



European Union



PEV-ETHIOPIA

Prevention, Mitigation and Management of Electoral Conflicts
and Potential Violence in Ethiopia

Final evaluation

PEV -Ethiopia

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In collaboration with :



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List of abbreviations

ACLED - Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
ADR - Alternative Dispute Resolutions
CCRDA -Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association
CECOE -Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organisation for Elections
CEWRR - Conflict Early Warning and Rapid Response
COVID-19 -Corona Virus 2019
CSO - Civil Society Organisation
CVE- Civic and Voter Education
DG -Democracy and Governance
EADR -Election Alternative Dispute Resolution
EDF -European Development Funds
EDR -Electoral Dispute Resolution
EPEA -Electoral Political Economy Analysis
ERV - Elections-Related Violence
ESR - Election Situation Room
ESTA -Electoral Security Threat Assessment
EU -European Union
EUD -European Union Delegation
EU-EOM- European Union Election Observation Mission
EURECS -European Response to Electoral Cycle Support
EWS -Early Warning System
FGD -Focus Group Discussion
FoF -Forum of Federation
ICC - Interim Coordinating Committee
IcSP -Instrument for contributing to Stability and Peace
International IDEA -International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES -International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IRC - Inter-Religious Council
IRI -International Republican Institute
LEAD -Leadership and Conflict Management Skills for Electoral Stakeholders
MEPA -Master in Electoral Policy and Administration
MMU -Media Monitoring Unit
MOU -Memorandum of Understanding
NDI -National Democratic Institute
NEBE -National Elections Board of Ethiopia
NIMD -Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NGO -Non-Governmental Organization
NSA -Non-State Actor
PCU -Project Coordination Unit
PEV -Preventing Election-related Conflict and Violence
PRAG - Procedures and Practical Guide
PWD -Persons with Disabilities
SOP -Standard Operating Procedure
SMART - Specific, Measurable, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SSSA -Scuola Superiore Santa Anna
ToR - Terms of References
TPLF - Tigray People's Liberation Front
ToT -Training of Trainers
UNDSS -United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNDP - United Nations Development Program
USAID -US Agency for International Development
VAWIE -Violence against Women in Elections
VR - Voter Registration

1. Executive summary

1.1. Purpose of the evaluation

Systematic and timely evaluation of its programmes and activities is an established priority of the European Commission and it is conducted by independent consultants.

The interventions are systematically evaluated on the quality and the results of actions in the context of an evolving cooperation policy ensuring a specific focus on results-oriented approaches and the contribution towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In December 2021, before the closure of the PEV, an external evaluation of the project was requested. This exercise is imperative to provide an overall assessment of the project PEV – Ethiopia paying particular attention to its results measured against its objectives and expected results.

This evaluation will serve to present lessons learned and best practices that can inform future similar activities and actions in the area of violence prevention and election-related conflict management.

The final evaluation of the PEV was conducted from November 1 to December 31, 2021, and covers the entire life of the project which corresponds to a 27-month project implementation period from 01/06/2019 to 31/12/2021 which includes 2 no-cost extensions and a three months' suspension between October to December 2020 due to the then indefinite postponement of the elections due to COVID-19.

The evaluation has been carried out in accordance with the DEVCO Evaluation methodology for projects/programmes as set out on the website <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/71165>

The evaluation used both primary and secondary data and a variety of data collection methods to gather the information needed to conduct the work.

Given the travel limitations due to security constraints in Ethiopia, the assignment was conducted via home-based work and the interviews were conducted remotely with the facilitation support of the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of ECES in Ethiopia.

I would like to thank her and ECES teams for their continuous support.

1.2. Main conclusions / Overall assessment /

Below are the findings and conclusions the evaluation expert deemed most significant

Relevance

PEV design is based on a multi-stakeholder capacity-building approach to develop and strengthen the skills, instincts, capacities and resources of various non-state actors in Ethiopia so that they engage in the electoral process and contribute to a peaceful electoral environment.

The overall design of the PEV is aligned with the objectives and priorities of the government of Ethiopia and particularly with the democratic reform process which started immediately after the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in April 2018.

