



# Youth Participation in Electoral Processes

## Handbook for Electoral Management Bodies



FIRST EDITION: March 2017

With support of:



European Commission  
United Nations Development Programme  
Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance

**GPECS II**   
Global Project  
for Electoral Cycle Support II

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Disclaimer

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## ABBREVIATIONS and ACRONYMS

<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EMB</b>	Electoral Management Body
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UNCAC</b>	United Nations Convention against Corruption
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme

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# INTRODUCTION

Never before have so many young people been involved in movements for change worldwide. They are taking to the streets and using online social networks and communities to connect, express their voices and campaign for change. They are protesting against authoritarian regimes, corruption and inequalities. They are fighting for sustainable development and a better future for current and new generations.

Youth were central actors in shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>2</sup> by setting the priorities for the future they want, with particular emphasis on education, employment, and honest and responsive governments. They play a crucial role as agents for change, and the potential of young people's contributions to sustainable human development must not be ignored.

However, the political representation of young women and men remains limited. They are increasingly demanding more meaningful participation in decision-making processes so they can have more control over how their lives and futures are shaped.

Recent youth mobilizations have demonstrated the capacity of young people to organize, communicate, exercise influence, and to act as a positive force for transformational change. Recognizing the potential of youth, UNDP in 2014 developed its first-ever Youth Strategy (2014–2017), called 'Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future'<sup>3</sup>, which calls on young generations to become more involved and more committed in development processes. Outcome 2 of the Youth Strategy is titled "Enhanced youth civic engagement and participation in decision-making and political processes and institutions". It aims to bolster youth political participation through the promotion of inclusive and effective engagement and participation of youth in planning and decision-making processes and platforms at local, national, regional and global levels that support sustainable development solutions to poverty, inequality and exclusion.

To boost the implementation of UNDP's Youth Strategy and respond to both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security<sup>4</sup>, UNDP launched a Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace – Youth-GPS (2016–2020)<sup>5</sup>. The Youth-GPS focuses on civic engagement and political participation, among other areas, and responds to the concerns young people have expressed in global, regional and national forums and the growing demand at all levels for cutting-edge and strategic support in youth programming in all development contexts<sup>6</sup>.

Although young people are drivers of change and engaged in socio-political movements, formal politics is still largely a domain of people over the age of 35, with youth remaining underrepresented. Evidence shows that young



people are less likely to participate in formal political processes than older generations. Voter turnout among youth aged 18 to 25 continues to be lower than other age groups and they are less likely to join political parties<sup>7</sup>. As young people are not a homogenous group, reasons for their underrepresentation vary. They include lack of knowledge, interest, or trust as well as flaws in the political process itself that make it hard for young people to participate in an effective and meaningful way.

For political systems to be representative, all parts of society must be included. When young people are disenfranchised or disengaged from political processes, a significant portion of the population has little or no voice or influence in decisions that affect group members' lives. A key consequence is the undermining of political systems' representativeness.

To make a difference in the longer term, it is essential that young people are engaged in formal political processes and have a say in formulating today's and tomorrow's politics. Inclusive political participation is not only a fundamental political and democratic right but also is crucial to building stable and peaceful societies and developing policies that respond to the specific needs of younger generations. For young people to be adequately represented in political institutions, processes and decision-making, and in particular in elections, they must know their rights and be given the necessary knowledge and capacity to participate in a meaningful way at all levels.

Electoral management bodies (EMBs), among other stakeholders, can and do play a crucial role in enhancing youth political participation. This UNDP handbook looks at strategies, good practices and entry points for EMBs to foster youth participation throughout the electoral cycle and ensure that young people's potential as drivers for change is fully realized.

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1 The term 'young people' here refers to people aged 15 to 24.

2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

3 UNDP, 'Youth Strategy 2014–2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future', 2014, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/youthstrategy.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/youthstrategy.html).

4 Resolution 2250, adopted by the Security Council at its 7573rd meeting, on 9 December 2015, [www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149\\_doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149_doc.htm).

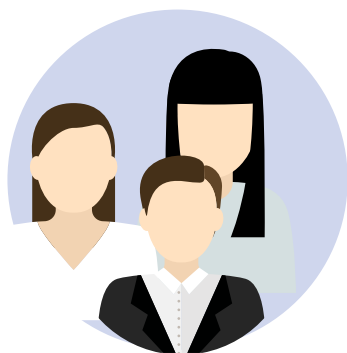
5 UNDP, 'Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace | Youth-GPS 2016–2020', May 2016, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/Youth-GPS/](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/Youth-GPS/).

6 UNDP, 'Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace | Youth-GPS 2016–2020', May 2016, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/Youth-GPS/](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/Youth-GPS/).

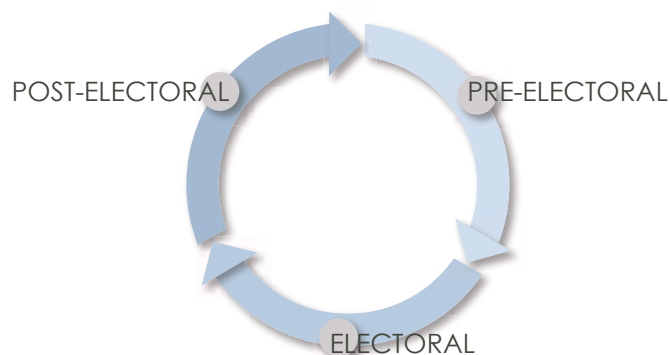
7 UN-DESA, 'World Youth Report 2016. Youth Civic Engagement', [www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/un\\_world\\_youth\\_report\\_youth\\_civic\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf).

# KEY CONCEPTS

A few key concepts are presented and discussed below as a framework for the rest of the guide.



## YOUTH



## ELECTORAL CYCLE

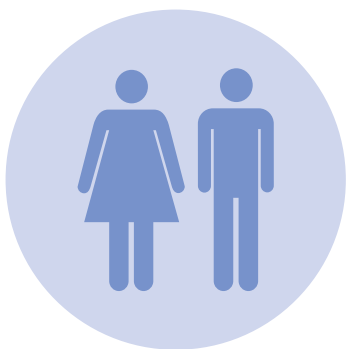
For statistical purposes, the United Nations General Assembly defines youth as between the ages of 15–24, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States<sup>8</sup>. However, since in many countries people below the age of 35 who are active in politics are considered young, this handbook uses a more flexible definition of youth — people between the ages of 15 and 35 — as specified as well in UNDP's Youth Strategy<sup>9</sup>.

This handbook is grounded in the electoral cycle approach, which has been mainstreamed throughout all electoral support projects of UNDP<sup>10</sup>. This approach emphasizes the importance of long-term activities aimed at developing capacities for inclusive political participation. It covers the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral periods. As such, the handbook provides strategies and good practices to create an enabling environment for participation, to empower young men and women to raise their voices, to engage in electoral operations, and to become active agents for peaceful elections.

8 United Nations Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981.

9 UNDP, 'Youth Strategy 2014–2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future', 2014, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/youthstrategy.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/youthstrategy.html).

10 UNDP, 'GPECS Scope and Strategy: Planning Ahead – The Electoral Cycle', [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/global\\_programmes/global\\_programmeforelectoralcyclesupport/programme\\_scope\\_andstrategy.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/global_programmes/global_programmeforelectoralcyclesupport/programme_scope_andstrategy.html)



## GENDER-SENSITIVE

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All UNDP guidance materials and other publications take into consideration the diversity of various groups of women and men as well as their specific activities and challenges. Young women in many societies face 'double discrimination' (based on both their age and gender) throughout the electoral cycle. Therefore, this handbook stresses the importance of developing and implementing targeted strategies and activities to enable and empower young women to participate.



## GOOD PRACTICES

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This handbook provides various practices and strategies on how EMBs have fostered youth participation throughout electoral processes. It is evident that successful strategies in one country might not be effective or useful in other socio-political contexts. As such, examples provided should serve only as a source of inspiration for EMBs on how youth can be empowered throughout the electoral cycle.



**Georgia:** Students of Georgian universities take part in a contest for creative ideas to promote Open Parliament.

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# CHAPTER 1



## Youth Underrepresentation in Formal Political Processes

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Although young people between the ages of 15 and 24 constitute about one fifth of the world's population<sup>11</sup> their participation and influence in formal politics remain limited. In light of the average low level and even serious decline of youth electoral participation in all regions of the world, this chapter explores the different obstacles that hinder young people from participating in electoral processes, be it as voters, political party members or candidates.

# YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT

## LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, people under 30 participate less than those over 30 in all presidential elections on the continent

## AFRICA

65%

18-35 YEAR OLDS

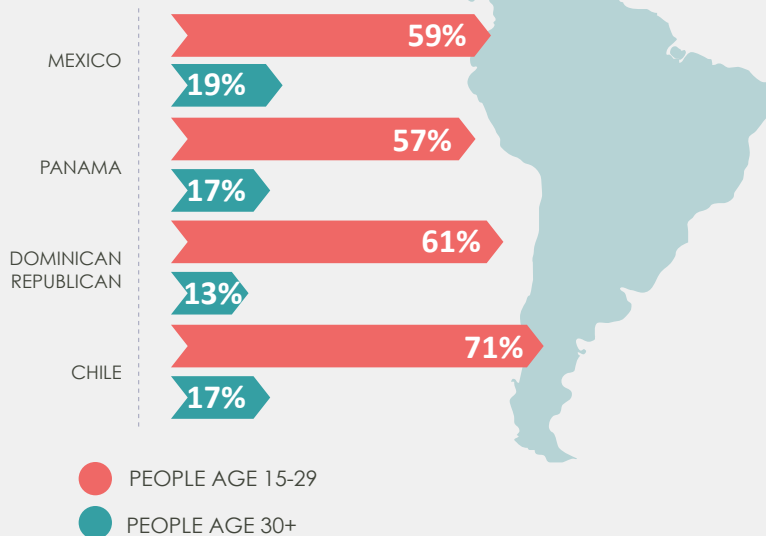
79%

36+

VOTED IN THE LAST NATIONAL ELECTION

Source: Does less engaged mean less empowered?, Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 34, August 2016

## VOTING ABSENTEEISM IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



Source: 2013 FLACSO Chile and International IDEA report on youth political participation

## ASIA

Youth turnout rate in the region is generally

15%

TO

30%

lower than that of people older than 35

### GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN

MALAYSIA

SINGAPORE

In both countries, only a third of youth voted in the most recent national elections, compared with an overwhelming majority of older citizens

Source: 2014 Asia Barometer Survey

## Voter turnout

Although official voter turnout figures are not consistently available from electoral authorities across regions, data collected by surveys conducted in different regions<sup>12</sup> are sketching a gloomy picture. Findings mentioned in 'Youth Civic Engagement'<sup>13</sup>, a 2016 UN World Youth report, reveal that voter turnout has decreased in all democracies since the 1980s and that the turnout decline is concentrated among youth. Survey results from a sample of 33 countries<sup>14</sup> indicate that close to 44 percent of young adults aged 18–29 years "always vote", compared with almost 60 percent of all citizens. The corresponding rate is more than 70 percent among those over the age of 50.

## Youth affiliation with political parties

While in the past political engagement of citizens was mainly channelled through activism in political parties (membership, voluntary work, door-door campaigning, attending meetings etc.), the last decade has shown that political parties are facing difficulties in attracting new party members, and in particular young people<sup>15</sup>. The 2016 UN global youth report shows that political party membership is less prevalent among those under the age of 30 than among older adults. Only 4.1 percent of 18–29 year olds are active party members, compared with 5 percent of all adults<sup>16</sup>.

## OBSTACLES

It is vital for EMBs to understand the multi-dimensional inter-connected barriers hindering youth participation in political processes if they are to respond effectively to weak participation of youth in electoral processes. A successful strategy to engage more youth can only be designed through wide-ranging research conducted by stakeholders in consultation with different youth subgroups.

Significant barriers to youth political participation occur at different levels and in different areas, including **structural**, **individual**, and **organizational** ones. Also and importantly, **election-related violence** has a negative impact on youth participation in elections.

Regarding the **structural level**, the following issues are hindering young people's participation:

- **Age requirements to vote or run for office.** A first barrier for youth participation is the minimum voting age requirement set for national elections at 18 in most countries, which disenfranchises younger citizens. Another important barrier obstructing the participation of young people is the existing gap in most countries between the minimum voting age and the minimum age of eligibility to run for office.
- **Increased costs** for candidate nomination and campaigning and the lack of political finance regulations make it even more difficult for youth to start a political career.



# YOUTH ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

60%

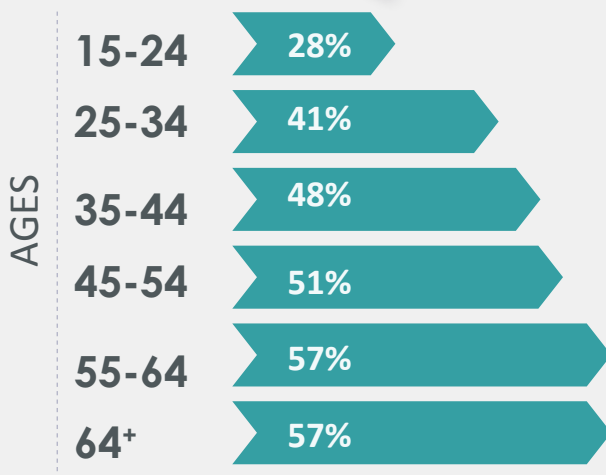
OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS BETWEEN 16 OR 18 AND 24 YEARS OLD OPTED NOT TO VOTE IN THEIR COUNTRY'S MOST RECENT NATIONAL ELECTION

EUROPE

In 2015 young people have been largely absent from national elections in the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU)

15

## TURNOUT PER AGE GROUP



In Europe, the European Youth Forum perceives the decline in youth party membership in the region as one of the core problems in institutional politics.

2%

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MEMBERS OF A POLITICAL PARTY

Source: 2015 European Youth Forum Report

Source: Addressing Youth Abstenteeism in European Elections, Youth Forum, 2014

- **Social and cultural traditions.** In most societies, politics has been for centuries a domain of older, often male and wealthy citizens, a situation that has resulted in the systematic exclusion of young people from political debates and decision-making and thus contributed to the underrepresentation of youth. Despite a broad consensus that young people have an important role to play in political processes, the participation of youth in politics remains a sensitive issue in some regions. While participation of all citizens at the local level is the cornerstone to build healthy democracies, it is often at the local level that young people are not given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.
- **Young women are in many countries subject to ‘double discrimination’** based on their age and gender. They also often experience additional obstacles compared with men. Because of social conventions and/or insecure or unsafe environments, women voters still face serious barriers to get registered as voters and to cast their votes. Women are also underrepresented as staff in EMBs, particularly in senior positions<sup>17</sup>. Despite gender quotas established by many EMBs for boards or commissioner posts, other senior leadership positions are still mainly or even solely male-dominated.

At the **individual level**:

- **Distrust in political institutions.** A growing number of citizens (including young people) have little trust in formal political processes, political institutions and leaders<sup>18</sup>.
- **Lack of confidence and trust in EMBs.** The composition of EMB leadership is in many countries a highly controversial issue. If stakeholders, in particular political parties, do not agree with the composition of an EMB, there is an increased risk that they will boycott the elections and demotivate citizens from participating, which can lead to a low voter turnout.
- **Lack of access to/knowledge about political processes.** Young people are grappling with understanding the complexities of democratic societies and formal political processes. The UN 2016 global youth report<sup>19</sup> shows that nearly 53 percent of young graduates say they always vote in national elections, in comparison with about 44 percent of all 18- to 29-year olds. Other groups often likely to lack the required knowledge to participate are marginalized youth such as minorities, unemployed youth and those living in isolation and/or poverty. A weak understanding of democratic principles and electoral processes makes it more difficult for youth to perceive elections as routes to express their grievances, demand change and hold governments accountable.
- **Social and economic exclusion/marginalization.** Finding a sustainable job has become a daily struggle for many young people in all parts of the world. They have to cope with precarious working conditions such as part-time, short-term, temporary and badly paid employment situations, all of which make it hard to find a work-family balance, rent a house and access

health care services (among other important priorities)<sup>20</sup>. Living conditions are even harder for young women, youth growing up in poverty and conflicts, youth without education certificates, and unemployed youth.

At the **organizational level**, inadequate or ineffective youth policies of EMBs, political parties and parliaments are factors in the limited participation of young people in formal politics.

