

Raising Their Voices: How effective are pro-youth laws and policies?

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Is it possible to design a legal framework that encourages youth to turnout to vote or leads to greater representation of youth in elected bodies? Under what conditions do political party youth wings provide an avenue for youth leadership? What makes national youth policy strategies work? These questions and others motivated the research behind [Raising their voices: How effective are pro-youth laws and policies?](#), a new report by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS).

This new publication evaluates the impact of a range of mechanisms designed to promote youth political participation. The report analyzes four pro-youth legal and political mechanisms and offers recommendations for funders, implementers and local partners considering the implications of:

- National youth policy strategies
- Reducing the minimum age for voting and candidacy
- Youth electoral quotas
- Political party youth wings

More than half the world's population is under 30, yet young people remain underrepresented in government and decision-making processes. There is a growing consensus among practitioners and scholars that politically and civically engaged youth are integral to a country's economic and democratic health. As national governments, international donors, and local advocates increasingly recognize that youth participation is vital to stability and success, a variety of public measures, policy mechanisms and legal reforms aimed at promoting youth engagement have gained traction.

Proponents of these measures contend that pro-youth policies and reforms can increase youth participation and, ultimately, result in better policy outcomes across a range of issues. However, there has been relatively little empirical research on if, and under what conditions, these pro-youth measures improve the quantity or quality of youth participation and representation in political processes. A summary of key takeaways from each chapter of the report is provided below.

National youth policy strategies – national level strategies that guide the development of youth policies across sectors and agencies – are designed to facilitate youth engagement through two related mechanisms: agenda setting and resource allocation. As such, political incumbents are often unwilling to prioritize youth issues if it involves diverting resources from programs that benefit the constituencies that elected them in the first place. To ensure that the development of national youth policy strategies is not purely symbolic, donors and implementers should try to ensure pre-commitment of material and financial resources, and the adoption of strategies that include action plans with specific, measurable, and achievable monitoring and evaluation benchmarks. Advocates for the development of these strategy documents should also ensure that youth are involved in an extended and systematic consultation throughout the strategy development process, so that the document reflects youth interests in their contexts, and so that it reflects the avenues through which youth are most likely to engage in their communities and the political system.

Advocates for lower minimum ages for voting and candidacy often invoke two arguments. First, a rights-based argument holds that voting and running for office are fundamental human rights that should not be denied based on age.

Dear readers,

This edition of the ACE Newsletter features new information on youth participation in elections and provides readers with an update on work being done in this field. ACE published a new Topic Area on [Youth and Elections](#), and several ACE partners have recently published materials on the topic (featured in the last section of this newsletter). The May 2019 edition of the ACE Newsletter further highlights:

- The latest questions and discussions on the Practitioners' Network
- Updates to the ACE Encyclopedia
- New Publications and resources from ACE partner organizations

Reaching more than 2.5 million visits per year, the ACE website provides more than 10,000 pages of knowledge resources in English, Arabic, French, and Spanish.

ACE promotes credible and transparent electoral processes with an emphasis on trust, sustainability, and professionalism in the electoral process.

Thank you for reading May's newsletter and for your involvement with ACE. We look forward to your contributions to the Network!

Sincerely,

The ACE Electoral Network

Second, utility-based arguments contend that more youth voting and holding office will produce better and more representative policy outcomes. Our research suggests that, on average, lower minimum ages increase youth electoral participation and representation. However, the link between increased youth representation and policy outcomes that are responsive to youth concerns was less clear. Campaigns to reduce minimum ages for voting and candidacy should deliberately engage young people, especially from marginalized communities, so that there is an organized constituency that is able to hold elites accountable for substantively engaging new voters and office holders. These campaigns should be coupled with civic education efforts, so that new voters are able to hold politicians accountable on policy, and so that new officials are equipped to develop and implement policies that are important to youth constituencies.

Similarly, youth quotas for parties, legislatures, and subnational bodies can increase youth representation, but may not result in substantive policy changes if political elites deliberately marginalize these new representatives. Furthermore, political elites may have an incentive to design quotas to pit marginalized groups against one another. Thoughtful design is necessary to ensure that youth quotas are incorporated into the legal framework in a way that makes them compatible with other measures designed to increase the representation of traditionally marginalized populations, such as gender quotas. Donors and implementers should recognize these incentives, and advocate for quotas that incorporate youth as a cross-cutting constituency, and that avoid packing youth at the bottom of party lists, where they stand little chance of gaining seats.