The design of the PEV is highly relevant in the context of Ethiopia which opened the democratic space to non-state actors after years of repression. Hence the PEV is aligned with the institutional needs of the beneficiaries (mostly CSOs). Years of repression and limited political space had diminished the internal capacity of CSOs, the media and other non-state actors to engage in electoral activities.

The design is in line with the EU's policy and strategic objectives to support Ethiopia's reform process, to strengthen the democratic process and to respond quickly to conflicts and crises in the region.

The financing of the PEV actions through the IcSP is relevant in the context where multiple ongoing security crises and persistent insecurity were identified as factors that could deteriorate the integrity of the electoral process.

The Logical framework matrix presents objectively SMART and action-oriented indicators with baselines to measure the progress.

The PEV increased in relevance after tensions escalated in the regions of Tigray, Amhara, Afar and Oromia regions, requiring an inclusive political dialogue, reconciliation efforts and a mediation process.

Some of the PEV activities were more relevant than others. The dialogue sessions with religious and traditional leaders through the inter-religious council seem to be gaining in relevance, as well as the activities related to election observation, while the design of the early warning mechanism is seen as a bit too ambitious given the limited resources and the long-term complexity¹ and nature of the challenges to establishing a permanent and functional early warning mechanism.

There is strong evidence that the project is designed to address the critical needs of non-state actors to develop their skills and capacity to recognize, deter, and address electoral violence in their respective communities.

Coherence of EU-funded actions

In Ethiopia, the EU has established a “democratic package” that is composed of four different interventions related to the overall context for the general elections, for an approximate envelope of 22.95M EUR.

These interventions are the European Response to Electoral Cycle Support in Ethiopia implemented by ECECS and developing the NEBE capacity to organize elections, the PEV implemented by ECES and developing Non-state actors capacities to address electoral violence through a network of CSO's, the Support to Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue implemented by NIMD aiming at developing political parties capacity and the establishment of an environment for inclusive, knowledge-based dialogue on the political process in Ethiopia implemented by International IDEA.

These actions provide a very solid level of coherence to support the organization of free, transparent, inclusive and non-violent elections in Ethiopia.

There are strong synergies between EURECS and the PEV. The architecture conceived by ECES ensures that PEV-Ethiopia actions complement those of the EURECS-Ethiopia project.

Throughout the project, the PEV established strong links with several partners involved in the sector of civil society. This includes strong coordination with NDI and IRI (USAID funding) which provided a grant of 750 000 USD to support the deployment of the CECOIE election observation mission and CVE.

There is evidence the project's interventions are complementary to other EU-funded interventions to support the integrity of the electoral process.

¹ Even if one of the biggest challenge was, the suspension of the PEV project in relation to the postponement of the election for unknown period time due to COVID

There are important synergies of the project with other interventions in the area of democratic governance funded by other partners.

There is good coherence between all these projects and coordination mechanisms are in place.

Effectiveness

The PEV provided critical support to the CSO's from June 2019 till December 2021.

The project improved knowledge, skills and awareness of targeted CSOs on several important issues related to the electoral process, including conflict prevention, transparency, integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process

During its implementation, it was able to deliver a very large number of activities in a rapidly and frequently changing operating environment. The project activities were carried, primarily through the CSO coalition known as CECOIE for which the project supported its creation, in all regions of Ethiopia including the Tigray, Somali and Oromia regions.

The PEV provided technical and financial support to the CECOIE secretariat so that it could properly discharge its function for the duration of the project.

Most of the activities were delivered through training, capacity building workshops, advisory support and coaching, continued technical backstopping, consultation forums and dialogue sessions.

The covid 19 period was an opportunity for the Project to provide online courses on the Master of Electoral Policy and Administration (MEPA) for a large number of CECOIE members.

The overall approach of the project has proven to be very effective in terms of outreach, inclusiveness, and geographic coverage, given the social, ethnic, and religious diversity of the country.

Relevant research was conducted to increase knowledge on election-related conflicts. Continuous institutional and logistic support was provided by the project to build CECOIE's capacity.