- **Limited data on youth political participation.** Data collection is essential to understand the complexities of youth political exclusion and to develop comprehensive youth strategies and targeted interventions to foster youth participation throughout the electoral cycle. Many EMBs do not have either (or both) quantitative and qualitative data on youth electoral participation.
- **Lack of an exclusive EMB youth policy and sustainable funding.**
  - a. Provisions for youth involvement are often grouped with other underrepresented groups such as minorities, indigenous peoples, women, disabled people, etc. As a result, EMBs do not adequately profile their initiatives targeting youth.
  - b. EMBs' youth initiatives are mostly tied to voter education initiatives, which are strengthened and supported when elections are drawing closer yet are abandoned or ignored after elections are held. Voter education programmes are often not extended beyond the election period, even though such activities are most effective when integrated into broader civic education programmes that focus on broader concepts such as democracy, participation and representation.
  - c. Youth engagement projects are not always seen as a priority. As a result, already scarce funds available for the organization of elections are often diverted to other areas of work.
- **Low representation of youth in EMB structures.** Strict recruitment policies (e.g., required years of experience) and a lack of training opportunities for young people within EMB structures contribute considerably to the underrepresentation of youth in higher levels of decision-making.
- **Voter registration.** In some countries, complex registration processes and the costs related to obtaining the necessary documentation to get enrolled constitute serious barriers for youth to get registered. Women who may not be able to leave their homes due to cultural norms and family duties face major obstacles to get registered if no special provisions and initiatives (including education and awareness among men) are established to facilitate their registration. Voter registration for youth studying away from home can be considerably more difficult as they often do not have the time and money to travel back home to get registered in their constituencies.
- **Party politics:** Political parties are the gatekeepers of elected positions and decide who will be placed on their candidate lists and at which position. Political parties' nomination processes

# YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN REMAINS LIMITED IN AFRICA

34%

YOUTH ATTENDED  
CAMPAIGN RALLIES  
OR MEETINGS

23%

YOUTH TRIED TO PERSUADE  
OTHERS TO VOTE FOR A CERTAIN  
CANDIDATE OR PARTY

AFRICA

TO

## YOUTH WHO WORKED FOR A CANDIDATE OR PARTY IN LAST NATIONAL ELECTION

11.4%

PEOPLE AGED 15-29

15.9%

PEOPLE AGED 30-49

16.7%

PEOPLE AGED 50+

Source: Results from the 2015 AfroBarometer

have not always favoured young candidates, as they are often placed in low positions on candidates' lists, with very limited possibilities to get elected. The absence/lack of candidate quotas for young people demotivates them from participating as they are often left out. To counter the declining youth political party membership, youth wings have been established. Unfortunately, political party leadership has not always taken youth wings seriously, such as when these groups' mandates are limited to supporting campaigns and/or recruiting new party members. In such instances, they often are given no power to influence nomination processes, set agendas or write party manifestos.

- **Interrupted electoral cycles:** If one or more election is delayed for any reason, there might be the risk that young people, particularly first-time voters, opt out in subsequent votes. Their lack of opportunity to cast ballots in originally scheduled polls can easily transform into lack of interest for the political affairs and self-isolation from democratic processes.

Lastly, **election-related violence** has significantly hindered the meaningful engagement of young people in electoral processes.

- Elections are one of the main pillars of democracy. However, elections can trigger violence when fundamental human rights such as the rights of association and expression are violated and when certain segments of society are unable to engage with from political processes. Countries emerging from internal conflicts such as civil war have an especially high potential for conflict during electoral processes<sup>21</sup>.
- In countries with a history of electoral violence, young people are often involved as perpetrators or victims of the violence. That is because they are often used as foot soldiers by politicians and armed groups that want to disrupt polling. As long as youth are vulnerable for political and military exploitation they will be hindered from fully participating in electoral processes.
- Women are affected in different ways than men by electoral violence. Voter turnout among women is much lower than among men, for example, in (post-) conflict countries where there is a high threat of gender-based violence and in countries with high risks of intimidation of women in public life.

When facing barriers at the environmental, individual and organizational levels, youth can rapidly feel **disempowered**. Many tend to believe that their voices are not going to be heard or that they will not be taken seriously even if they are heard. The problem becomes circular as politicians may lose interest in responding to the aspirations of youth if they cannot win their votes. This in turn leads to youth being increasingly excluded from taking part in decision-making, or in debates about key socio-economic and political issues, despite their sensitivity to the demands for social equity and justice, environmental protection and cultural diversity.

# NOTES OF CHAPTER 1

- 11 UN-DESA, 'Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making', [www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf).
- 12 According to the 2015 European Youth Forum Report, young people have been largely absent from national elections in the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU). Almost 60 percent of eligible voters between 16 or 18 and 24 years old opted not to vote in their country's most recent national election. Deželan, Tomaž, 'Young People and Democratic Life in Europe: What Next After the 2014 European Elections?', European Youth Forum, 2015, [www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ\\_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope\\_B1\\_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf](http://www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope_B1_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf).
- Nearly two thirds (65 percent) of the overall African population is younger than 35, according to the 2015 AfroBarometer. Yet only 55 percent of African youth said they voted in their last national election. Considerable regional differences exist, however: in East Africa, 65 percent of young people participated in their country's most recent elections; as opposed to only 49 percent of youth in Northern Africa. AfroBarometer, Dispatch no. 41, 12 August 2015, [http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ob\\_r6\\_dispatchno41.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ob_r6_dispatchno41.pdf).
- The 2014 Asia Barometer Survey indicates that youth turnout rate in the region is generally 15–30 percent lower than that of people older than 35. Generational differences in voting are striking in Malaysia and Singapore. In both countries, only a third of youth voted in the most recent national elections, compared with an overwhelming majority of older citizens. UNDP, 'Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South East Asia: Exploring Political Attitudes of East and South-East Asian Youth through the Asian Barometer Survey', 2014, <https://issuu.com/undp/docs/rbap-dg-2014-youth-n-democratic-cit/69>.
- In Latin America, the 2013 FLACSO Chile and International IDEA report on youth political participation noted that people under 30 participate less than those over 30 in all presidential elections on the continent. According to the report, the greatest difference in participation between young and older people existed in Mexico, where 59 percent of young people did not vote compared with just 19 percent of older citizens. Other gaps included in Panama, where 57 percent of youth did not participate compared with 17 percent of older citizens; the Dominican Republic (61 percent compared with 13 percent); and Chile (71 percent compared with 17 percent). FLACSO Chile and International IDEA, 'Youth and Political Participation in Latin America, Current State and Challenges', document prepared for the Annual Democracy Forum 'Youth Participation and Elections', 2013.
- 13 UN-DESA, 'World Youth Report 2016. Youth Civic Engagement', [www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/un\\_world\\_youth\\_report\\_youth\\_civic\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf).
- 14 Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Zimbabwe (Africa); Cyprus, Estonia, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden (Europe); Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay (South America); Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Republic of Korea, Taiwan Province of China, Thailand (South-East Asia); India (Southern-Central Asia); and the United States (North America).
- In Asia, research indicates that in most of the region's countries, young people identify less with political parties than do older citizens. The exceptions were Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, where political parties have stronger links with youth.
- 15 UNDP, 'Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South East Asia: Exploring Political Attitudes of East and South-East Asian Youth through the Asian Barometer Survey', 2014, <https://issuu.com/undp/docs/rbap-dg-2014-youth-n-democratic-cit/69>.
- In Europe, the European Youth Forum perceives the decline in youth party membership in the region as one of the core problems in institutional politics. Research conducted in 2014 by International IDEA reveals that across the continent, as few as 2 percent of young people are members of a political party. Deželan, Tomaž, 'Young People and Democratic Life in Europe: What Next After the 2014 European Elections?', European Youth Forum, 2015, [www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ\\_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope\\_B1\\_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf](http://www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope_B1_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf).
- Results from the 2015 AfroBarometer show that youth participation in election campaigns remains limited in Africa. On average, 34 percent of youth attended campaign rallies or meetings in 2014, the year preceding the survey, and only 23 percent tried to persuade others to vote for a certain

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- 21 UNDP, 'Elections and Conflict Prevention: A Guide to Analysis, Planning and Programming', 2009, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/electoral\\_systemsandprocesses/elections-and-conflict-prevention-guide.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/electoral_systemsandprocesses/elections-and-conflict-prevention-guide.html).



Brazil: Launch of Sustainable Development Goals at UN House

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# CHAPTER 2



## Sustainable Development Goal 16

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### 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs

Building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>22</sup>, world leaders in September 2015 adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York<sup>23</sup>. The 2030 Agenda includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals<sup>24</sup> (SDGs) that collectively, according to the Declaration agreed to by signatories, aim to “end poverty; to combat inequalities; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources and to create

conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities."<sup>25</sup> The SDGs are the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Young people played an important role in defining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They voiced their needs and ideas to governments and the UN through a broad consultative process (UNDG consultations), their participation through the UN Major Group of Children and Youth in negotiations, and the online My World Survey<sup>26</sup>, with more than 7 million young people voting for their priorities for a better world.

As a result, the 2030 Agenda not only specifically names young people as “critical agents of change”<sup>27</sup>, but also represents them as a priority across the 17 SDGs. More than 60 out of the 169 SDG targets refer to young people explicitly or implicitly, with the focus on enhancing their empowerment, participation and well-being. The international recognition of youth as “critical agents of change” is intended translate into actions by governments and other stakeholders to implement and monitor the progress made on the SDGs, including in the selection of national-level indicators and the involvement of young people in monitoring their progress<sup>28</sup>.

Another key aspect of the implementation of the SDGs that could boost youth inclusion in electoral processes is the on-going SDGs localization process, i.e., the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies and policies at the local level for achieving global, national and subnational SDGs and targets. This involves concrete mechanisms, tools, innovations, platforms and processes to effectively translate the development agenda into results at the local level. To achieve results, all sectors in society — civil society, youth groups, traditional leaders, religious organizations, academia, the private sector and others — need to be engaged at all steps.

The SDGs and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are wider in scope than the MDGs. Most notably, they seek to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people with a commitment of “leaving no one behind”, an appeal made by the UN Secretary-General that underpins the 2030 Agenda<sup>29</sup>.

## SDG 16

SDG 16 is particularly noteworthy because it specifies commitment to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. The inclusion of an SDG covering governance, inclusion, participation, rights and security follows a strong criticism of the MDGs for having failed to account for insecurity, human rights abuses and weak governance as barriers to development.

SDG 16, which focuses on inclusion, can only be met if all segments of society are involved in decision-making processes at all levels. This makes the goal particularly important for all stakeholders working on youth political empowerment. Moreover, SDG 16 is not only a goal in itself, but serves as an enabling goal for the rest of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. It is evident that without peace and effective, accountable and inclusive political institutions, it will be impossible to end poverty and hunger (SDGs 1 and 2), to ensure healthy lives (SDG 3), promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8) or to achieve all the other goals. Consequently, fostering inclusive political processes is essential to the achievement of all the other goals.

Eight out of the 12 targets of the SDG 16 are particularly relevant to the work of EMBs in fostering inclusive electoral processes:

### 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

Elections are often highly contentious processes and can lead to violence when they are not perceived as free and fair, or when the results are contested by stakeholders. Violence is most likely to erupt when there are also other underlying causes of conflict, such as exclusion, inequality or ethnic tensions<sup>30</sup>. To help assure achievement of SDG 16.1, EMBs may need to take measures to prevent conflicts throughout the electoral cycle and to implement successful practices to capitalize on and support youth as active agents for peace. (See Chapter 6.)

### 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

Effective dispute resolution mechanisms are fundamental to ensuring that electoral disputes are solved in a legal and peaceful manner, thereby helping to uphold the integrity of the process and allow the will of the people to prevail. To work towards the achievement of SDG 16.3, EMBs have to ensure that citizens are aware of their right to file complaints and that there are formal and/or informal processes in place to address complaints.

### 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

In a context of widespread corruption and bribery, there is an urgent need for EMBs to establish strong political finance regulation, control funding and expenditures of political parties, and establish mechanisms to seek redress if parties contravene the law. (See Chapter 3.)

### 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

To organize free, fair and credible elections, EMBs should make sure their work is carried out in an effective, accountable and transparent manner and that it is also perceived as such.

# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Continuous consultation with political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs) and security forces can build trust among all stakeholders. Youth account for an important part of the electorate. Politicians seeking to gain youth votes need to take their voices into account in policy development and ultimately become more accountable towards young people.

#### 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

Inclusive electoral processes lay the foundation for responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making. However, youth are underrepresented as voters, candidates and senior EMB staff, and are thus missing the opportunity to influence decision-making and advocate for stronger youth policies.

#### 16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.

Citizens without a legal identity, including birth registration, usually cannot get registered on voter lists and are being disfranchised from exercising their basic right to vote. EMBs in partnership with other stakeholders have to ensure that citizens can obtain the required documents to get registered. Chapter 5 looks more closely at existing barriers for youth registration.

#### 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Target 16.10 on access to information is a key enabling condition for the implementation of all 17 SDGs<sup>31</sup>. One of the first prerequisites for citizens to actively participate in electoral processes is having knowledge and understanding of democratic values, elections and their impact on representation and accountability. EMBs play an important role in providing citizens with the basic information surrounding the electoral process and the casting of their votes. However, EMBs also can develop strong collaborations with other state actors to educate citizens from an early age. Of particular importance is EMBs' crucial work with the media during the electoral cycle, which helps to ensure that fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of association, are protected. Chapter 4 looks at civic and voter education strategies for EMBs.

### SDG 16: To measure is to know

Collecting data will be essential to measure progress against the different targets of the SDGs. Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge and adhere to the overarching principle of data disaggregation that accompanies the list of SDG indicators: "Sustainable Development Goal indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and

geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.”<sup>32</sup>

Data on electoral participation disaggregated by age is not yet available in most countries and is urgently needed. SDG 16 is unlikely to be achieved unless mechanisms are developed to collect age-aggregated data for registration and voting, for participation in voter education programmes, for participation in campaign activities, for political party membership and candidates, for representation in parliaments, and for EMB staff.

# NOTES OF CHAPTER 2

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A young Palestinian woman learns about the finer points of democratic governance at a UNDP-supported training session

© UNDP/PAPP and Sharek Youth Forum



# CHAPTER 3



## Enable – Legislative and Policy Framework

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### International legal framework

International electoral standards form the foundation for legal electoral frameworks. The rights to participate fully in a country's political and electoral processes are basic human rights recognized in an extensive body of international and regional legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>33</sup> (UDHR, 1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>34</sup> (ICCPR, 1966). Over the last decade, the international community has re-affirmed its commitment to youth participation in several resolutions, charters and action plans, such as the African Youth Charter<sup>35</sup> and the EU Strategy<sup>36</sup> for Youth, both of which highlight

the value of increased information and capacity development to ensure that young people are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to become active citizens and leaders in their communities.

International instruments and frameworks provide a solid foundation for countries to develop legislation, policies and practices to foster the full participation of youth in their political and electoral processes. A clear understanding of the international legal framework can likely help EMBs to ensure that electoral laws and processes comply with international standards and that youth sensitive strategies and programmes are developed accordingly.

**Annex 1** includes more details on the international and regional frameworks to foster the political participation of youth.

## National legal framework

### Constitutions

Formerly written in closed-door meetings by mostly male and elder legislators, constitutions are now usually drafted in more open and transparent processes that include all citizens. The increased involvement of historically excluded groups often has resulted in the incorporation of special provisions to foster political participation of youth.

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In 2012–2013, UNDP supported a nationwide dialogue between National Constituent Assembly (NCA) members and citizens and CSOs in all 24 of Tunisia's governorates. A total of 80 Assembly deputies were provided with training in both legislative and constitutional drafting, and in public consultation techniques. More than 6,000 citizens, 300 CSOs and 320 university representatives provided input during the dialogue. A national survey of 1,100 young people provided detailed information on the desires and expectations of Tunisian youth, the segment of the population whose exclusion sparked the 2011 revolution<sup>37</sup>. Article 8 of the Constitution acknowledges the role of youth with this language: *Youth are an active force in building the nation. The state seeks to provide the necessary conditions for developing the capacities of youth and realizing their potential, supports them to assume responsibility, and strives to extend and generalize their participation in social, economic, cultural and political development.*

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Constitutions with special provisions for historically marginalized groups lay a strong foundation to foster broad and comprehensive electoral processes. Because constitutions are the highest law within legal systems, they give EMBs a clear mandate to develop targeted interventions to increase the participation of historically excluded groups, including youth.

## Quotas for youth

Several countries have started to introduce quotas for youth to increase their participation. Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Peru, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Uganda, among other countries, have adopted some kind of quota to bolster the representation of youth.

