electoral violence monitoring in target constituencies and districts from 2006 to 2008. Election violence monitors reported a great deal of response to their work at community levels, with some local political leaders, in unmonitored areas, calling on supporters to be peaceful. Following the project, Odhikar incorporated elements of EVER data collection into its work on violence against women.

Burundi: In 2010, IFES assisted the electoral commission and local organizations in minimizing violence through innovative programming in conflict monitoring, civic education campaigns, theater skits, community festivals, a powerful documentary film and election mediation teams. The early warning project, *Amatora mu Mahoro* (elections in peace), trained over 400 community-based field monitors in the EVER methodology and included a reporting function via SMS and paper forms. The SMS reports were immediately visible to the team on the Ushahidi platform. The team analyzed data in periodic reports during the election period. This information fueled advocacy and action in response to potential conflicts and enabled local and national leaders to promote peace in identified hot spots.

Kyrgyzstan and Timor-Leste: The EVER monitoring methodology created a foundation for an early warning system in both countries. The Foundation for Tolerance International Kyrgyzstan and BELUN in Timor-Leste continue to publish crucial information in their countries. BELUN recently launched an online mapping site to display their early warning and election-related data.

Maldives: In 2011, IFES helped the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN) develop a political violence monitoring methodology, train its existing network of human rights defenders in the methodology and launch a conflict-mapping website built on the Ushahidi platform. MDN and its website were a crucial source of information for stakeholders on the political crisis that developed in early 2012 and continued with positive feedback through the end of that year. Beginning in 2013, IFES assisted Transparency Maldives with incorporating political violence monitoring methodology and Ushahidi usage to augment their on-going election observation.

EVER projects have been implemented in 14 countries: Bangladesh, Burundi, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Maldives, Nepal, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Timor-Leste.