LEAD training has been one of the pillars of the PEV during its implementation and over 2000 people, members of CSOs have been trained in LEAD nationwide. The training was focusing on leadership and elections, security of the electoral process, soft mediation and conflict management at various levels.

Informal Election Mediation Groups of Elders were created, and workshops of capacitation and advisory support for women mediators in fragile localities were organized.

A media monitoring unit was set up and media monitors were recruited to produce daily press reviews. As well journalists from Media houses and graduated students of journalism received training on conflict-sensitive reporting, hate speeches and fake news from the project.

An election-related early warning system was set up and 24 regional focal persons were recruited. They delivered electoral safety and security reports, flash report and early warning reports that they shared with various stakeholders including NEBE.

Alliances were built between NSAs and other electoral stakeholders through multi-stakeholder forums. These forums were very successful.

PEV provided tremendous support to train short- and long-term observers of the CECOIE which was able to deploy 100 recruited, trained long-term observers throughout the election process and over 3000 Short Term

observers for the general elections in partnership with NDI and the CECOIE basket fund administered by ECES.

Text messages were reported at regular intervals to the computed data base of the situation room, established by the project in Addis Ababa to cover the election day.

As well, PEV supported 6 CSO's to undertake voter education activities with a specific focus on youth and women participation.

Under this area, dialogue sessions were organised with religious leaders on nonviolence messaging led by women using LEAD training as an effective way to disseminate information on best practices on nonviolence during electoral periods.

Despite the challenging operating environment caused by the election reports², the Covid 19 crisis and the increasing security concerns, especially the armed conflict in Tigray; the project was able to achieve most of its original intended deliverables. The level of effectiveness is high.

Efficiency

The project demonstrates a high level of efficiency given the context in which it operated. The structure was fully operational as soon as the activities started in June 2019. This was a performance as ECES in Ethiopia was new in the country.

The partnership with GO Innovation and Forum of Federations who were already established in Ethiopia facilitated the smooth operationalization of the project. Sharing of tasks between ECES, FoF and GOI Innovation was based on organizational excellence and reputation to complement each other toward best achievements of anticipated results

ECES management team was able to demonstrate extensive experience working in crisis-affected countries and their flexible and proactive approach facilitated the effective and efficient delivery of the project activities

The human resource plan was adequate for the activities. The experts were all recruited through a competitive process, and for the international experts, the recruitment process was conducted from ECES' database of qualified experts, which is very diverse in the field of elections.

The level of local experts is quite good even if very few of them have been involved previously in an election project.

The excellent relationships between the project and the EU delegations in Ethiopia and Kenya facilitated the project implementation throughout the electoral cycle. The EUD has taken a very flexible and committed approach to facilitate the performance of the project.

² The report of the elections initially scheduled for August 2020 was then planned for June 2021.

The implementation of the project started in a context where PEV activities were to be pre-financed by ECES for 4 months. This was an opportunity to reflect on the sharing of administrative costs with another EU funded project called “EURECS “

A management structure has been set up to ensure a coordination mechanism between the two projects and the sharing of running costs.

Communication and visibility of the PEV were very effective and supported by a communication strategy.

The choice of ECES to implement the Action in the partners’ country presents several added values for the EU including from a financial perspective.

There is evidence that the resources mobilized to support the development of the project have been cost-effective and present value for money for the donor.

Impacts

The project was able to structure and accompany many CECOIE members in exercising their rights in the electoral process after the democratic reforms took place in the country.

In less than 2 years, CECOIE became a vibrant network of CSO’s, occupying civic space throughout the electoral process.

The general elections of 2021 were generally perceived as quite peaceful elections despite the various challenges. The turnout was quite high.

Even if it is difficult to measure to which extent the outcome of the elections can be attributed to the PEV support, due to the involvement of other CSO’s in the electoral process, there is strong evidence that CECOIE became an important player in the electoral process.

PEV demonstrated that after so many years of restrictions, CSO members could not only do voter education and observe the elections, but they could work on various election-related issues such as the prevention of electoral violence in their respective communities. This is a milestone.