Three types of quotas<sup>38</sup> are mainly used today:

- Reserved seats (constitutional and/or legislative)
- Legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative)
- Voluntary political party quotas

### Reserved seats

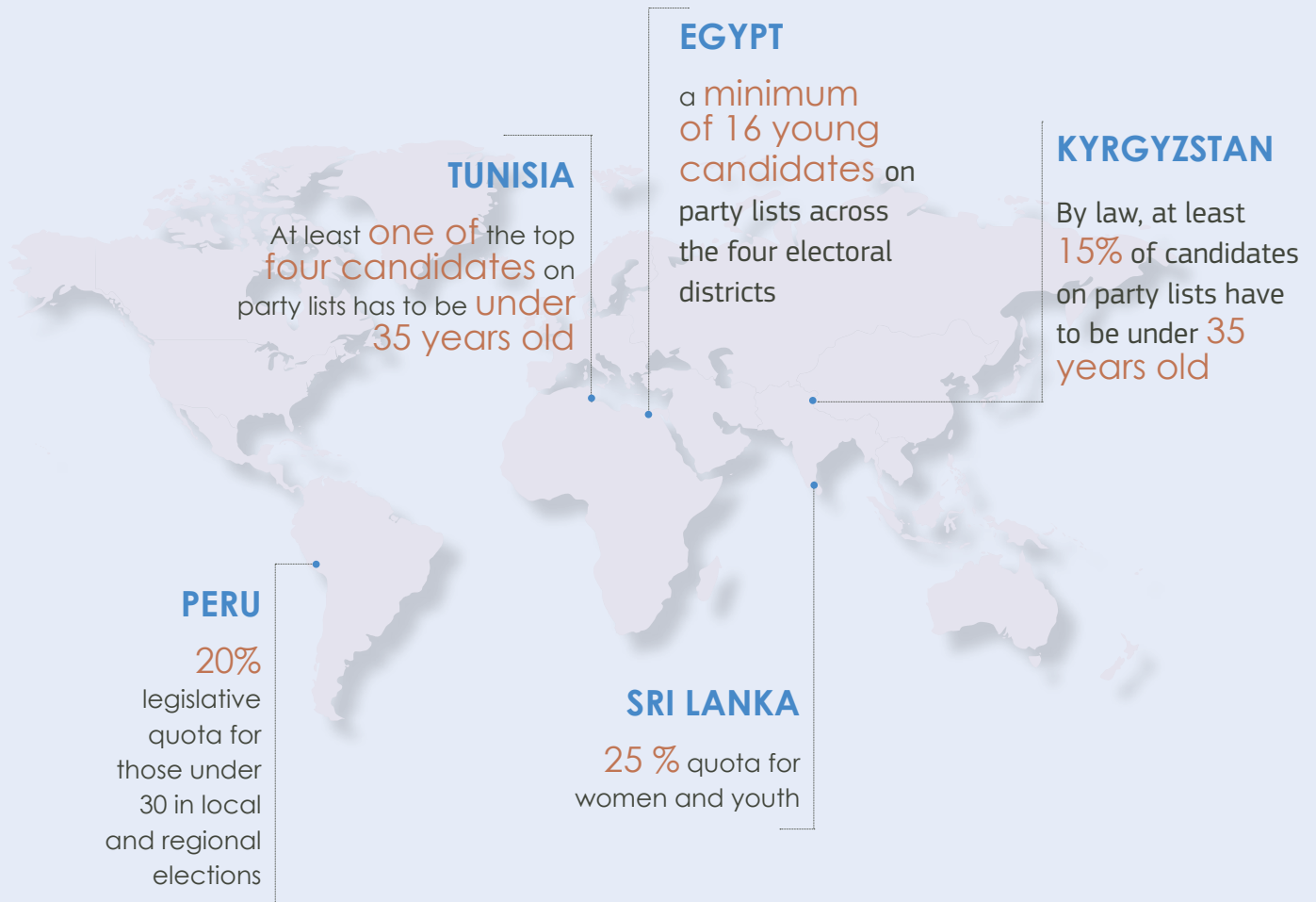
Reserved seats for young people guarantee that a certain proportion of them will be elected. Reserved seats do have a strong impact on youth representation as they are generally embedded in the constitution and/or electoral law of a country and as such should be enforced by EMBs. Illustrative examples for countries with reserved seats for young people include [Kenya](#)<sup>39</sup>, with 12 members nominated by political parties to represent special interests including youth; [Uganda](#)<sup>40</sup>, with five seats for people under 30, one of whom must be a woman; and [Rwanda](#)<sup>41</sup>, with two members of parliament elected by the National Youth Council.

### Legal candidate quotas

In countries with constitutions or laws providing quotas for young candidates, political parties are obligated to fill their candidate lists with a minimum number of young people. Several countries have adopted them; impacts vary, and usually depend on the position in which young people are placed on political party lists. Candidate quotas can be an effective means to increase youth representation under the condition that young people are placed in electable positions. Yet there is a risk they will have no real impact in terms of increasing the representation of youth in a parliament if young people are placed too low on the political party candidate list.

# LEGAL CANDIDATE QUOTAS

EMBs can influence this situation, for example refusing to accept candidate lists that do not comply with the legally required minimum number of young people. Legal candidate quotas are imposed on political parties in several countries:

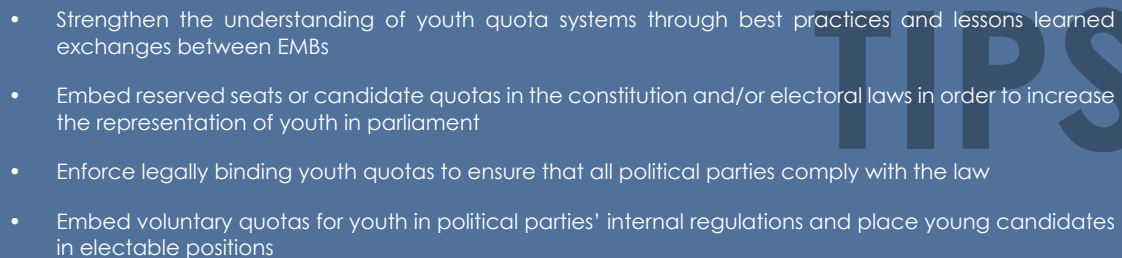


Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Youth Participation in National Parliaments, 2014.<sup>42</sup>

## Political party quotas

In countries with no legal provisions guaranteeing a minimum of young people on candidate lists or reserved seats for young people, political parties can opt to introduce voluntary quotas to ensure that a minimum of young candidates are represented on their lists. Political party quotas are part of a political party's internal regulations and cannot be enforced by EMBs.

Yet despite their voluntary nature, it is encouraging to see that many political parties have established voluntary quotas for young people. To name only a few: in [Cyprus](#), the Movement for Social Democracy adopted a 20 percent quota for candidates under 35 years old in 2010; and in [Nicaragua](#), the Sandinista Front for National Liberation has had a 15 percent quota for youth in party leadership and electoral lists since 2002<sup>43</sup>.

- 
- Strengthen the understanding of youth quota systems through best practices and lessons learned exchanges between EMBs
  - Embed reserved seats or candidate quotas in the constitution and/or electoral laws in order to increase the representation of youth in parliament
  - Enforce legally binding youth quotas to ensure that all political parties comply with the law
  - Embed voluntary quotas for youth in political parties' internal regulations and place young candidates in electable positions

## Lowering the voting age

Most countries have a minimum voting age of 18 years; however, in the last 10 years, several countries have had on-going debates about the possibility of reducing the voting age to 17 or 16.

In general, those in favour are convinced that lowering the voting age to 16 – in combination with stronger civic and voter education programmes in schools – could increase the political participation of youth. The advocates for a lower voting age seek to strengthen their case by noting that 16-year olds participate in political debates on social media and events, work, pay taxes, rent houses, and join the armed forces in some countries. Consequently, given their contributions to society, they should have the right to vote and hold representatives accountable for decisions that are affecting their daily lives. The main arguments raised by opponents of lowering voting ages to 16 or another age younger than 18 are that younger people lack the maturity to grapple with complex political processes and that they would most likely be influenced by the positions of their parents or other adults.

In the Ethiopia, Indonesia, Sudan and Timor-Leste, the legal voting age is 17 for national elections. Argentina<sup>44</sup>, Austria<sup>45</sup>, Brazil<sup>46</sup>, Cuba, Ecuador, and Nicaragua have lowered their voting ages to 16 in national elections.

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The Scottish referendum on independence, which took place in 2015, gave 16- and 17-year olds the right to vote. Supporters consider the decision to be successful, and thus invalidating opponents' key arguments, based on data showing that youth aged 16 and 17 were (a) as interested in politics as adults, (b) demonstrated engagement with politics in conversations and through voting when actual issues were concerned, (c) were not strongly influenced by parents, and (d) did not exhibit signs that their political perceptions were substantially related to their parents' educational backgrounds. In addition, discussing political issues in schools greatly increased students' political confidence, and the young people surveyed had more positive impressions of political parties after the referendum<sup>47</sup>.

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### Lowering the age of eligibility to run for office

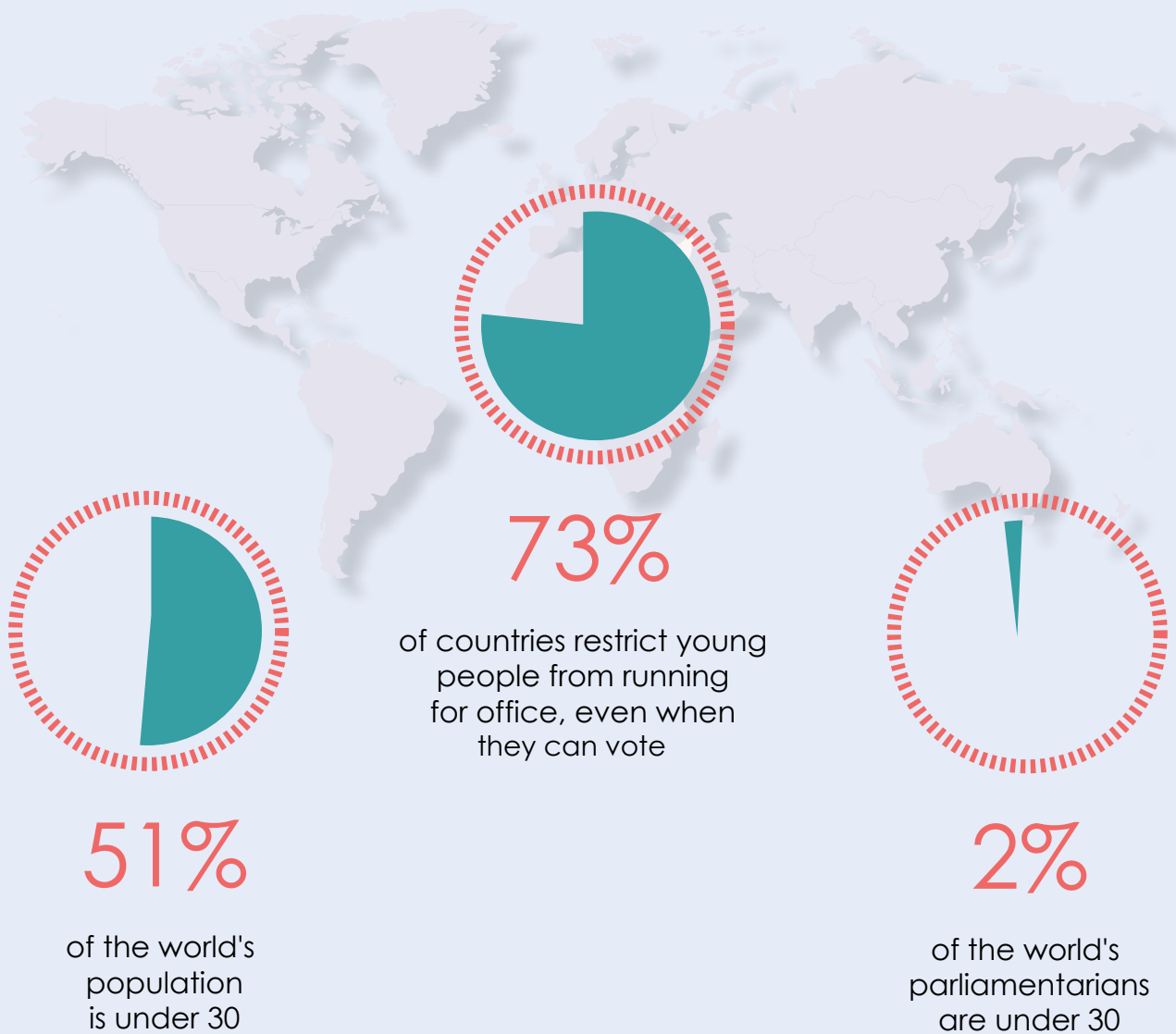
While the minimum voting age is more or less aligned across countries, the age at which citizens can stand as a candidate varies more widely. A study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)<sup>48</sup> in 2014 concluded that in most countries citizens must wait several years after gaining the right to vote before being eligible to run for parliamentary office – usually until age 21 or 25, but in some countries until 35 or even 40. Such criteria have created enormous gaps between the youth electorate and political leaders in countries with large youth populations. [Zimbabwe](#) for example, based on 2012 census data, has the largest youth bulge: 20 percent of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24<sup>49</sup>, but young people are not eligible to run for office until they are 40 years old.

Such age gaps between voters and political candidates can have the following consequences, among others:

- youth votes will not lead towards a higher representation of young people;
- the lack of trust widens between young people and political institutions;
- a perception arises and persists that participation is not going to make any difference; and
- elected leaders have no or only limited accountability towards the youth electorate.

Recognizing age gaps as an important barrier for enhanced youth participation, countries are increasingly reflecting on reducing age requirements to run for office. Austria, Belgium, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, and Kenya, for example, have all lowered the required minimum age for candidates.

# AGE GAP BETWEEN VOTING AGE AND AGE TO RUN FOR OFFICE



Source: <http://www.nottooyoungtorun.org/>

## Political finance legislation

Money plays an important role in electoral processes in all countries. Without money, it is difficult for political parties in most countries to reach out to and inform citizens about their manifestos or to motivate people to register and get out to vote.

Money only becomes problematic when costs for nomination fees and campaigning are high or escalating (which limits participation to wealthier individuals and organizations), when women's access to campaign financing is disproportional difficult due to cultural and social barriers, when there are no legal frameworks or mechanisms in place to control donations and expenditures of political parties and candidates, and when corruption is infiltrating political parties. In these cases, money creates an uneven playing field and electoral process.

### Earmarking state subsidies for youth

Recognizing that political activities often require (considerable) financing, many countries have introduced state subsidies to level the playing field and encourage political pluralism. Earmarking state subsidies for specific activities and/or target groups is not new and has been used in several countries to promote the representation of underrepresented groups in political institutions. A small number of countries, including [Ireland](#) and [Kenya](#), have drafted legislation requiring parties to use part of their funding to increase youth political representation. To ensure political parties respect regulations on the use of state subsidies, it is important to have mechanisms in place to (a) verify expenditures and activities implemented by political parties and (b) financially sanction those parties that do not comply with the regulations.

