

Reinforcing Credibility and Acceptance of Electoral Processes The Role of Electoral Stakeholders and Electoral Administrations

**Efforts made to include civil society,
media, and observers in the electoral
process**

Bushra Abu Shahout,

Director of policies and institutional development

Independent Election Commission / Jordan

What Distinguished 2013 Elections From Previous Elections?

2007 & 2010

- Electoral process run by the Ministry of Interior.
- Limited number of domestic and international observers.
- Weak response to observations made by stakeholders.
- Lack of consultations with civil society.
- Lack of sufficient guarantees to reinforce credibility of electoral process.

2013

- Independent electoral administration that supervises and runs all stages of the elections.
- Marked increase in number of domestic and international observers.
- Setting up mechanisms to follow up observations of stakeholders.
- Expanded consultations with various stakeholders.
- Adopting measures to boost credibility and safeguard rights associated with the electoral process.

Identifying Stakeholders

- Election observation groups, transparency, credibility and trust.
- Civil society organizations concerned with women, youth, and people with disabilities to increase the participation of these categories in the electoral process.
- Mass media to guarantee respect to the right of all citizens to obtain accurate information.
- Civil society organizations in general to contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of participation in the electoral process and the rights associated with it.

Principles adhered to in engaging with civil society

1. Transparency and respect to the right to access to information by all stakeholders.
2. Openness and adoption of a participatory approach in identifying needs and developing plans and programs.
3. Equality, non-discrimination, and taking the necessary measures to guarantee equal opportunities and fair and equal access to all local and international stakeholders.
4. Constant learning and investing in expertise and knowledge generated by the IEC and the opinions and proposals of stakeholders.

Areas of Partnership and Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations

- ✓ Consultation over executive instructions.
- ✓ Partnership in preparing and executing awareness campaigns.
- ✓ Engaging representatives of civil society organizations in training electoral process staff.
- ✓ Participation in training workshops held by some local and international observation bodies for their observers.
- ✓ Formation of election committees in electoral districts (22%)
- ✓ Engaging of stakeholders in the comprehensive assessment of the various elements of the electoral process.

Milestones in Relationship with Stakeholders

- ✓ Legalizing work of observation bodies that organize their work and give them the chance to observe the various stages of the electoral process and providing them with the necessary mechanisms to do this.
- ✓ Phased evaluation of the various phases of the electoral process.
- ✓ Engaging the observation bodies in investigating complaints that are filed.
- ✓ Engaging the relevant categories, such as persons with disabilities, in adopting the measures related to increasing their participation.
- ✓ Consultation regarding some controversial issues and coming up with consensual solutions.

Challenges

1. Issuing statements and reports in the media before verifying their content which had affected, in some cases, the credibility of the electoral process and the IEC.
2. The concept of election observation was new to various parties involved in the electoral process.
3. Weak adherence to the provisions of legislations related to streamlining the performance of the mass media regarding the electoral process, especially during the period of election campaigns.
4. Scarcity of information needed to enhance the participation of some categories (people with disabilities).

Future Steps

A number of proposals were developed and they started to be implemented:

- Setting up a permanent mechanism for coordination with the political parties.
- Setting up a mechanism for cooperation and coordination between the IEC and the stakeholders in the area of raising public awareness of the issues related to the work of the IEC and the electoral process administration.
- The strategic plan and the role of stakeholders in developing it.
- The IEC's institutional and individual capacity building plan.
- Communication with the EMB's in the region and world to benefit from their experiences.