

Key considerations and challenges to civic and voter education

Considerations for Civic and Voter Education

- Surveys and/or assessments can help to determine the levels of current public awareness and opinions on democracy and electoral issues.
- To the extent possible, it can be useful to integrate voter education and voter registration efforts with broad-based civic education efforts.
- Civic education should ideally begin well in advance of an election and be sustained as part of an ongoing democratization process. Civic education should be focused in particular toward the young — for example, through national education curricula, media outlets, popular culture, etc. — because they are the next generation of voters.
- Where the electoral process is combined with the introduction of a new voting process, civic and voter education should ideally start before new processes are introduced.
- Targeted voter and civic education can help to elicit the active participation of traditionally vulnerable and politically marginalized groups. Similarly, they can help promote conflict-prevention messages.
- Voter education is also needed before voter registration activities.
- Any reform in the electoral system is likely to require a significant civic education and voter information effort.
- Efforts can be made to institutionalize civic education through ‘national champions’ in key sectors. This could entail enlisting the support of government heads, national leaders, domestic NGOs, and public personalities, and key institutions (such as the Ministry of Education).
- Coordination of activities among EMBs, civil society organizations (CSOs), media and political parties can help to avoid duplication, maintain consistency and ensure as broad as possible coverage.
- Civic and voter education, especially if targeted at marginalized groups, should take into special consideration the potential need for using different languages and appropriate ways of delivering the information and messages (e.g., theater performances in local languages instead of written handouts in the official language)

- The impact of civic and voter education initiatives, and the pertinence of the messages, should be assessed during and after implementation.
- Grassroots-based and bottom-up approaches to civic education should be advocated.

Challenges to Civic and Voter Education

- The effectiveness of civic or voter education can be limited if the conceptualization or planning is poor, if there are limited funds, or if there is inadequate coordination among those implementing the various initiatives.
- CSOs delivering civic and voter education may lack competence, have poor financial accounting practices or lack consistency in the transmission of messages.
- Those conducting civic and voter education should have credibility and should not be affiliated with any political party.