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In [Kenya](#), according to Article 26.1 of the Political Parties Act 2011, at least 30 percent of direct public funding provided should be used for “promoting the representation in Parliament and in the county assemblies of women, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic and other minorities and marginalized communities”.<sup>50</sup>

In [Ireland](#), in accordance with Section 18 of the Electoral Act, 1997 (as amended), “The funding received is also deemed to include provision in respect of expenditure by qualified parties in relation to the promotion of participation by women and young persons in political activity. Public funding cannot be applied to, or be used to recoup, election or referendum expenses.”<sup>51</sup>

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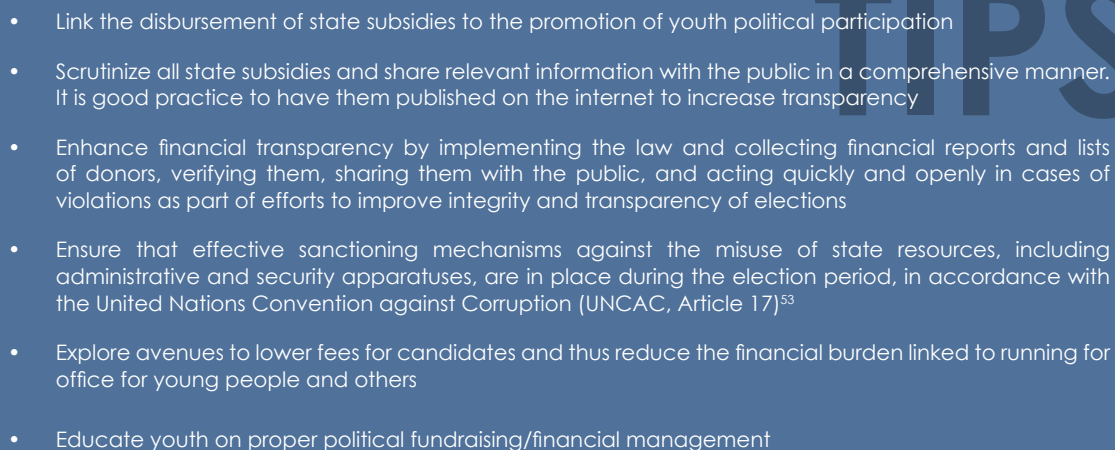
## Donations and expenditures

The political sphere in most countries continues to be dominated by wealthy and powerful individuals and groups. High and often escalating costs often limit opportunities for young people with relatively less influence or financial means, regardless of how eager they are to run for office. Proper regulations for donations and campaign expenditures should be put in place to ensure that young people from all segments in society (women, indigenous peoples, minorities, etc.) have access to funding for electoral campaigns. Otherwise, power and access remain concentrated among those from wealthy backgrounds and/or established political families.

Weak legislation in terms of donations and spending of political parties is only one of several potential obstacles. In some countries, state and government resources are systematically used during campaign periods for the advantage of incumbents. It goes without saying that this weakens the position of opposition candidates and young people who are not associated with incumbent governments or candidates.

### Enforcing legislation: verify and sanction

Despite strong political finance regulations, many countries lack mechanisms to enforce legislation by collecting, scrutinizing, and disclosing financial reports and to address violations. In the absence of mechanisms to investigate political parties' donations and expenditures and hold political parties accountable, it is unlikely that political parties will be penalized for not complying with the rules. Yet despite this rather obvious correlation, about 25 percent of the countries for which data was available during research for a 2012 report lacked regulations obliging any agency to examine financial reports or to investigate potential political finance violations<sup>52</sup>.

- 
- TIPS**
- Link the disbursement of state subsidies to the promotion of youth political participation
  - Scrutinize all state subsidies and share relevant information with the public in a comprehensive manner. It is good practice to have them published on the internet to increase transparency
  - Enhance financial transparency by implementing the law and collecting financial reports and lists of donors, verifying them, sharing them with the public, and acting quickly and openly in cases of violations as part of efforts to improve integrity and transparency of elections
  - Ensure that effective sanctioning mechanisms against the misuse of state resources, including administrative and security apparatuses, are in place during the election period, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC, Article 17)<sup>53</sup>
  - Explore avenues to lower fees for candidates and thus reduce the financial burden linked to running for office for young people and others
  - Educate youth on proper political fundraising/financial management

# NOTES OF CHAPTER 3

33. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has codified everyone's "right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives" (Article 21), [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/)
34. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights specifies in Article 25 everyone's "right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors", <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20999/volume-999-I-14668-English.pdf>.
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# CHAPTER 4



“**SDG 16**, target 10:  
Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”

## Empower

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This chapter explores avenues for EMBs to empower young people to become citizens who are interested and involved in the electoral process.

### EMBs voter and civic education

EMBs have a crucial role to play in achieving SDG target 16.10 through civic and voter education activities. All citizens, including young people, are entitled to the knowledge and information necessary to make well-informed choices and thus to participate in a meaningful way in electoral processes. As part of the civic and voter education activities that form part of EMBs' mandate, they need to form extensive partnerships with youth organizations, schools, and political institutions and to find innovative ways to build young people's knowledge and capacity.

Emphasis should be on explaining concepts of democracy and why elections matter for youth. EMBs should consider including the following different messages in voter and education programmes:

- Elections are fundamental for **democracies**
- An election establishes a representative government and ensures **accountability** by those who are elected
- **Your vote counts!** Each individual vote has weight in determining and influencing the actions of an elected party or representative once an election has been won or lost
- **Secret voting is a right!** Any form of intimidation should not be tolerated, and family voting—a practice where a family member casts votes on behalf of the entire family or where one member of the family pressures other members to vote for a certain candidate—is not accepted

As youth are not a homogenous group, EMBs should develop education programmes taking into account the specific challenges of different subgroups related to the voting process. Non-targeted activities might lead to discrimination against certain subgroups and undermine efforts toward an inclusive electoral participation. For example, voter education campaigns relying on information and communication technologies (ICTs) often discriminate against illiterate youth or those living in areas with limited internet access.

### **Targeting young women**

In view of the need for increased women's empowerment across most societies, EMBs should reflect on strategies and targeted activities to reach out to young women and eliminate existing barriers to women's participation.

Voter education programmes should take into account the fact that women might face additional challenges compared to men. Voter information campaigns should therefore highlight to women the importance of their votes and emphasize their right to vote as equal members of society. A recent document co-produced by UNDP and UN Women<sup>54</sup> put it this way:

*With respect to gender equality, it is also extremely important to convey to young women voters that the ballot is secret. In outreach messages and images, it is important that women be shown in active roles as voters, candidates and electoral staff.*

## Using multiple media platforms and technology

### Traditional media: TV and radio

The use of traditional media (TV, radio and newspapers) remains an important venue to reach out to youth even in an era of new and changing media options and outlets. In many countries, radio messages are still popular and effective among local communities, especially in remote areas where people are more likely to have access to radio rather than TV or print/electronic media.

In more urban areas, voter education information and awareness programmes tend to be delivered through various TV channels. TV shows, including telenovelas, are highly popular in certain parts of the world and therefore offer an excellent avenue to deliver messages.

The reality show 'The President' in Palestine<sup>55</sup> tasks viewers and a panel of expert judges with selecting a candidate on the show that they hope to see become the next Palestinian president. The programme is designed to promote democratic values to a Palestinian audience and to engage citizens in democratic processes.

- Engage youth in the creation of awareness campaigns. For example, an EMB's voter education unit could hold competitions for youth to create TV and radio spots and work on implementing the winning campaigns
- Produce a regular programme through TV and radio broadcasters before, during and after elections to raise awareness among young people, familiarize them with the electoral processes and motivate them to vote. The programmes could cover a range of topics such as democratic values; constitutions; the role and composition of regional, national and local institutions; voter registration; elections and mechanisms to prevent electoral-related violence
- Engage with the media on gender-aware outreach; be attentive to gender-sensitive messages and portray young women in active, participatory roles as voters, election officials and political leaders; and avoid reinforcing existing gender stereotypes

## ICTs to empower youth

Faced with barriers to get their voices heard in traditional media and communication outlets, such as television and media, young people are increasingly ignoring them altogether. More than ever, young people around the world are using ICT tools and platforms to organize for change, make their political opinions publicly known and mobilize support. They have adopted more direct and interactive communication tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, text messages, promotional videos, podcasts, and blogs, decisions that have eliminated the use of intermediaries in communication and allowed youth themselves to be 'the news makers'.

These youth preferences and trends underscore why EMBs should capitalize on the power of ICTs to provide incentives for young people to participate in electoral processes, as well as to reach out to them in relatable ways.

## Social media

EMBs need to pass their information through social networks on which young voters are particularly active, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Bambuser, Vimeo, blogs, Flickr, LinkedIn and Google+. Highly targeted approaches are needed to engage the young electorate in electoral processes. Given the scale and scope of youth engagement with social media, which will likely continue to grow in the foreseeable future, these platforms have the potential to become valuable and effective tools to inform young people about all aspects of elections, including in real-time.

To date, the level of engagement of EMBs with social media platforms and their online followers has remained rather low. A survey conducted by International IDEA in 2013 revealed that out of 172 countries and territories, only 55 EMBs (31.9 percent) had Facebook pages, and of these 55 only 49 showed any sign of current Facebook activity. The corresponding number for Twitter showed that 47 EMBs (27 percent) had Twitter accounts. The number of Twitter followers ranged from a high of 250,117 (with Latin American EMBs being the most active Twitter users) to a low of only two<sup>56</sup>.

Many EMBs, however, are gradually starting to capitalize on the advantages offered by the digital world, including by acknowledging the important role social media play in reaching out to youth. What they often find is that developing and implementing successful social media strategies is time-consuming and requires staff with strong communication skills who are familiar with different social media platforms. As social media is a competitive environment — and many EMBs have only just started using social media tools — it often makes sense for them to reach out to young social media experts to assist with developing strong social media campaigns. As the examples below show, successful online campaigns combine different platforms to get their messages across.

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In the run-up to the 2014 elections, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of **South Africa** launched the IXSA ('I Vote South Africa') campaign to encourage youth registration, participation and engagement. The campaign was rolled out on television, radio and the internet, and featured celebrities and other citizens discussing their commitment to voting. The Commission recruited a team of three social media content creators to further engage with youth on Facebook, Mxit and Twitter. The number of users who 'liked' the Commission's Facebook page increased from 1,400 to 10,000 during the first 24 hours of the campaign. Similarly, the first 10 days brought about 16,000 new followers to the Commission's Twitter account. By March 2015 the Commission had attracted 220,000 and 70,000 followers to its Facebook and Twitter accounts, respectively<sup>57</sup>.

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# EMBs USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO REACH OUT TO YOUTH

## UNITED KINGDOM (UK)



In 2016 the Electoral Commission teamed up with Facebook to inform young people about registration procedures and reminded this way over **15 million** people to get registered. One month after launching the campaign, **658,800 people** submitted an online application to register to vote of which approximately one third came from **16 – 24 year olds**.



On Twitter, the Electoral Commission launched a social media campaign **#RegAFriend** asking young people across the UK to encourage their friends to register.

## SOUTH AFRICA

In 2014, the **IXSA ('I Vote South Africa')** campaign encouraged youth registration, participation to and engagement in the elections. A team of social media content creators engaged with youth on **Facebook, Mxit and Twitter**.

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Faced with an underrepresentation of youth in voter lists and a low registration percentage<sup>58</sup>, the **United Kingdom (UK)** Electoral Commission teamed up with Facebook in 2016 to inform young people about registration procedures. One week before the deadline for registration in 2016, a reminder was added to the Facebook news feed of people eligible to register to vote, directing them to register via the gov.uk portal. Additionally, the Electoral Commission, in collaboration with the National Union of Students (NUS), in 2016 launched the online campaign #RegAFriend, which is intended to give people the opportunity to get their friends registered to vote<sup>59</sup>.

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The use of social media platforms offers a range of advantages for EMBs. It allows them to do the following, for example:

- **Engage with new audiences.** By using social media platforms, EMBs can successfully connect with youth who are less likely to be reached through traditional voter education programmes.
- **Directly access an existing audience of followers**, who can then share the information provided by EMBs within their own respective networks in an ongoing and ever-expanding process.
- **Increase transparency and accessibility.** Social media can enhance the ability of EMBs to disseminate impartial, accurate and timely information and respond promptly to queries and requests through both formal and more informal platforms. In addition, exchanges held on an EMB's social media platforms — either between the EMB and its followers or between the followers themselves — are visible to a wide audience and contribute to increased accessibility to information and transparency around the electoral process.
- **Have two-way interactions** through user-generated content and communication, thereby allowing EMBs to not only share information with, but also to gather real-time information from, the electorate.
- **Optimize costs.** The use of social media is cost-effective. The money saved by using social media can be used for vital activities on the ground instead of on advertising in traditional media.

# TIPS

- Understand the online youth audience and develop smart social media campaigns. Which social media platforms are mainly used in your country? Which platforms are best suited for voter education? At what times are young people active online? What are trending topics?
- Develop a social media strategy well in advance of the election
- Consider recruiting and training young communication experts to develop social media campaigns and work with social media content developers
- Develop social media policies or guidelines and monitor mechanisms to avoid content that could compromise their impartiality
- Exchange information with other EMBs that have successfully implemented social media communication strategies. This step could be especially valuable for EMBs seeking to enhance their social media presence
- Formulate vibrant and positive messages for social media campaigns
- Encourage snowball campaigns – campaigns that grow and increase rapidly through social media - that encourage youth to share election materials
- Organize competitions to collect influential videos and graphics that could be easily shared among youth cohorts
- Find entry points to make elections more relevant for youth. Use language that builds on young voters' desire to have an impact on issues central to their lives and to the lives of their friends and families; give them a sense that their votes can make a difference and will be accounted for
- Use social media in a complementary way with other means of communication in the electoral process, in particular because not all young people have access to social media<sup>60</sup>. Internet access varies among regions and internet user penetration often is not equally distributed between women and men<sup>61</sup>. Given this evidence and to ensure that men and women are equally reached, EMBs should combine new media and traditional media to increase the impact of their voter education campaigns
- Monitor the social media platforms carefully, identify and remove inappropriate content and make sure online platforms are a space where women can express freely about the electoral process

## Websites, apps and games

Social media platforms are effective and efficient mechanisms to send voters a quick heads-up and inform them in real-time on latest news and developments. However, the content that can be distributed through social media platforms is limited. Therefore, while the use of social media has many advantages, social media strategies should be seen as complementary to user-friendly websites that offer a one-stop shop for all election-related information.

Today in many contexts – especially in developing countries – it is more likely that young people have regular access to smartphones than to desktop computers or laptops. EMBs therefore should develop **mobile responsive websites**, which offer several advantages:

- Mobile websites are designed to adapt to any screen size and make text easily readable and media easily accessible.
- Mobile websites are much easier to navigate and operate, replicating the navigation and general user experience of mobile native apps
- Mobile websites are easier to be discovered, due to the better mobile search optimisation (Google penalises the website that are not mobile responsive)

Despite the many benefits of the mobile web, **election-specific smartphone apps** are becoming increasingly popular. The main advantage of apps is that they do not require internet connection and allow people offline access to content and functions, something which is particularly important for people living in rural areas with a limited, slow and/or unstable internet connection. The MyINEC app developed by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has become a one-stop shop for all INEC information. It enables subscribers to use their mobile phones to access election-related news, such as for example information on candidates and political parties<sup>62</sup>.

Additionally, apps are being developed for **interactive games**. Games are an interesting feature to present elections in a fun and interactive way and to introduce first-time voters to the electoral process. However, the development of good games is rather costly. If funding allows, EMBs can reach out to external services to develop interactive games or to adapt those already used elsewhere.

### Text messages

Cell phones are widely available, both in developed and developing countries. By the end of 2015, there were more than 7 billion mobile cellular subscriptions, corresponding to a penetration rate of 97 percent, up from 738 million in 2000. In Africa alone, some 94 percent of urban Africans are near a cell phone signal site<sup>63</sup>.

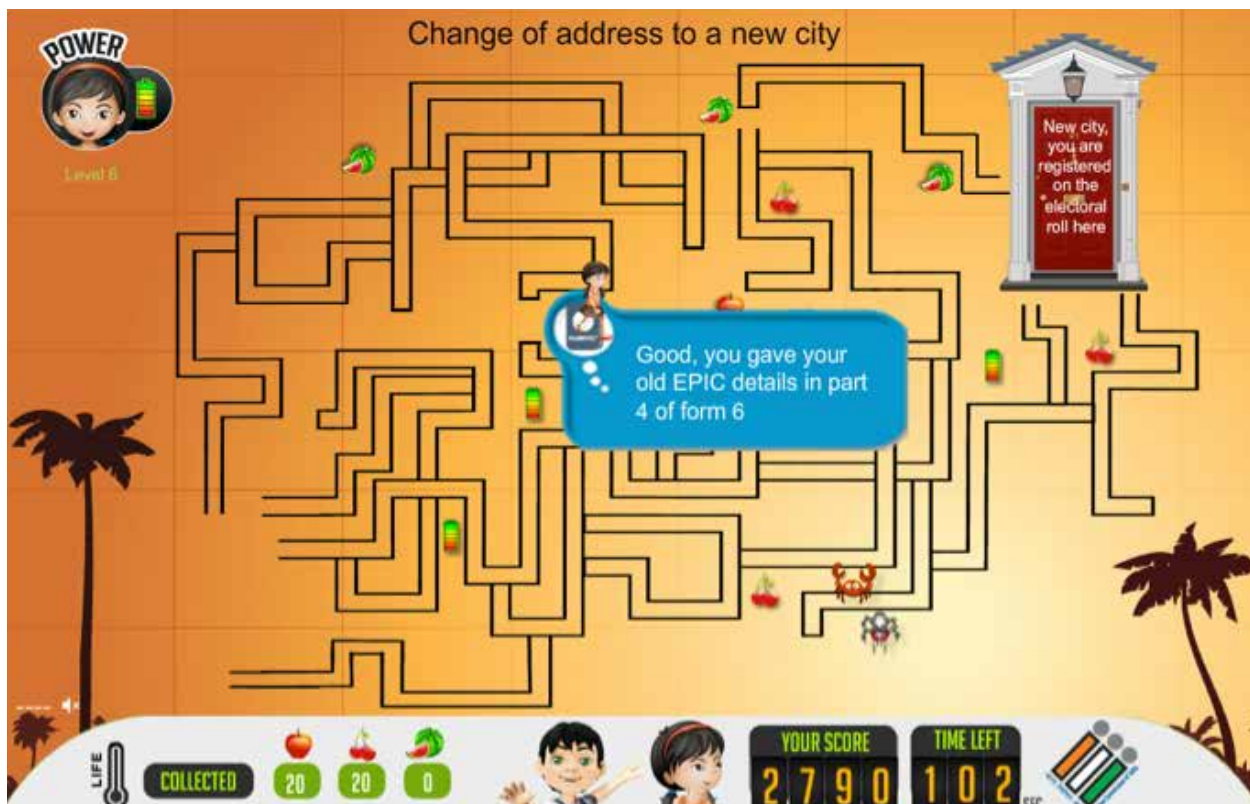
### Using text messages to increase voter turnout

Given the wide use of cell phones, using text messaging to get more young people to polling stations is extremely efficient and cost-effective.