Finally, political party youth wings can be a vehicle for youth recruitment, leadership development, and youth input into party programs. However, the capacity of youth wings to perform these functions requires parent parties that are internally democratic. In systems where politics are coercive or clientelistic, party elites may have an incentive to sideline substantive youth input into policy programs, opting instead to use youth wings as a tool to dispense patronage, or to mobilize supporters for elections, demonstrations, or acts of violence. In this case, party youth wing development should be coupled with democratizing reforms within the parent party, so that youth members can provide

substantive input on policy issues. Furthermore, donors and implementers must account for the fact that disillusionment with political parties is particularly pronounced among young people, and that youth that self-select into formal party organizations may be predisposed to participating in the formal political system. Recruiting skeptical or disengaged youth for civic activism or electoral participation may require new tools or organizations entirely, including digital activism in the context of hybrid organizations.

A common theme underlying all the pro-youth policy and legal mechanisms we studied was that however well-intentioned, these reforms risk letting political elites appease donors, implementers, activists, and young citizens. That is, these mechanisms let incumbents appear to be doing something to increase youth engagement, while avoiding any substantive implementation of reforms that might incorporate new constituencies or endanger their electoral prospects. Furthermore, even where governments get these mechanisms right, and pursue good faith efforts to implement them, formal legal and political reforms still may not engage youth on the terms that are most relevant for them.

The CEPPS report, recognizing these risks, offers a series of detailed recommendations for donors, implementers, and local partners to guarantee that political elites are held to account for the substantive implementation of youth participatory mechanisms, and to ensure that reforms address youth interests and their preferred forms of engagement. These recommendations, along with a deliberate Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) approach and tools like applied Political Economy Analysis (PEA), will help advocates understand the political incentives facing incumbents and young citizens, and ensure that their advocacy campaigns better link political elites and state policies with youth interests.

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Established in 1995, the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) pools the expertise of three international organizations dedicated to democratic development: the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute. CEPPS has a 20-year track record of collaboration and leadership in democracy, human rights and governance support, learning from experience, and adopting new approaches and tools based on the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Practitioners' Network

Since November 2018, **335**

members logged on to the Practitioners' Network and shared their experiences, knowledge and expertise through **30**

contributions to questions asked by their peers. Recent questions include: [updating a voter register not linked to a national identity database](#), and [conditions for registering to vote outside place of residence](#).

[Consolidated replies](#) are published summaries of the discussions on the Practitioner's Network. The following page highlights some recently published consolidated replies, including: [practices for updating electoral roll](#), [voter education content](#), [transferring voting municipalities](#) and ["Head-List" election models](#).

Dozens of questions have been consolidated already, so be sure to look [here](#) for a full overview.

Join the Network!

- Are you an election practitioner with expertise and experience?
- Are you not yet a member of the ACE Practitioners' Network?

If so, submit an application to be a member of the Practitioners' Network now: www.aceproject.org/apply.

Recently Consolidated Questions

Voter registering and voting outside their municipalities of residence

In France, voters may register and vote in a municipality other than their municipality of residence, as long as they have been a taxpayer for at least five years. I am looking for examples of other countries with similar practices. What are the conditions a voter must meet to register outside their municipality of residence? Is this a common practice across countries?

More broadly, I would like to know if and how voters' residence is defined during registration: is it done by the State (if so, on what basis- fiscal or postal files, census, etc.) or by the voter (if so, with what information- taxes, bills, etc.)?

Voter registration without link to national identification

What are some best practices and country experiences for updating a national voter roll when voter registration is not fully linked with the national identification database? Complete re-

registration in the case of our EMB will be costly, but we are concerned that duplicate registrations, deceased voters on the roll, and other challenges are undermining the credibility of the voter roll among political parties and other stakeholders.

Any advice for conducting supplemental updates or mitigating these challenges would be greatly appreciated.

Voter education to engage and motivate voters

Voter education can be based on legal and/or purely informational content, such as where and how to vote. But it can also include methods and content that engages citizens politically and leads them to further education that will enable them to make a conscious choice when voting. What kind of content (slogans, values, needs, conflict, interests, etc.) is the most successful in engaging potential voters in voting/politics? In other words, what kind of content in social projects most fosters in people the will to vote and to educate themselves in politics? Any research or experience is welcome.

ACE Encyclopaedia: The Latest Updates

This is an exciting time for ACE content development! ACE has expanded its Encyclopaedia to include a comprehensive entry on Youth and Elections. In the coming months, two more new topics: *Elections and Conflict* and *Gender and Elections* will be published.

If you would like to see a particular topic in the ACE Encyclopaedia or see material translated into Spanish, French, or Arabic, please send your suggestions to facilitators@aceproject.org.

