

ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE



Providing electoral assistance to Member States is one of the key functions of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). As the UN system-wide Focal Point for electoral assistance, on behalf of the Secretary-General, DPPA ensures coordination and coherence across the United Nations system in responding to Member States' requests, including working very closely with other entities, in particular the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Such support, almost entirely funded by the Multi-Year Appeal, is provided upon request from Member States or by mandate from the Security Council or General Assembly. It ranges from basic needs assessments and other missions to proffering the good offices of the Secretary-General during electoral crises. In 2020, despite the pandemic, DPPA assisted 50 countries, including through advice on whether or how to proceed with planned elections given pandemic constraints.



At one of the polling centers in Bimbo, Central African Republic, a woman is monitoring the voter registrations. Credit: MINUSCA/ Leonel Grothe

Results in 2020:

- Supported over 50 Member States' efforts to conduct credible and peaceful elections
- 21 National elections & 1 referendum supported
- The UN continued to provide technical electoral support to over 50 electoral processes with 8 of them under a Security Council Mandate
- 20 electoral missions conducted by staff and consultants, despite the pandemic, to provide technical support to Member States
- 13 comprehensive needs assessments conducted in response to new requests for UN assistance from Member States

In 2021, DPPA expects to deploy electoral missions and experts to Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Iraq, New Caledonia, The Gambia, Zambia and other countries, for a total of around 30 times. Our Electoral Assistance Division plans to organize trainings and workshops, many with a gender focus, to build the capacity of Member States and regional organizations to better manage elections.

DPPA electoral assistance work

In the past 30 years the UN has provided electoral assistance to over 100 Member States. The most common form of UN electoral support remains technical assistance to national election authorities and institutions. Upon request, DPPA deploys experts and staff members to conduct electoral advisory and needs assessment missions to provide tailored responses.

Examples made possible in 2020 thanks to MYA funding

- ▶ In **Uzbekistan**, support was provided to the second round of legislative elections in January 2020, including with technical assistance, training, and voter education targeting women, youth, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups.
- ▶ In **Moldova**, presidential elections took place in November 2020, which resulted in the first female presidency. The UN, upon the request of the Moldovan Government, has been providing technical assistance to the electoral process in the past several years. The UN support during the 2020 elections included voter education (with emphasis on inclusion and safety), IT and elections, women's participation, safe conduct of elections during the pandemic, as well as developing the capacity of the electoral officials.
- ▶ In **Jordan**, low election turnouts – especially among women, persons with disabilities and youth – have been an issue during past elections. An MYA project focused on educating potential voters and supported the deployment and training

of 3,500 youth election volunteers (50 per cent female) to strengthen COVID-19 related mitigation measures on election day. They also promoted the participation of youth, particularly young women, in the electoral process. The project supported the production of two videos on COVID-19 mitigation and safeguarding the health of voters and polling staff.

- ▶ In **New Caledonia**, a referendum on access to full sovereignty was conducted in 2020, in which the UN provided technical support through the deployment of a team of electoral experts. This assistance helped ensure inclusive voter registration and a transparent referendum process. The updating of the voters' list was key to the credibility of the process. The referendum process was peaceful, and all stakeholders acknowledged the positive contributions of the UN team.

Strengthening regional capacity

DPPA continues to conduct electoral trainings for regional and sub-regional organizations. These trainings are organized in cooperation with UNDP, UN Women and UNCTs on the ground. They have enhanced the electoral capacity of Member States and regional organizations, created networks among electoral officials and institutions in various regions and promoted South-South and Triangular cooperation.

Women/gender equality in elections

While 2020 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and provided an opportunity to reflect on progress in gender equality, full gender parity is far from being reached. Women still only make up one-quarter of national legislators worldwide and 36 per cent of local government members and are also underrepresented in leadership positions across the public sector, including the judiciary. Obstacles to women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life were compounded by the pandemic, further deepening existing inequalities.

Gender equality continues to be systematically considered as a key guiding principle in all United Nations electoral assistance activities, projects and policies. For example, in **Bolivia**, using MYA funds, DPPA supported steps to

promote women's participation, empower female electoral authorities and combat gender-based violence in politics. In 2020, for the first time in Bolivian parliamentary elections, there was full gender parity in candidates lists. In **Ethiopia**, ahead of the 2021 general elections, the United Nations supported several initiatives, including a gender audit of draft electoral directives, the inclusion of gender disaggregated data in ICT systems, integrating gender components in public outreach strategies and incorporating gender considerations in the methodology of assessing risks of electoral violence. In **Zimbabwe**, the Organization has supported the electoral commission to launch a gender and inclusion policy to guide the integration of gender equality in its organizational procedures and practices and in the implementation of its mandate.

Mindful that the pandemic would further complicate women's participation in electoral processes, United Nations electoral assistance projects that advised on implementing COVID-19 mitigating measures emphasized their impact on women as voters, candidates and electoral officials, including in Jordan, Malawi, Moldova, Bolivia and Mali.

For further information on the Multi-Year Appeal, please contact the Donor Relations Team:

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