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For example, in a controlled experiment during **New Zealand's** parliamentary election in 2008, between 10 a.m. and noon on election day, text messages were sent to 15,662 citizens reminding them to get out to vote. Voter turnout among those who received a text reminder was 4.7 percentage points higher than those who did not receive the text message<sup>64</sup>.

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GAME GET SET VOTE<sup>65</sup>

In 2014, the Election Commission of India (ECI), with support from the EC and UNDP, developed the video game 'Get Set Vote', which is available on its website<sup>66</sup> ([eci.gov.in](http://eci.gov.in)). The game –available in English and Hindi– is designed to engage citizens of all age groups to learn about democracy and the electoral process in an interactive manner. The concept is easy: with 10 levels of mazes, players receive at each level pieces of information on democracy, registration, assistance from ECI and so on. The information provided becomes more specific with every level and the mazes get more challenging as the game progresses.<sup>67</sup>

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In **Norway**, results from a pilot project<sup>68</sup> in which selected voters in 27 municipalities received two text reminders before the 2015 election showed that sending out such reminders increased turnout among young people under the age of 30 by 5 percent, but had far less effect on the elderly. One of the text messages was sent out before election day, while the second came on the polling day and gave information about the opening hours of polling stations<sup>69</sup>.

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### **Text messaging is cost-effective**

Research conducted after the November 2006 elections in the United States<sup>70</sup> demonstrated the effectiveness of using text messages sent to mobile phones to mobilize young voters. The study found that text message reminders to new voters increased an individual's likelihood of voting by 4.2 percentage points. This option's mobilization effect of 4-5 percent was associated with a cost of only US\$1.56 for each vote generated, which compared favourably to other, more costly means, as seen below:

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<b>Text messages</b>	US\$1.56/vote
<b>Phone calls</b>	US\$20/vote
<b>Door-to-door canvassing</b>	US\$30/vote
<b>Leafleting</b>	US\$32/vote
<b>Direct mail</b>	US\$67/vote

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- Inform citizens by text message about registration processes
- Allow citizens to find their polling station by sending (a free) text message
- Send text messages close to election day to update citizens on the latest news and remind them about the opening hours of polling stations

# TIPS

## Online tools for continued communication and advocacy

Avenues that ensure continued communication with the youth electorate are likely to build trust of young people in politics and help to transform political institutions into more open and inclusive institutions. Online platforms allow citizens to engage with their political leaders at community, municipal, provincial and national levels by providing them with the opportunity to collaborate and openly share information, thereby bringing to the fore the power and agency of citizens to contribute to and influence political dialogue.

An interactive online platform introducing the Lebanese legislative process to youth was created on the parliament's website. It allows youth/children and citizens at large to send inquiries and learn more about the parliament and its members<sup>71</sup>.

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In **Germany**, the Pirate Party<sup>72</sup> created a continuous, real-time political forum in which every member has equal input on party decisions, and used LiquidFeedback, available as an open-source software powering internet platforms, for proposition development and decision making.

LiquidFeedback helps groups (such as societies or organisations, political or not) make decisions without the limitations of a traditional internet forum. It aims to create an accurate representation of the opinions held by the members of the group without them being distorted by social hierarchies and knowledge disparities. Any of the 6,000 members who use the forum created by the Pirate Party can propose a policy. If a proposal picks up a 10 percent quorum within a set period of time, it becomes the focus of an almost 'gamified' revision period. Any member can also set up an alternative proposal, and over the ensuing few weeks these rival versions battle it out, with members voting their favourites up or down.

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In the **United States**, the Countable app<sup>73</sup> allows citizens to receive summaries of bills going through Congress, connect with representatives, share ideas and take action.

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## Schools

Civic and voter education form an important part of educational activities. While civic education is a continuous process that is not specifically linked to an electoral cycle, voter education is tied closer to individual electoral periods. Despite this broad conceptual distinction, civic and voter education

are mutually reinforcing. By partnering with ministries and authorities responsible for education, EMBs can ensure that youth are reached outside electoral periods and that the necessary knowledge is transmitted from an early age.

Strategies to empower youth to become active and engaged citizens is most successful when schools include both teaching about democratic values from books and specific day-to-day activities on democratic education. Students could get engaged in decision-making processes through meaningful youth voice forums and volunteer opportunities. EMBs can support schools in numerous ways in bringing democratic values into practice by setting up mock elections, by supporting elections for student boards, and establishing EMBs in schools, among other strategies.

EMBs in several countries have established collaborations with schools. In Honduras, for example, the EMB signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education to provide trainings to teachers in primary and secondary schools to organize elections for student boards. By organizing elections in schools from an early age, students are learning about democracy and electoral processes. The initiative will be expanded from public schools to private schools from 2016 onwards.

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In **Bhutan**, 153 'democracy clubs' were established in 2012 in schools and educational institutes to engage and teach students on their roles and responsibilities in a democratic society. The clubs work as 'mini election commissions' in which they organize activities to teach students about the country's electoral system and seek to increase youth participation in decision-making processes<sup>74</sup>. As part of an effort to further expand the role and impact of the democracy clubs, student representatives from 153 clubs in 2015 signed a constitution establishing a children's parliament<sup>75</sup>.

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### Artistic and cultural activities

In most societies it is unlikely that youth not enrolled in schools, illiterate youth, young people without access to the internet, and young people not interested in electoral processes will not be attentive to traditional voter education programmes. EMBs thus need to identify more creative solutions to connect with them.

One way of reaching out to such 'marginalized youth' is the use of cultural activities in the form of music, theatre, street art and comics. They offer the possibility to convey electoral messages in a playful manner to targeted audiences.

Many EMBs are already thinking progressively and 'outside the box' by using arts and culture in voter education activities.



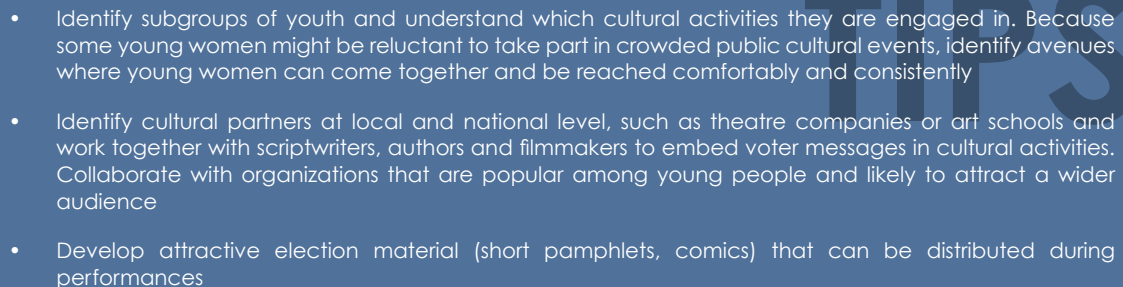
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In **Tunisia**, UNDP in 2011 sponsored the recording of the song *Enti Essout*<sup>76</sup> ('You are the Voice' or, more idiomatically, 'It's Your Call') that became the unofficial anthem of the elections. The song was a collaboration among a diverse group of Tunisian musicians, from folk singers to rap artists, and was distributed for free on CD and made available for free download from the internet.

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In 2014, UNDP supported the Independent Election Commission of **Afghanistan** with promoting civic and voter education through mobile theatres throughout the country. Mobile theatres targeted illiterate people in particular and emphasized the importance of elections in the democratic process as well as a voter's ability to influence his or her future.

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- Identify subgroups of youth and understand which cultural activities they are engaged in. Because some young women might be reluctant to take part in crowded public cultural events, identify avenues where young women can come together and be reached comfortably and consistently
  - Identify cultural partners at local and national level, such as theatre companies or art schools and work together with scriptwriters, authors and filmmakers to embed voter messages in cultural activities. Collaborate with organizations that are popular among young people and likely to attract a wider audience
  - Develop attractive election material (short pamphlets, comics) that can be distributed during performances

### **Information centres**

Through the establishment of information centres, EMBs can strengthen citizens' knowledge and understanding of democracy and electoral processes and motivate them to participate in elections. To make information centres appealing for youth, EMBs could set up exhibitions using different forms of art (video, photo, music, multimedia installations, story-telling) and create an interactive experience with games and mock polling exercises.

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In 2012, with support from UNDP, the Election Commission of Nepal established the Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC). As of April 2016, some 22,000 visitors had visited the EEIC, of whom 18,000 were high school students. At the EEIC a 25 minutes documentary named “ *Democracy and Election* “ is shown to the visitors, which highlights the election history of Nepal. Another distinctive feature of this center is its thematic area, installed with interactive games to educate learners/ visitors by engaging them in touch enables games where they can explore, play and learn more about electoral process.

To increase outreach and promote electoral education in remote areas, mobile EEIC kits are taken to rural and marginalized areas to give users the opportunity to learn more about Nepal's political history, democracy and electoral process through seeing, touching and hearing methods.

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**Central African Republic:** Polling station staff assist a voter placing their vote in the ballot box on election day

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# CHAPTER 5



“**SDG 16**, target 7:

Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”

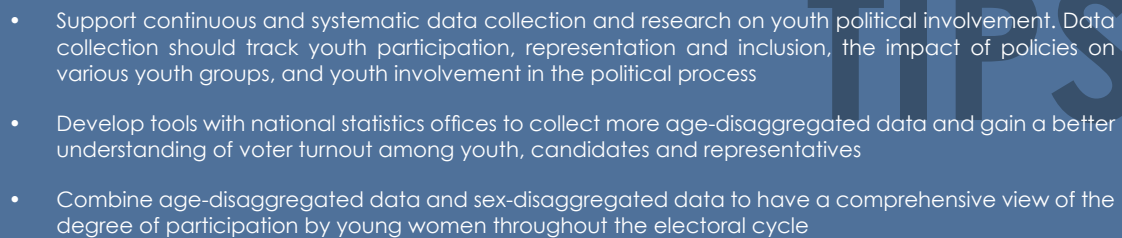
## ENGAGING YOUTH IN ELECTORAL OPERATIONS

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EMBs' aspirations for inclusive elections are reflected in SDG 16.7. This chapter provides some entry points for EMBs to ensure that (a) youth engagement is mainstreamed throughout the electoral cycle and (b) that strategies and activities are driven by the needs expressed by young people and built upon consultative processes.

## Data collection

To accurately assess the participation of young people in electoral processes, it is essential to have reliable data on youth registration, voter turnout, youth EMB staff, observers, candidates, and memberships of political parties. These kinds of data can help EMBs develop youth strategies and implement targeted interventions to increase youth participation. In most contexts, such data are mostly missing and data collection remains incomplete.

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- Support continuous and systematic data collection and research on youth political involvement. Data collection should track youth participation, representation and inclusion, the impact of policies on various youth groups, and youth involvement in the political process
  - Develop tools with national statistics offices to collect more age-disaggregated data and gain a better understanding of voter turnout among youth, candidates and representatives
  - Combine age-disaggregated data and sex-disaggregated data to have a comprehensive view of the degree of participation by young women throughout the electoral cycle

## Youth in EMBs

A first prerequisite to foster inclusion of youth in electoral processes is ensuring that young people are positioned at all levels within the structure of EMBs. Although EMBs often deploy many young people as polling staff, especially if election operations require tech-savvy staff, youth remain underrepresented at the higher level because they often do not have the experience required for these positions. Recent research<sup>77</sup> in the European Union found no instances of the regulated participation of young people, representatives of youth organizations or experts on youth issues within the advisory boards of EMBs. The 2015 report, 'Young People and Democratic Life in Europe', highlighted explicitly the lack of strategies to get more young people on EMB boards<sup>78</sup>.

The lack of inclusion of young people across EMB structures is unfortunate because employing more young people can have many advantages. For example:

- EMBs can profit from in-house knowledge and experience from youth to understand youth challenges and develop successful strategies to engage youth in electoral processes.
- Young people are — in general — more familiar with new communication tools and as such can contribute to the development and implementation of comprehensive online voter education campaigns.

- Set targets for the minimum percentage of youth at various levels within the EMB, particularly at the decision-making levels. They can be structured similarly as targets and quotas for women
- Moderate the criteria and work experience requirements for appointing election administrators so that young people can realistically compete with older cohorts for positions within EMB boards
- Take affirmative action to expand the pool of young applicants by, for example, conducting outreach work with youth organizations and university students
- Display appealing jobs advertisements in high schools and universities, community centres and sport facilities
- Make arrangements with academic institutions to give academic credit for students who are involved in the organization of elections
- Develop a pool of qualified youth to become election administrators and consider offering special training programmes for targeted young people to build their knowledge and confidence prior to formal application processes
- Provide trainings for EMB staff about equal opportunity and youth-sensitive policies. This can be useful to build institutional understanding of the importance of youth mainstreaming, particularly in relation to electoral administration
- Implement staff development and leadership programmes tailored to meet the needs of young EMB staff, such as training on speaking in public, assertiveness, etc.
- Collate age-disaggregated data in all EMB departments to monitor levels of youth participation and identify remedial actions

## Registration

Voting is a right. Therefore, political authorities and public officials have the duty to make registration processes as convenient as possible for all eligible citizens. In many countries, first-time voters displayed lower levels of registration, and consequently lower levels of voting, than other age groups. For example, in **South Africa** only about 41 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 19 were registered for the 2014 elections, compared with 76 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 20 and 29<sup>79</sup>. In the **United Kingdom**, only 55 percent of 17- and 18-year olds and 56 percent of 19- to 24-year olds were registered for the 2010 elections, compared with more than 82 percent of eligible persons from older age groups<sup>80</sup>.

Several obstacles hinder youth from getting registered, including those discussed below:

### Legal identity documents

SDG 16, target 9: “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”

Civil registration is the basis for individual legal identity and thus is necessary for obtaining rights and obligations, including the right to vote. Worldwide, though, almost half<sup>81</sup> of the world's citizens are not registered at birth — a process that may be hindered by limited resources — and are not in the possession of legal identity documents. Without these documents, many individuals, including young ones, lack the legal identity necessary for voter registration. Unsystematic civil registration and the lack of vital statistics has been identified as “the single most critical failure of development over the past 30 years”<sup>82</sup>, along with the fact that progress towards development cannot be monitored. Its importance has been acknowledged by the inclusion of a target on legal identity in the SDGs.

Requiring possession of identity documents such as a citizenship certificate or passport in order to register to vote can be a particularly daunting obstacle for women (young or old) as they are often less likely to have the necessary identification papers or have less independence in accessing them because they are held by a husband or father. Moreover, if a photo ID is required, registration can become even more difficult for women in some cultures and contexts because they may not feel comfortable displaying their faces publicly (e.g., if they usually wear a veil outside the home)<sup>83</sup>.

To meet SDG 16, target 9, **governments should ensure that all citizens are in the possession of legal identity documents.**

- **Deadline for voter registration:**

Sufficient attention should be paid to the timeframe and deadline set for eligible voters to register for an election. If set too early, a deadline is not likely to raise interest in the elections. For young people, an early deadline to register is even more problematic as it may disenfranchise potential voters who turn 18 after the deadline but before the elections.