As well, the numerous training and workshops demonstrated that there was a real appetite for the project among the CSO members and especially among the university students. It was a life-changing experience for many of the participants of the training

These positive results suggest that the PEV had a very positive impact on many non-state actors, as it enhanced the credibility of the electoral process. The process was made transparent and tangible.

Sustainability

The project has several very strong durable elements which contribute to its sustainability.

The various policy-relevant studies and research conducted under the PEV provide written material and baseline data for future interventions; LEAD capacity developments training was a life-changing experience for most of the beneficiaries of the project.

The various collaborative forums and platforms established during the multi-stakeholder dialogues are sustainable resources of the PEV.

Monitors of the media monitoring center have been trained, the equipment has been purchased and capacity has been transferred to CECOIE.

CECOIE has in less than 3 years become a legitimate network. Its members are committed to continuing their involvement in the electoral process.

The major factors contributing to the challenges of sustainability and scalability is the short-term design of the project and the lack of resources for the CECOIE Secretariat.

Although general elections have been held, in some constituencies, elections could not take place for logistical challenges and insecurity.

The sustainability of the network as a permanent structure is a growing concern especially as the election cycle is not fully completed and at the moment, the secretariat and activities are highly dependent on the donors.

Gender, Youth and vulnerable groups

In line with its original design, the project has worked a lot to engage youth, women and vulnerable groups

To support the inclusiveness of the electoral process, the PEV project document included in its design numerous activities to increase the participation of women, youth and people living with disabilities.

In line with its original design, the PEV provided a lot of efforts to engage women, youth and vulnerable groups in various activities providing them with the necessary skills to address the issue of electoral violence.

This includes workshops, training and dialogue sessions.

Women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and other groups are still marginalized in the electoral process,

CECOIE's efforts to promote an inclusive electoral process under the influence of the PEV have been noted by election observation missions.³

2. Introduction of the project

2.1 Political background and context

Ethiopia is a cultural mosaic composed of more than 80 different ethnic groups. It is Africa's second-most populous nation with some 110 million citizens.

³ NDI-IRI2021 – report of electoral observation.

The country has a federal system and ten regional governments, many of which have border disputes or are experiencing unrest. Inter – ethnic tensions⁴ and power dynamics and historical context are essential to understanding all aspects of Ethiopia's political, economic, and social affairs furthermore that the country is at an important moment in its democratic history.

Ethiopia has had general elections every five years since 1995, but in the 2015 vote, not a single opposition MP was elected. The 2015 legislative and regional elections were described by opposition parties as a "farce."

A wave of protests against the government and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in power since 1991 swept the country in 2018, and a new Prime Minister named Abiy Ahmed was appointed who began a substantial reform program called "Ethiopia: A New Horizon of Hope».

His program aims to build a national consensus and implement a national roadmap to facilitate a democratic transition in the country.

One of the pillars of the reform process is the opening of the political space to previously banned political parties and the creation of an enabling environment for CSOs to work on issues previously considered "sensitive", such as national election monitoring.

In the run-up to the election, observers noted that the electoral process offered a unique opportunity to develop transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance in the country, but that major challenges could also potentially deteriorate the political and security situation.

On 9 September 2020, during the implementation of the PEV activities, the region of Tigray challenged the federal government of Ethiopia and hold its state council election despite the postponement of the elections due to the Covid 19 crisis. The TPLF won 98.5% of the 190 seats for the Tigray Regional Council but the election was considered illegal by the federal government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed which reacted by sending troops to the Tigray region.

This resulted in thousands of deaths and forced more than two million people to leave their homes and plunged parts of the country into famine.

Ethiopia's general elections were finally held on June 21, 2021, and September 30, 2021, after being postponed twice.

The tide of the civil war in Ethiopia has fluctuated wildly and in early November 2021, fighters from Ethiopia's northern region of Tigray surged south toward the capital, Addis Ababa, causing the government to declare a state of emergency. Since then, Ethiopia has been heading for civil war.

It is in this very sensitive political context between the Covid 19 crisis, various security constraints and other challenges in the election environment that the project under evaluation entitled « Prevention, Mitigation and Management of Election-related Conflicts and Potential Violence in Ethiopia "(PEV-ETHIOPIA) was implemented from June 1, 2019, to December 31, 2021.