Recent Publications by ACE Partners



Indelible Ink in Elections (IFES)

The one-person, one-vote adage has long been a rally call for an inclusive, genuine and legitimate process to determine who should represent the people in government. However, what happens when an electoral process is vulnerable to fraud by individuals who want to cheat the system by voting multiple times to improve the chances of a favorable outcome for their preferred candidate? One way in which election management bodies (EMBs) have sometimes chosen to protect against multiple voting is by marking voters' fingers with indelible ink during the voting process. Looking at case studies from around the world, a new white paper from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems offers a discussion guide for EMBs contemplating implementing, improving or abandoning finger inking processes. *Indelible Ink in Elections* outlines how finger inking is treated in electoral legislation, the role of EMBs and procedural, practical, technical and country-specific considerations for the use and optimization of indelible ink. This paper is also available on IFES.org.



Election Access Observation Toolkit (IFES)

In this book, IFES, along with disabled person's organizations partners from around the world, has developed an *Election Access Observation Toolkit* aimed at incorporating a disability rights perspective into domestic and international observation missions. The toolkit includes step-by-step instructions for disabled person's organizations and national or international observer groups to collect data; detailed checklists for long- and short-term observations and guidance on how to contextualize national laws and policies; and a list of disability-inclusive questions that could be added to the observation checklists of mainstream observers. There are also case studies included to demonstrate good practices from around the world.



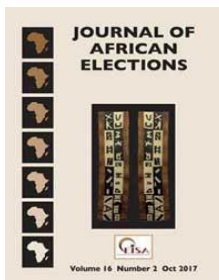
[Engaging young people and women in European Parliament elections \(IDEA\)](#)

This discussion paper puts together relevant data and information on the inclusion of young people and women in the European Parliament elections that could be useful for the preparation of the 2019 campaigns. It is focused on two pitfalls of EU electoral democracy: voter absenteeism on the part of young people, and the under-representation of women in the European Parliament. Please visit www.idea.int for a copy of the paper after 16 May 2019.



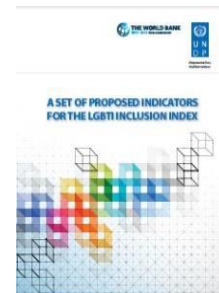
[GSoD in Focus No. 5: The Sustainable Development Goals and the Global State of Democracy Indices \(IDEA\)](#)

This issue of *GSoD in Focus* explores the ways in which the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices can make contributions to the review of progress on the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The GSoD Indices can be used to complement official indicators of the SDG and provide data in areas such as poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, education, gender equality, inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and more. The release of this publication is designed to coincide with the upcoming 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development in July.



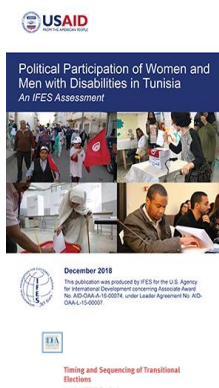
[Journal of African Elections Volume 17 Number 2 \(EISA\)](#)

The Journal of African Elections (JAE) is an accredited interdisciplinary, biannual publication of research and writing in the human sciences which seeks to promote a scholarly understanding of developments and change in Africa. This issue of the JAE includes articles on the judiciary and democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic; the proceduralism in the adjudication of electoral disputes in Lesotho; the impact of ethnicity on the electoral choices of voters in Ghana; the concept of agency theory in electoral democracy; election administration in Nigeria; and public participation and dispute resolution mechanisms in South Africa.



[LGBTI Inclusion Index \(UNDP\)](#)

UNDP is leading efforts to develop an LGBTI Inclusion Index to measure developments for people in the LGBTI community and inform programs, investments, and policies that strengthen LGBTI rights and inclusion. The UNDP, in partnership with the World Bank and civil society partners, worked to develop these indicators. The publication includes 51 indicators that are in line with the SDG global indicator framework and measure the categories of education, health, civil and political participation, security, violence, and economic empowerment.



[Political Participation of Women and Men with Disabilities in Tunisia: An IFES Assessment \(IFES\)](#)

IFES conducted a disability rights assessment mission to look at the obstacles and opportunities related to political participation of women and men with disabilities, focusing primarily on the preparations for and conduct of the elections. The focus group participants identified a number of recommendations for stakeholders in Tunisia including Parliament, election commission, political parties, disabled people's organizations, civil society organizations and government ministries. Some of the findings of the study included that while legal frameworks promote inclusivity, laws are not always properly enforced or implemented; the processes and policies to get a disability card negatively impact the political participation of disabled Tunisians; and while the disability quota is a positive step toward making municipal councils more inclusive, further measures must be taken to make the quota more effective so as to empower candidates with disabilities.

[Timing and Sequence of Transitional Elections \(IDEA\)](#)

In this Policy Paper, IDEA provides guidance on how to best design decision-making processes during transitional elections to ensure that elections facilitate the consolidation of democracy and peace rather than undermine democratic transitions. This Policy Paper examines 15 case studies of transitional elections from around the world and conclusions derived expert workshops. Finally, a set of practical recommendations are presented for those involved in the decision-making process surrounding transitional elections.