- **Costs of registration:**

In some countries, direct and indirect costs associated with registering and obtaining documents prevent poor people from getting registered. Although it is not the norm, it is unfortunately not uncommon for countries to charge for some aspect of the process of obtaining identification.

- **Investment of time:**

Registration can be time-consuming, particularly for young people and students because they move residences more frequently. High mobility rates, in combination with strict voting ID requirements, create more hurdles for young people to get registered. Another somewhat related hurdle is that it may also be dangerous for women to register to vote if to do so they have to travel long distances or to locations that are isolated or known to be hotspots for violence.



Reaching out effectively to young people almost always requires EMBs to **develop initiatives to register youth such as** targeted education campaigns that include advertisements, pamphlets, radio and TV programmes, online campaigns, visits to schools and universities, and information displays at youth events.

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In **Kenya**, youth between the ages of 18 to 35 account for more than 70 percent of the population. Since 2012, close to 1 million Kenyan youth from villages throughout the country have come together to form youth parliaments, also called 'youth bungenes'. With support from the USAID/Yes Youth Can programme, 15,000 bungenes have registered with the Kenyan government and bunge members are participating in the national campaign 'My ID, My Life' to help 3 million youth obtain a national identity card, which is required to register to vote<sup>84</sup>.

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To make registration less time-consuming and easier for youth, **mobile registration units** can be set up in remote areas and in places frequented by young people, e.g., community centres, sport facilities, schools and universities<sup>85</sup>.

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In **Bolivia**, the Civic Registry Service of the EMB uses a system that allows for the collection of biometric data from the citizens. The data is then put in a database compatible with an automated fingerprint identification system, which makes it swift and simple to compare millions of fingerprints<sup>86</sup>.

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To make it even easier for young people with access to an internet connection, registration could be done over the internet.

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In the **United States**, the online voter registration platform 'Rock the Vote'<sup>87</sup> provides a solution for modern voter registration. Since its inception in 1991, the platform has registered over 6 million new voters. The platform is mobile-friendly, available in 13 languages, and approved by the Presidential Commission for Election Administration.

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# EMBs ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION INITIATIVES



## CANADA

Online voter registration service where citizens can check their registration, update their address and register to vote

## UNITED KINGDOM

The Government put in place an online voter registration platform where citizens can update their names, address or other details on the electoral register

## AUSTRALIA

The Electoral Commission created an online platform to enroll to vote in federal elections, by-elections and referendums, even for the first time

## UNITED STATES

Online platform **Rock the Vote**, using pop culture, music, art and technology to encourage youth to take part in the electoral process and allow them to register online

## INDIA

The Electoral Commission established an online complaint mechanism to manage all citizens' complaints related to registration

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The **Canadian** online voter registration service<sup>88</sup> and also the Indian National Voters' Service Portal<sup>89</sup> are other good examples of how successful online registration can be and how it facilitates youth voter registration.

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EMBs may also develop **provisional registers of young people** who will reach voting age within one or two years. Efforts to 'pre-register' young voters could be tied to school civics classes and/or obtaining a driver's license. In the United States and Canada, 16- and 17-year olds can be pre-registered and once they turn 18 they are automatically transferred to the general voter list<sup>90</sup>. Also in Nepal, although the voting age is 18, citizens have the right to request to be registered as soon as they legally obtain citizenship at the age of 16. They are then automatically transferred to the main voter list after they turn 18.

In addition, EMBs should ensure that **transparent systems for the resolution of electoral complaints** are in place and that information about the complaints process is easily and clearly available to voters, candidates and political parties. Such information should in turn help them understand the procedures, evaluate the integrity of the process, and call for increased fairness, transparency and accountability. The process should be straightforward, accessible, free of unnecessary obstacles and timely in the handling of disputes, issuing of decisions and implementing remedies.

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In the 2014 election in **India**, citizens could complain through the 'citizens service section' of the Election Commission's website. Additionally, in 2016, the Election Commission of India (ECI) established a complaint mechanism in all the five election going states.<sup>91</sup> The main objective of this IT platform is to (a) manage the complaints being received through call centres/telephone/online/fax/ post /paper complaints/in person in an integrated way and a time bound manner and (b) inform the complainants about the status of receipt and disposal of complaints.


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- Extend the deadline for registration to avoid disenfranchising young people who are turning 18-years old before the election
  - Avoid passing costs of voter registration on to individual citizens wherever possible
  - Establish registration and information centres on campuses to increase students' participation in electoral processes
  - Develop awareness campaigns that aim to equip potential and current voters with necessary knowledge about the registration process. Special campaigns should be developed to target some difficult-to-register groups, such as young women, unemployed youth, youth not enrolled in formal education programmes, youth living in precarious living conditions and illiterate youth
  - Bring voter registration to young people: e.g., work with mobile registration units or allow people to register via the internet
  - Establish provisional voter registers of young people who will reach voting age within one or two years and transfer them to the general voter list once they turn 18
  - Establish overseas voter registration provisions to allow youth working or studying abroad to register and vote
  - Establish effective and transparent complaint mechanisms
  - Explore all options to overcome particular challenges for young women to get registered<sup>92</sup>

## Voting

The following all increase the likelihood of young people not taking part in electoral processes: complex administrative procedures to obtain required ID documents, long distances to travel to vote, and unfavourable opening hours of polling stations during work and school hours. In many contexts, young women are facing particular challenges to cast their votes such as cultural norms that prescribe that women should not be involved in politics or that politics is the domain of men; concerns about the safety of journeys to voting centres and security there; illiteracy levels that are still disproportionately high among women, etc.

To counter youth-specific obstacles to voting, EMBs should explore different options to make voting more convenient. In 2015 for example, Elections Canada set up temporary returning offices at 72 locations across the country, including 57 pop-up offices on 39 university and college campuses, 13 at aboriginal friendship centres and two at youth community centres in urban areas<sup>93</sup>.

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- Establish pop-up polling stations on universities and college campuses and youth centres
  - Establish vote-by-mail ballot drop boxes within campuses of universities and colleges
  - Allow students to vote by special ballot while away from their home towns
  - Extend voting hours and/or schedule elections on days that are less of a hassle for people to find the time to vote, such as weekends or make them public holidays
  - Provide voters the opportunity to vote from abroad, which would allow young people studying and working out of the country to exercise their voting rights

## Internet Voting

### The potential of internet voting

People are using increasingly the internet to learn, play, transfer money, communicate, shop, connect with peers, arrange travel, do business, etc. Considering that internet penetration continues to increase in the daily lives of many, it is also likely that voting via the internet will one day become commonplace (and especially for young people).

Internet voting has the potential to **make the voting process easier**. It allows voters to cast their vote at any time and at any place as long as they have access to an internet-connected computer. This option therefore can make participation in electoral processes more accessible and less time-consuming, which could lead to an increase in voter turnout. Many students studying far away from their hometowns or those living abroad will welcome the possibility to vote by internet and being able to participate without traveling on election day.

Internet voting has the potential to **increase the participation of young women in societies** where women face restrictions to their engagement in public life. In such places, women may feel insecure about casting their vote in a polling station because of factors such as long distances to travel, long queues at the polling station or intimidation from men who do not think women should vote.

### Conditions to successfully implement internet voting

While internet voting presents a promising solution to many obstacles to voting accessibility, the following should be considered to ensure that the potential of this strategy can be fully realized.

## Closing the digital divide

In its 2016 report 'ICT Facts and Figures 2016', the International Telecommunication Unit (ITU) estimates that “by the end of 2016, still more than half of the world's population — 3.9 billion people — will not yet be using the internet. While almost 1 billion households in the world now have internet access [...], figures for household access reveal the extent of the digital divide, with 84 percent of households connected in Europe, compared with 15.4 percent in the African region<sup>94</sup>”. ITU also notes that internet penetration rates are higher for men than for women in all regions of the world, ranging from a 2 percent gap across North and South America to a 23 percent gap in Africa<sup>95</sup>.

To fully harness the potential of internet voting, EMBs should collect data on internet penetration in their country and examine in particular regional and gender divides in the use of internet. Implementing internet voting systems to foster inclusive electoral processes can only be successful in countries with high internet penetration rates. As there is still a gender gap in internet use, most EMBs together with other stakeholders should invest time and resources into making internet voting more accessible to young women.

## Ownership

Vendors have a role to play in maintaining and updating internet voting system because they require specialized technical knowledge on systems and software used. Given the important role vendors play in keeping such technology up to date and reliable, there is a risk that EMBs are losing ownership over the process and that external companies are taking over the responsibilities of electoral officers. Careful consideration and oversight are necessary to ensure that vendors do not replace any relevant functions of an electoral administration, which should always remain in full control of the electoral process.

## Security threats

A major concern for EMBs implementing internet voting is safeguarding the secrecy of voting and the integrity of the results. A weak systems design, a technical flaw or the smallest bug in software can compromise the entire electoral process. What makes small technical defects even more problematic is that errors in the transmission or recording of votes cannot feasibly result in a correction of these results after the fact. At best, such discovery can only result in the invalidation of any votes affected or, at worst, in the invalidation of the election itself.

Another serious security challenge in addition to technical flaws in the design of the system is associated with the potential for the system to be hacked or manipulated from outside. To guarantee a safe environment for voting, EMBs should ensure the system is carefully developed and sufficiently protected against hacking and manipulation by election officials, vendors and other technicians.

## Confidence in EMBs as a prerequisite

In countries where citizens lack basic trust in the functioning of EMBs, introducing internet voting could further diminish their trust in the electoral process. As such, before starting to develop new voting systems, EMBs should first invest substantially in building the trust and confidence of citizens in the electoral process.

EMBs can successfully start introducing new technologies only when all stakeholders in electoral processes have trust and confidence in EMBs overall. To successfully implement internet voting systems, EMBs need to collaborate closely with all stakeholders to ensure support for the new system. Political parties, candidates, CSOs, observers and voters all have to be confident that the process is transparent and the system cannot be manipulated. All stakeholders should trust the vendor selected, the software and the mechanism used to safeguard the secrecy of vote and to verify the integrity of results.

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**Estonia** was the first country in the world to introduce legally binding internet voting in 2007, a decision that was made in response to low voter turnout. The country's specific context is unique, given its small population and high level of internet penetration, but its experience is considered notable for other countries considering the introduction of internet voting systems. A concept known as the House of Confidence has been developed to illustrate the factors influencing the use of internet voting in Estonia<sup>96</sup>. Factors determining the success of internet voting include the following: (a) The degree of acceptance of e-services in the society. To what extent are citizens using e-services for online payments, money transfers, and tax declarations? If citizens are not using internet services on a regular basis, it is unlikely they will feel confident about voting online. (b) Secure online authentication methods. Citizens must feel comfortable and trust the use of an electronic ID card. If not, it is unlikely they will use such a card for voting. (c) Confidence in the work of the EMB and its ability to organize internet voting according to the same principles and standards of traditional voting is essential to motivate citizens to cast their votes online<sup>97</sup>.

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## Youth as observers

Engaging youth in electoral observation is another effective way to increase the participation of young people throughout the electoral process. There are many benefits of working with youth observers, such as the following:

- Many youth have the necessary technical skills and feel comfortable using new technology to monitor electoral processes.
- Young people are well-placed to pay extra attention to the participation of young people during elections. This means they can provide invaluable support in collecting age-disaggregated information and reporting on youth-specific challenges.
- Youth observers are likely to have useful influence in convincing other young people to vote, thereby having a positive impact on that age group's turnout.

In response to the reality of declining youth electoral participation and building on the new opportunities of introducing technology in electoral observation, many national and international organizations are expanding their work with youth to observe electoral processes.

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In **Mexico**, during the 2012 federal electoral process, UNDP managed and operated a fund that supported electoral observation projects. The fund's public call for proposals clearly stated that youth were one of the priority topics in the selection process. In total, five of the selected projects were not only focused on youth, but were also run by youth organizations.

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The National Democratic Institute (NDI) partnered with the **Tanzania** Youth Coalition (TYC) to support youth engagement in the 2014 constitutional reform process and the 2015 presidential elections<sup>98</sup>.

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The European Students' Forum (AEGEE) in 2014 initiated electoral observation missions for students in Europe. By deploying young people on election observation missions to specifically assess youth engagement, AEGEE provides a youth perspective on elections in Europe. So far, the organization has deployed young observers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (General elections, October 2014), Moldova (Parliamentary Elections, November 2014), Estonia (Parliamentary Elections, March 2015), Finland (Parliamentary Elections, April 2015), United Kingdom (Parliamentary Elections, May 2015), Catalonia – Spain (Parliamentary Elections September 2015), Ukraine (Local Elections, October 2015), Spain (General Elections, December 2015), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Parliamentary Elections June 2016), United Kingdom (EU Referendum in June 2016)<sup>99</sup>.



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**Côte d'Ivoire:** Young athletes participating in a Sport for Peace programme

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# CHAPTER 6



“SDG 16, target 1:

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”

## YOUNG PEOPLE AS PARTNERS FOR PEACE

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In fragile contexts, youth can be involved in election-related violence that might occur at different stages of the electoral cycle, mostly during voter registration, campaigning, voting and tabulation of results. The disenfranchisement of youth from political processes can lead to frustrations that are often channelled through violence, thereby contributing to instability and undermining peace.

Preventing the eruption of election-related violence to preserve the integrity of elections and democratic systems is thus fundamental to a country's long-term peace and stability. This objective is also acknowledged in SDG 16.1, which focuses on reducing all forms of violence to achieve "peace, justice and strong institutions". As observed in previous UNDP documents, reducing the risk of election-related violence is a complex proceeding that requires "[building] general trust among key players, including media, security services, political parties, civil society and others in crisis prevention programmes"<sup>100</sup>. Therefore, EMBs, in conjunction with other electoral stakeholders, should take action to reduce the risks of electoral violence and enhance peoples' sense of security and freedom in exercising their right to vote.

Young women and men can and do play active roles as agents of positive and constructive change. This was validated in December 2015 by the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security<sup>101</sup>. While acknowledging the prominent threat posed by the rise of radicalization among youth, UNSCR Resolution 2250 formally recognizes the positive and important contribution of young people in the maintenance of international peace and security, emphasizing that youth must be regarded as key partners, rather than as victims or perpetrators. The implementation of UNSCR 2250 requires the meaningful engagement and representation of young people in all processes of decision-making and societal transition.

This chapter outlines actions that EMBs and other electoral stakeholders (in particular the media, political parties and CSOs) can take to partner for peace and mitigate the risks of electoral violence. It examines how EMBs can engage young people in conflict prevention and electoral monitoring activities and prevent political parties from involving youth in violent acts.

## Political parties

Although the vast majority of young people are neither violent nor interested in violence, political leaders sometimes successfully manipulate and mobilize young people to initiate or escalate violent actions to support their own political objectives. In many countries with a history of electoral violence, some youth groups have developed strong ties with political parties or armed opposition groups, while in others it is youth wings of political parties that have been directly involved in violent activities<sup>102</sup>.

Examples of long-term interdependent relationships between political parties and armed groups can be found throughout all regions. In **Haiti** for example, armed gangs (the so-called *chimères*) supported President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from 1994 to 2004 and became the de facto leaders in the capital after he was ousted. In the run-up to the 2006 elections, political parties distributed cash and weapons in exchange for recipients' assistance in mobilizing people to demonstrate, vote for them and disrupt the elections<sup>103</sup>. In the **Maldives**<sup>104</sup>, gangs are given money, alcohol or drugs and depend on politicians for protection. In turn, they participate in political protests, start political riots,

destroy property and initiate fights to divert media attention from political issues. Since January 2015, the political situation in **Burundi** has been tense with further restrictions on democratic space for the expression of political views and positions divergent to those of the government<sup>105</sup>. Youth wings of the ruling party (CNDD-FDD) have been extensively involved in severe violent activities<sup>106</sup>.

The exploitation of youth by political leaders and youth wings contravenes the law. Regardless of the context or country, aggressive efforts should be taken to disband party militia groups or violent youth wings of political parties that support and sustain them.

EMBs can play an important role in monitoring illicit activities and ensuring that reports of possible infractions are investigated. In the run-up to the 2015 presidential elections in **Tanzania**, the National Electoral Commission called on the police to investigate reports that internal sections of political parties were recruiting youth and training them as militias to cause violence during the polls<sup>107</sup>.