4 Conflicts between Somali and Oromo groups in the Somali region have led to the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people as a result of instability and inter-ethnic violence.

Initially, the project was supposed to be implemented for 18 months but due to the postponement of the elections and because of the COVID outbreak in 2020, the project benefited two times to no-cost extensions⁵ to be aligned with the timeline of the elections. The total duration of the project covered finally is 27 months.

2.2 Overview of the project

PEV has a budget of 3.659, 775 M EURO, funded by the European Union. The core objective of the project is to prevent, mitigate and manage conflicts that may arise during the electoral cycle by assisting the NSA's in addressing root causes of political and election-related violence and conflict.

The project is structured around 4 specific objectives and seven interconnected key areas of interventions.

2.3 The specific objectives are:

1 -Enhancing knowledge and developing skills amongst electoral stakeholders, NSA's a priori, of root causes and appropriate responses to electoral conflict and violence focusing on exclusion and building strategies for inclusion.

2 - Support the establishment of a CSO platform composed by NSA's bringing together organisations working towards inclusiveness, tolerance and peace at the grassroots, regional and national level and plug this work into the electoral cycle for a meaningful contribution towards electoral conflict and violence prevention.

3 - Capacitate NSA's to revive, coordinate and utilize an early warning network composed of local electoral conflict mediators, managed by a Conflict Coordinator per province.

4 -Capitalise on networks, platforms and NSAs with a focus on women and youth associations, formal and informal, to craft and disseminate peace messages in a coordinated multi-stakeholder response to a conflict-free electoral process

2.4 The key areas of interventions are:

- Production and dissemination of baseline data, with policy relevance.
- Establishment and capacity building of an NSA coalition, and a wider span of NSAs, in election observation.
- Skills enhancement in leadership and conflict management, media monitoring and journalist capacity building, not limited to the NSA coalition.
- NSA-led election conflict prevention, mitigation and management activities spanning from grassroots conflict coordinators to an informal, flexible mediation group of elders.
- Capitalization on existing early warning structures; reinforcement of electoral conflict prevention capacities; establishment of a distinct election conflict early warning by merging into what already exists and filling the gaps.
- NSA-led election situation room.
- Civic and voter education outreach and NSA-led dialogue with traditional structures exploring the role of youth in pro-peace messaging

2.5 The intervention logic of the project and the assumptions underlying

⁵ 22 February 2021 no cost- extension given by FPI regional Team Nairobi -Request for 6 months no cost extension and additional 4 months no cost extension authorized by the FPI in Nairobi the 15 / 09/ 2021 through an addendum N° 2.

The intervention logic is the set of assumptions explaining how the intervention was expected to meet its objectives and produce the expected effects.

Figure 2: Intervention Logic

Outcome	Component	Assumptions	Judgement criteria (JC)
1	Knowledge on Elections- Related Violence (ERV) Enhancing knowledge and developing skills amongst electoral stakeholders, NSA's a priori, of root causes and appropriate responses to electoral conflict and violence focusing on exclusion and building strategies for inclusion.	If Non-State Actors (NSA) ⁶ gain relevant knowledge on election-related conflicts and violence, they will be able to address these issues appropriately ⁷	The capacity of the project to increase knowledge on election-related conflicts to improve NSAs appropriate response.
2	Set up of CSO Platform Support the establishment of a CSO platform composed by NSA's bringing together organisations working towards inclusiveness, tolerance and peace at the grassroots, regional and national level and plug this work into the electoral cycle for a meaningful contribution towards electoral conflict and violence prevention	If non-state actors are organized into a platform to work towards inclusion, tolerance and peace at the grassroots, regional and national level, this will make a significant contribution to the prevention of conflict and election violence.	The capacity of the project to support the organisation of a platform that will work towards inclusion, tolerance and peace at grassroots, regional and national levels will contribute significantly to the prevention of conflict and electoral violence.
3	Early Warning network Capacitate NSAs to revive, coordinate and utilize an early warning network composed of local electoral conflict mediators, managed by a Conflict Coordinator per province.	If NSA's are capacitated to revive, coordinate and utilize an early warning network composed of local electoral conflict mediators, then this mechanism will deter and prevent electoral violence.	The capacity of the project to support the establishment of an early warning network composed of local electoral conflict mediators to deter and prevent electoral violence.
4	Peace messages Capitalise on networks, platforms and NSAs with a focus on women and youth associations, formal and informal, to craft and disseminate peace messages in a coordinated multi-stakeholder response to a conflict-free electoral process	If the electoral process relies on networks, platforms and NSAs, with a focus on women's and youth groups, to develop and disseminate peace messages, then this will contribute to reducing conflicts and election-related violence.	The capacity of the project to support the establishment of a platform with a focus on women and youth associations, which will develop and disseminate peace messages, to reduce conflicts and election-related violence