In high-stake elections in particular, where tensions between political rivals are often exacerbated, EMBs can play an active role in establishing and/or facilitating **platforms for dialogue** where members from different groups can meet, exchange information and discuss policies and activities in an effort to prevent violence. For example, in 2010 and 2011 the Interim Independent Electoral Commission of **Kenya** (IIEC), with support from the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), established nine regional conflict management panels. Panellists were identified to spearhead mediation work in their respective regions and were equipped with the skills and expertise needed for mediating and resolving election disputes. The mediators intervened in various incidents including a dispute involving rowdy youth from different political parties who were trying to prevent voters from leaving a voting station<sup>108</sup>.

## **Political parties' codes of conduct**

EMBs also play a key role in facilitating the development of **codes of conduct for political parties**. Codes of conduct can highlight measures that political parties should take to ensure young people have the means to participate in all stages of an electoral process and are not being used to incite violence and breach peace. This would be particularly relevant in countries with highly contested elections, substantial risks of violence among supporters of political parties, and histories in which various groups of society have been excluded from political processes. If mutually accepted, codes of conduct are useful ways of building confidence, relationships and trust among contending political forces.


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**In the lead up to the 2015 general election, political parties and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission** drafted the 'Guidelines for Political Parties Code of Ethics for 2015 Election, Zanzibar'<sup>109</sup>. One provision, Paragraph 4 b, highlights the importance of ensuring inclusiveness throughout the electoral cycle: "Political Parties will ensure equal participation of women, youth and people living with disability as voters and candidates during election." Paragraph 4 d, meanwhile, focuses on the role of political parties in ensuring peaceful elections: "Political Parties will not use women and youth groups to initiate violence and breach of peace during election."

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The Independent National Electoral Commission in **Nigeria** explicitly highlighted in its 2013 code of conduct<sup>110</sup> the duty of political parties to promote the active participation of youth and the responsibility political parties have in rejecting violent activities. Paragraph 2.9 stipulates: "Every political party shall ensure the promotion of active participation of women, youth and the physically challenged in the electoral processes." Paragraph 2.6 focuses on the role political parties have to play in guaranteeing peaceful elections: "No political party shall engage in violent activities of any kind, as a way of demonstrating its strength. All political parties shall publicly condemn any form of political violence."

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- Facilitate the revision of codes of conduct for political parties to emphasize the importance of including youth in all stages of the electoral process. If no code currently exist, facilitate the development of one that highlights this critical priority
  - Facilitate the revision of codes of conduct for political parties to guarantee they are not using youth to commit violent activities throughout the electoral cycle. If no code currently exist, facilitate the development of one that highlights this critical priority

## Media as watchdog

SDG 16, target 10: "Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements"

SDG 16, target 10 on access to information is a critical enabling condition for the implementation of all 17 SDGs<sup>111</sup>. To contribute to the achievement of this target, EMBs and the media have a tremendous

responsibility to ensure that all citizens stay informed about all stages of the electoral process (e.g., campaigns, voting and tabulation) in a transparent and unbiased manner. Violence can easily be sparked by lack of information, false or incomplete information, and unsubstantiated rumours.

### Media codes of conducts

In several countries, biased media or incomplete factual coverage during electoral processes have contributed to creating an atmosphere of fear by disseminating rumours, giving credence to hate speech and calling for violent protest. In Guyana, biased and partisan media reporting from government-owned media has been identified as one of the main reasons for electoral violence in the country. In 2006 the **Guyana** Elections Commission (GECOM) with support from UNDP established a media code of conduct and a Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) in an effort to halt inflammatory statements on private and public media<sup>112</sup>. The MMU remained in place through 2011 and was re-established ahead of the 2015 elections. The new MMU developed an updated code of conduct for the media on reporting, conducted training sessions on reporting in the lead up to, during and after the elections, and monitored the media's reporting on the elections<sup>113</sup>.

### Social media

**Social media platforms** are playing larger roles in the dissemination of information about electoral processes (as discussed in Chapter 4 of this handbook), especially for young people who are increasingly active online. Yet although their rising prominence is usually a positive development, social media platforms are also used in negative and destructive ways — e.g., to misinform the public with selective and incomplete coverage, spread rumours and false information, and call for violent protest. EMBs and the media must be prepared to swiftly counter false information and take necessary actions against those who are behaving irresponsibly by misleading citizens throughout an electoral process.

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A good example of collaboration between different stakeholders to monitor social media was the establishment of the **Social Media Tracking Centre** prior to the 2011 elections in **Nigeria**. Working with volunteers, the Centre used specially designed software that provided an interface for scanning reports, a map-based incident reporting mechanism for some areas of the country as well as an automatic classification of reports based on content and election-related locations. For example, the software showed the rising number of incidents on the day following the presidential election and tracked references to two key words that trended highest that day: Buhari (CPC presidential candidate) and Kaduna, a northern state where most reports of violence originated<sup>114</sup>.

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## Blocking social media platforms

More than ever, young people are using communication tools and platforms such as cell phones, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and the internet more broadly to get informed about political processes. Yet social media has become more than simply a primary source of information for many young people. It also plays a central role for young people in exchanging new political ideas and to organize for change, as was seen to powerful effect during the Arab Spring movements.

Feeling threatened by the power of new media, several governments have occasionally or continuously blocked access to social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook) in efforts to prevent the dissemination of information by citizens on electoral processes. Such steps infringe on the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and contravene the fundamental human right to freedom of expression (Article 19 of the UDHR). Blocking social media is also counterproductive to prevent conflicts as it fuels rumours of fraudulent elections. Since young people are particularly active on social media platforms, they are disproportionately impacted by any attempt to block social media outlets.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR): “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”<sup>115</sup>

## Campaigning to prevent election-related violence

Election-related conflicts affect all people in society, not only political actors. It is therefore essential for EMBs to work with all sectors and communities, including by offering trainings on conflict prevention and providing them with the tools to respond constructively and report when violence occurs. Vigilant citizens and resilient communities can deter political parties from supporting or using violence. Special attention should be paid to young women in all such efforts by EMBs. Members of this population are highly vulnerable to electoral-related violence such as sexual harassment during manifestations, intimidation during registration and polling, online bullying on social media platforms.

In many countries with a history of electoral violence, international and national organizations, EMBs, CSOs, youth organizations and peace activists have been launching offline and online campaigns to strengthen youth's resistance to political manipulation and violence and to promote peaceful participation in elections.



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The 2015 presidential election in **Nigeria** was one of the most hotly contested on social media. The government's National Orientation Agency initiated the #Wagepeace2015 campaign, which sought to mitigate and counter risks of electoral violence. The agency encouraged stakeholders in the private and public sectors, international organizations, community development and civil society groups, and individual peace activists to utilize the #Wagepeace2015 platform to send out messages to the public via the #Wagepeace2015 twitter handle and bulk SMS messaging as well as the broadcasting of peace messages on radio and television<sup>116</sup>. These messages encouraged non-violent political behaviour and proactive action to counter hate speeches. After polling stations closed, #NigeriaDecides was used by thousands of Nigerians to discuss the elections while awaiting final results. Both presidential candidates also used their Twitter and Facebook accounts to send messages to the population to patiently await the results and refrain from using violence<sup>117</sup>.

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Although EMBs, peace activists and youth organizations are increasingly using online platforms to campaign to prevent election-related violence, **traditional media actors also remain important partners of their anti-violence campaigns**, in particular to reach out to citizens who are not active online. EMBs can therefore use national and local radio and TV channels for broadcasting their peace education messages through public service announcement, dramas and talk programmes (see also Chapter 3 on voter education).

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In **Burundi** for example, where radio is the most popular medium, Search for Common Ground created Intamenwa (*'Indivisibles'*): Mobilizing Youth for Peaceful Elections, a radio drama series exploring political manipulation and youth violence through the story of a fictional football team<sup>118</sup>.

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## **Crowdsourcing to monitor elections**

New communication tools and a large technologically literate youth population are making it easier for elections to be monitored closely and cases of violence to be instantly reported. EMBs could consider establishing online platforms for elections monitoring and providing trainings for youth and CSOs to use new tools in ways that can contribute to the prevention of conflicts and enable real-time exchanges of information on all parts of electoral processes.

# EMBs INITIATIVES TO MOBILIZE YOUTH FOR PEACEFUL ELECTIONS

## BURUNDI

Intamenwa ('Indivisibles'), a **radio drama** series exploring political manipulation and youth violence through the story of a fictional football team

## KENYA

**Ushahidi tool**, to monitor and map the violence in Kenya after the disputed 2008 elections

## NIGERIA

**#Wagepeace2015** campaign to mitigate and counter risks of electoral violence

## MOZAMBIQUE

**Project Txeka-la** (Mozambican slang for "check it out") to empower citizens to observe and report on the 2014 presidential election through the use of their mobile phones

Crowdsourcing, defined as “the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers”<sup>119</sup>, can be a valuable tool during elections.

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*Ushahidi* (‘testimony’ in Swahili) is an open source project that allows citizens to send data through their mobile phones or the internet. It was first introduced in the aftermath of the violent 2007 election in **Kenya**<sup>120</sup> to allow citizens to report and map incidents of violence that they witnessed via text messages, email or the internet. It is being used for various types of crisis-related monitoring, in particular during elections. Today more than 30 countries have used this crowdsourcing technology in their electoral processes.

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The **Mozambique**-based NGO *Olho do Cidadao* (‘Citizen Eye’) launched the project *Txeka-la* (Mozambican slang for ‘check it out’) to empower ordinary citizens to observe and report on the 2014 presidential election through the use of their mobile phones, powered by the *Ushahidi* open source project. *Ushahidi* not only acted as the technology partner in this case, but also provided extensive training to the election monitoring team, gave advice on how to run the situation room throughout the election, and helped process incoming reports during the election<sup>121</sup>.

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During the 2012 presidential election in the **United States**, the *Ushahidi* tool was utilized to monitor thousands of incoming reports. More than 1,200 trained lawyers answered calls, texts, tweets, and emails from people experiencing or witnessing problems with voting. The mapping of the reports allowed for the responders to search via county and to respond immediately to important issues. In addition, the *Ushahidi* team mapped all the polling locations and created a tool to allow citizens to find their nearest station and identify any obstacles or irregularities related to that location<sup>122</sup>.

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# TIPS

- Push strongly for legislation outlawing party militia groups and sanctioning parties that maintain them and/or violent youth wings. If such laws are already in place, advocate publicly for their enforcement
- Organize trainings for political party members to strengthen their capacities to prevent conflicts during election periods
- Take the lead in getting political parties to develop codes of conduct with strong sanctions penalizing electoral violence. Such codes can be either legislated or informally signed by parties and other key stakeholders
- Introduce new technology and social media for election monitoring and crisis management. Engage young people in the development and implementation of online platforms and text-messaging mechanisms to monitor elections; to convey messages about election results, possible intimidation or violence; and to inform citizens about election-related updates
- Establish and/or facilitate youth-inclusive platforms for dialogue and discussions about preventative measures
- Incorporate violence prevention topics in general voter/civic education programmes and develop special activities aimed at preparing parties and candidates for potential election loss

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**Nepal:** Electoral Commission in Nepal established the Electoral Education and Information Center (EEIC) in 2012

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# CASE STUDY

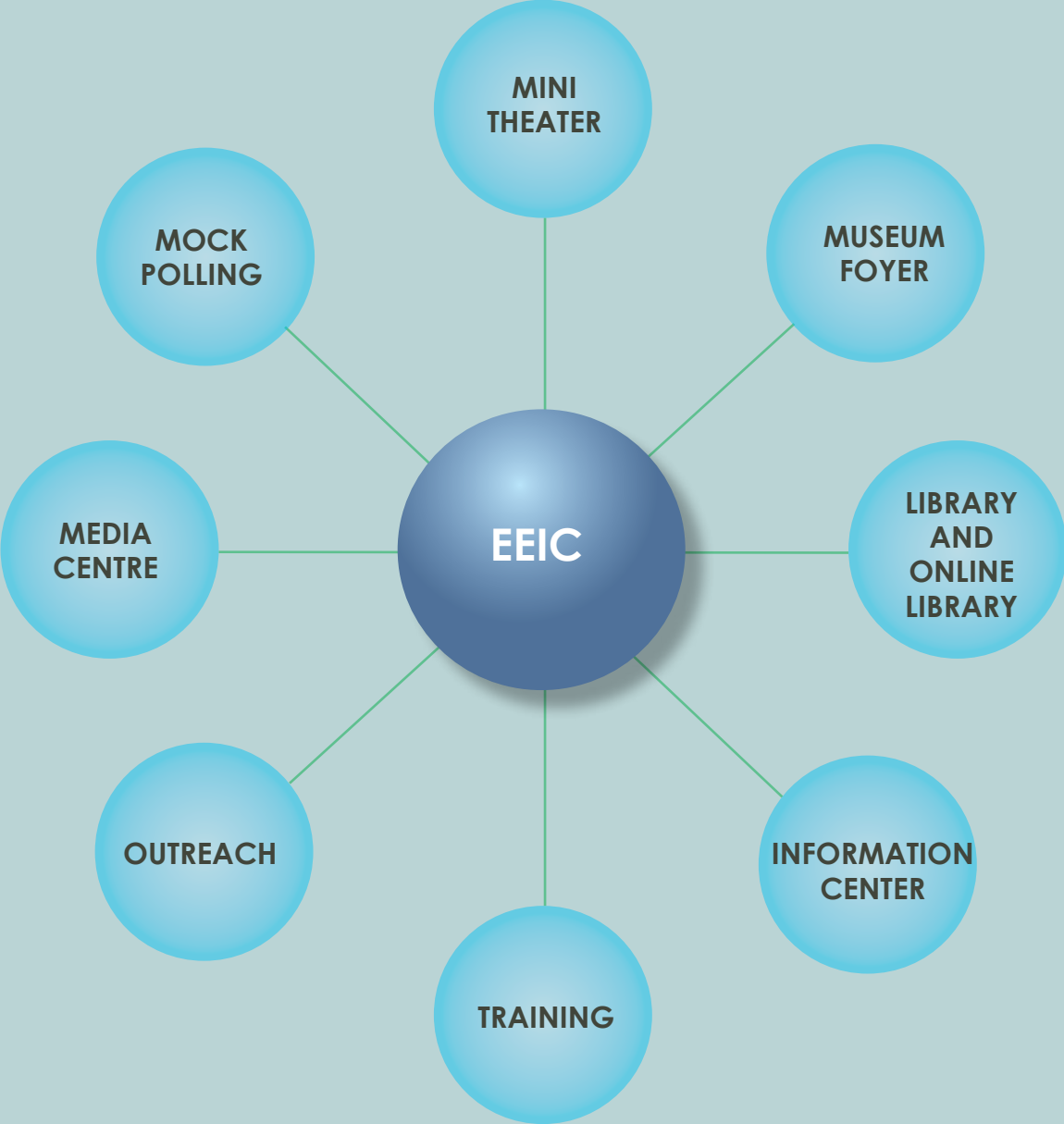


## EMPOWERING NEPALESE YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE THROUGHOUT THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

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Recognizing that an inclusive electoral process is a vital pillar of a healthy democracy, the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) with support from the UNDP/Electoral Support Project (ESP) developed and implemented in 2013 a comprehensive voter education programme to ensure that Nepalese citizens have the trust, knowledge and capacity to engage in electoral processes in an effective and meaningful way.

# ELECTORAL EDUCATION INFORMATION CENTRE





During the 2013 Constituent Assembly elections and the 2014 and 2015<sup>123</sup> by-elections ECN developed a massive voter education programme to reach out to as many citizens as possible. This programme (2013-2015) included the following:

- 4,721 election education workers and 10,013 voter education volunteers were mobilized to conduct voter education programmes at grassroots level
- 88 types of voter education materials were produced, including posters, pamphlets, public service announcements in 28 different languages, text messages, and TV and radio programmes/dramas
- Mock polling, street drama and interaction programmes were conducted at national and local level

The implemented activities, achieved results and identified challenges were subsequently codified in the UNDP-ESP report 'An assessment of the voter education programme, Nepal'<sup>124</sup>.

ECN specifically targeted young people throughout its voter education activities leading up to and after the 2013 Assembly elections and the by elections in 2014 and 2015. The Commission sought to reach out to different subgroups of youth by developing and implementing a broad range of strategies that combined offline and online activities (using both traditional and new media channels) as well as cultural activities and expanded partnerships with schools.

One notable step taken by ECN was the establishment of the Electoral Education Information Centre (EEIC) with support from AusAID and UNDP/ESP. The visitors centre's main goal is to increase the skills and knowledge of Nepalese citizens and to encourage them to take active part in political processes.

EEIC was conceptualized in part as a way for youth to learn about Nepalese democracy in an interactive and playful manner. This objective is considered vital in the country because as young men and women consider democratic principles, political processes and its institutions appear to be far removed from their personal lives. EEIC aims to convince youth that elections have a direct impact on their lives, that their votes count and that through the act of voting young people have a way to keep hold representatives accountable and to force leaders to listen to the priorities of young men and women. As of April 2016, a total of 21,000 young men and women had visited the visitors centre in Kathmandu. With the success of EEIC in the capital city, ECN with support of UNDP/ESP opened regional centres in Pokhara (Western Region) and Dhangadi (Far Western Region) to serve the youth population living in those parts of the country.

## Electoral Education Information Centre

ECN and UNDP also collaborated on a project designed to ensure that young men and women living in remote areas are not disenfranchised. With support from the European Union and government international development programmes in Denmark, Norway and the United Kingdom, the two partners brought **mobile electoral education information kits<sup>125</sup> to remote areas**. These innovative introduce readers to topics such as democracy, elections, election processes and citizens' rights. Users also have an opportunity to take part in the mock polling, through paper ballots as well as in electronic voting machines (EVMs).

### Public service announcements on radio and TV

To motivate as many young men and women as possible to cast their votes, ECN and UNDP/ESP have been producing and broadcasting regular TV and radio programmes targeting youth (particularly first-time voters) and marginalized communities. From 2013- 2015, these public service announcements have been broadcast over 75 FM radio stations and two national TV channels. All have been translated into 28 local languages in order to reach all Nepalese communities.

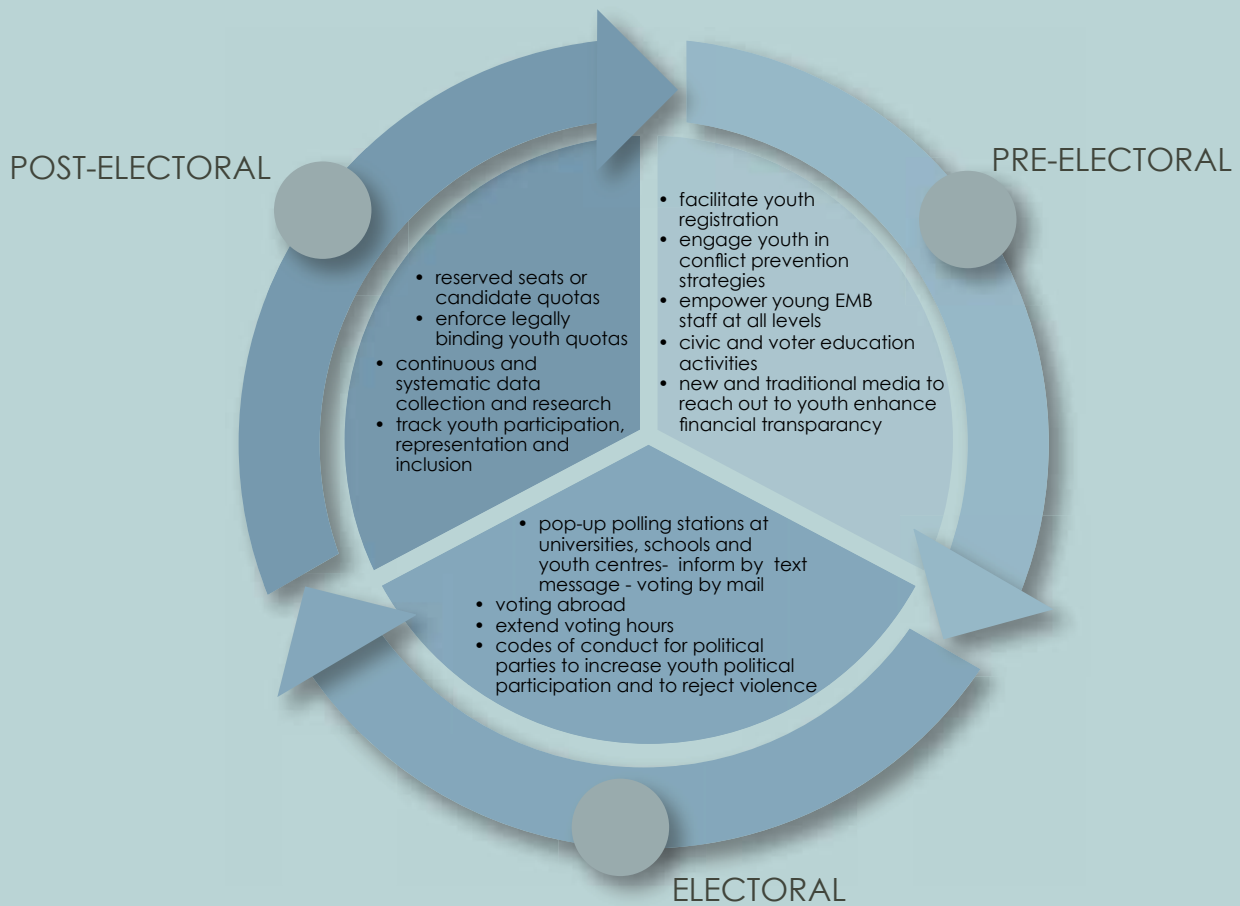
### Partnering with schools

The ECN actively took part in the development of the school curricula for social studies in classes eight, nine and ten (12–14 years of age). Its input focused on democratic values, the Nepalese Constitution and elections. Additionally, ECN developed a specific training module for social studies teachers from both public and private high schools in all the country's 75 districts. One key aim of this programme, initiated in 2013, is to promote informed participation of youth in electoral processes. To date, more than 2,000 teachers have benefitted directly.

# NOTES OF CASE STUDY

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# ELECTORAL CYCLE



# SUMMARY

## ENGAGING WITH YOUTH THROUGHOUT THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

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The tips in this section are for EMBs in all contexts to consider. They are mostly brief summaries of the more comprehensive information found in the individual 'tips' entries, organized along the different stages of the electoral cycle.

## Pre-electoral

### Registration:

- Extend the deadline for registration
- Avoid passing costs of voter registration on to individuals
- Allow students to register in their college towns
- Engage youth in developing voter registration campaigns
- Develop special campaigns to target some difficult-to-register/marginalized groups
- Inform citizens by text message about registration processes
- Use mobile registration units
- Organize voter registration in youth-oriented CSOs, health clinics, sports/recreation centres, gyms, etc.
- Allow people to register via the internet
- Establish provisional voter registers of young people who will reach voting age within one or two years and transfer them to the general voter list once they turn 18
- Establish effective and transparent complaint mechanisms for registration
- Facilitate the registration of young women in particular

### Security:

- Introduce new technology and social media for election monitoring and crisis management
- Engage young people in the development and implementation of online platforms and text-messaging mechanisms to monitor elections; to convey messages about election results, possible intimidation or violence; and to inform citizens about election-related updates
- Push strongly for legislation outlawing party militia groups and sanctioning parties that maintain them and/or violent youth wings. If such laws are already in place, advocate publicly for their enforcement
- Organize trainings for political party members to strengthen their capacities to prevent conflicts during election periods
- Establish or facilitate platforms for dialogue and discussions
- Ensure that all stakeholders — particularly youth wings of political parties, youth organizations, and community-based organizations — are consulted for the development of strategies to prevent electoral violence

### Recruitment of procurement staff:

- Establish systems to collate and report age-disaggregated data for all EMB departments, including a personnel database
- Develop comprehensive youth strategies that tackle youth's barriers as electoral administrators
- Set targets for the minimum percentage of youth at various levels within the EMB, particularly at the decision-making levels. They can be structured similarly as targets and quotas for women

- Moderate the criteria and work experience requirements for appointing election administrators so that young people can realistically compete for positions within EMB boards
- Take affirmative action to expand the pool of young applicants by, for example, conducting outreach work with youth organizations and university students
- Display job advertisements in high schools and universities, community centres, and sport facilities
- Develop a pool of qualified youth to become election administrators

#### Operational training for electoral officials:

- Offer special training programmes for targeted young people to build their knowledge and confidence prior to formal application processes
- Involve more experienced staff in youth mentorship programmes
- Organize trainings for EMB commissioners and staff in order to build an understanding of the importance of youth mainstreaming, particularly in relation to electoral administration
- Ensure that staff throughout the organization are aware of equal opportunity and youth-sensitive policies and understand the importance of complying with them
- Organize staff development and leadership programmes for youth EMB staff

#### Voter and civic education:

- Focus on civic as well as voter education, explaining concepts of democracy and why elections matter for youth
- Capitalize on the power of ICTs to provide incentives for young people to participate in electoral processes, as well as to reach out to them in relatable ways
- Exchange information with other EMBs that have implemented successful social media communication strategies
- Develop a comprehensive social media strategy well in advance of an election
- Consider recruiting and training communication experts to develop social media campaigns and work with social media content developers
- Develop social media policies or guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to avoid content that could compromise an EMB's impartiality
- Find entry points to make elections more relevant for youth
- Combine new media and traditional media to increase the impact of voter education campaigns
- Identify cultural partners at local and national levels, such as theatre companies and art schools, and work together with scriptwriters, authors and filmmakers to embed voter messages in cultural activities
- Identify subgroups of youth and understand which cultural activities they are engaged in
- Collaborate with youth organizations, theatre companies and artists that are popular among young people and likely to attract a wider audience

- Involve youth in the development of attractive election material (short pamphlets, comics) which can be distributed during performances
- Incorporate 'violence prevention' in general voter/civic education programmes and develop special activities aimed at preparing parties and candidates for potential election loss

#### Party financing and party registration:

- Link the disbursement of state subsidies to the promotion of youth political participation
- Scrutinize all state subsidies and share relevant information with the public
- Enhance financial transparency by implementing the law and collecting financial reports and lists of donors, verifying them, sharing them with the public, and acting quickly and openly in cases of violations as part of efforts to improve integrity and transparency of elections
- Ensure that effective sanctioning mechanisms against the misuse of state resources, including administrative and security apparatuses, are in place
- Explore avenues to lower fees for candidates and thus reduce the financial burden linked to running for office for young people and others

## Electoral

#### Voting:

- Allow citizens to find their polling station by sending (a free) text message. Send text messages close to election day to update citizens on the latest news and remind them about the opening hours of polling stations
- Establish pop-up polling stations on universities and college campuses and youth centres
- Establish vote-by-mail
- Establish mechanisms for voting from abroad
- Allow students to vote by special ballot while away from their home towns
- Extend voting hours

#### Codes of conduct:

- Facilitate the revision of codes of conduct for political parties to emphasize the importance of including youth in all stages of the electoral process. If no code currently exist, facilitate the development of one that highlights this critical priority
- Take the lead in getting political parties to develop codes of conduct with strong sanctions penalizing electoral violence. Such codes can be either legislated or informally signed by parties and other key stakeholders



## Post-electoral

### Reform:

- Enforce legally binding youth quotas
- Encourage political parties to embed voluntary quotas for youth in their internal party regulations and place young candidates in electable positions

### Audits and evaluation:

- Support continuous and systematic data collection and research on youth political involvement
- Work together with national statistics offices to develop tools to collect more age-disaggregated data to gain a better understanding of voter turnout among youth, candidates and representatives
- Track youth participation, representation and inclusion, the impact of policies on various youth groups, and youth involvement in the political process

# ANNEX

## International normative and policy framework to enhance youth participation throughout the electoral cycle

<b>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948)</b>	<p>Article 21. "(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.</p> <p>(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.</p> <p>(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures"<sup>126</sup></p>
<b>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966)</b>	<p>Article 25. "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:</p> <p>(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;</p> <p>(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;</p> <p>(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country."<sup>127</sup></p>
<b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)</b>	<p>Article 12.</p> <p>1. "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."<sup>128</sup></p>
<b>The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) (1996)</b>	<p>Priority area J. "Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making"<sup>129</sup></p>

<p><b>UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/133, Policies and programmes involving youth (2003)</b></p>	<p>4. "Recognizes the importance of the full and effective participation of young people and youth organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels in promoting and implementing the World Programme of Action and in evaluating the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in its implementation, as well as the need to support the activities of mechanisms that have been set up by young people and youth organizations, bearing in mind that girls, boys, young women and young men have the same rights but different needs and strengths and are active agents in decision-making processes and for positive change and development in society"</p> <p>5. "Also recognizes the great importance of empowering young people by building their capacity to achieve greater independence, overcoming constraints to their participation and providing them with opportunities to make decisions that affect their lives and well-being"<sup>130</sup></p>
<p><b>122nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Youth resolution (2011)</b></p>	<p>1. "Calls on the IPU, parliaments, youth organizations and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen efforts aimed at achieving appropriate representation and participation of youth in decision-making bodies, bearing in mind that girls, boys, young women and young men are all entitled to the same rights(...)." <sup>131</sup></p>
<p><b>Inter-agency statement on the occasion of the UN High-Level Meeting on Youth (2011)</b></p>	<p>"Full and effective youth participation in society and decision-making, in both rural and urban settings, striving to include young people with disabilities, young people living with HIV, indigenous young people, young people from minorities, young migrants, young people who are stateless, internally displaced, young refugees or those affected by humanitarian situations or armed conflict." <sup>132</sup></p>
<p><b>United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/127 (2016)</b></p>	<p>15. "Recognizes that youth participation is important for development, and urges Member States and United Nations entities, in consultation with youth, and youth-led and youth-focused organizations, to explore and promote new avenues for the full, effective, structured and sustainable participation of young people and youth-led organizations in relevant decision-making processes and monitoring, including in designing and implementing policies, programmes and initiatives, while implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;" <sup>133</sup></p>

<b>Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security (2015)</b>	"Urging Member States to consider ways to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels." <sup>134</sup>
<b>UNDP Youth Strategy (2014-2017) "Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future" (2014)</b>	Outcome 2 "Inclusive and Effective Democratic Governance" aims to "enhance youth civic engagement and participation in decision-making and political processes and institutions" <sup>135</sup>
<b>General Assembly Resolution Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)</b>	17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 associated targets. Goal 16. "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." <sup>136</sup>
<b>UNDP, Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace – Youth-GPS (2016–2020). (2016)</b>	The Youth-GPS focuses on, among other areas, civic engagement and political participation and the role of young people in peace-building and resilience-building. It also seeks to respond to the concerns young people have expressed in global, regional and national forums and the growing demand at all levels for cutting-edge and strategic support in youth programming in all development contexts. <sup>137</sup>

## Complementing this international framework, there are a number of regional instruments to foster youth political participation.

<p><b>African Union (AU), African Youth Charter (2006)</b></p>	<p><b>Article 11.</b> “Every young person has the right to participate in all spheres of society. States parties agree to: 1. “Guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws; 2. Facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in decision-making at local, national, regional, and continental levels of governance; 3. Ensure equal access to young men and young women to participate in decision-making and in fulfilling civic duties.”<sup>138</sup></p>
<p><b>Ibero-American Convention on Young People’s Rights (2008)</b></p>	<p><b>Article 21.</b> “1.Youth have the right to participation in politics. 2. The States Parties undertake to boost and strengthen social processes, which generate forms, and guaranties, which make the participation of youth from all sectors of society effective in organizations which encourage their inclusion. 3. The States Parties shall promote measures which, in conformity with the inner law of each country, promote and encourage that youth exercise their right to register in political associations, to elect and be elected. 4. The States Parties undertake to promote that governmental and legislative institutions promote the participation of youth in the formulation of policies and laws concerning youth, drawing up the corresponding mechanisms to make effective the analysis and discussion of youth initiatives through their organisations and associations.”<sup>139</sup></p>
<p><b>United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Arab States/Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) Strategic Action Plan on young people 2010-2011</b></p>	<p>“Scale up regional evidence-based responses in the Arab States/ MENA by concerting efforts to assist countries in the Region to achieve the goals and targets of the World Programme of Action on Youth and other key related UN Commitments.”<sup>140</sup></p>
<p><b>Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration of Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development</b></p>	<p>“Strengthen regional coordination aimed at accelerating youth participation in socio-economic and political matters, and ensuring that they take part in policy and decision-making processes of government.”<sup>141</sup></p>
<p><b>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Declaration on Youth (2014)</b></p>	<p>“Acknowledging the potential of young people to contribute to economic, political and social development.”<sup>142</sup></p>

# NOTES OF ANNEX

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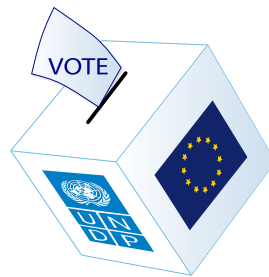
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