2.6 Evaluation questions

For each of the evaluation criteria and building on the specific areas of analysis specified by the TORs, the evaluation expert has developed a comprehensive set of research questions, then regrouped and consolidated them into overarching Evaluation Questions.

Figure 3: Evaluation questions

CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTIONS

⁶ The Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000 defines Non-State Actors (NSA) as those **players from the private sector, economic and social partners** –including trade unions- and civil society in all its diversity according to national characteristics.

⁷ With a focus on exclusion and building strategies for inclusion.

RELEVANCE	EQ1: To what extent does the action address the critical needs of the NSA in the area of electoral violence?
COHERENCE	EQ2: To what extent are the project's interventions complementary to other interventions to support the integrity of the electoral process?
EFFECTIVENESS	QE3: To what extent have the interventions of the project supported the development of the capacities of the targeted electoral stakeholders to prevent, mitigate and manage election-related conflicts?
EFFICIENCY & value for money	QE4: To what extent the resources mobilized to support the development of the project have been cost-effective and present value for money for the donors?
IMPACT	EQ5: Is there evidence that the project's actions have had a positive effect to prevent, mitigate and manage election-related conflicts and potential violence?
SUSTAINABILITY	QE6 To what extent have the beneficiaries of the project being able to take ownership of the project? Will they be able to sustain the results of the action (programmatically, politically, and financially)?
GENDER, YOUTH & VULNERABLE GROUPS	QE 7: To what extent have the interventions of the project addressed the issues of human rights, women's, youth and disenfranchised groups inclusion? (Project design, implementation, management)

3. Development of the Findings

3.1. Relevance: To what extent does the action address the critical needs of the electoral process in Ethiopia?

The overall design is aligned with the objectives and priorities of the government of Ethiopia which entered in 2018 in a significant process of democratic reforms

The project is highly relevant in the context of the electoral and institutional reforms process in the field of democratic governance because it was tailored to the country context, and it increased in relevance during the implementation.

The strategy of the action is aligned with the objectives and priorities of the government of Ethiopia and particularly with the democratic reform process which started immediately after the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in April 2018.

The reforms were regarded in the county as a unique opportunity to promote a peaceful transition to democracy since 1991, when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of four ethnically defined organizations, first came to power.

Reforms introduced have led to far-reaching political and social changes, including greater freedom for citizens, CSOs, political parties and the media, the release of political prisoners and the appointment to more than half of all ministerial posts.

It is in line with the roadmap of the reform program presented by the new administration called “**Ethiopia: A New Horizon of Hope**”, which offers an opportunity for the expansion of democracy and respect for human rights for a more democratic, prosperous and resilient society.

The overall design of the PEV is aligned with the institutional needs of the beneficiaries (mostly CSO’s).

In Ethiopia's past decades, there was no tradition of open elections. Years of repression and limited political space had diminished the internal capacity of CSO’s, the media and other non-state actors to engage in electoral activities and human rights. In the sector of peace and security, the NSAs were not authorized to intervene. It was under the exclusive authority of state actors.

In light of the reform process, the enactment of the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation No. 1113/2019 opened the space for CSO participation in electoral processes.

On the eve of the general elections in 2019⁸, despite the reforms and the enjoyment of more basic rights and freedom, CSOs were still facing significant limitations in terms of expertise, technical capacity and resources.

The electoral process was perceived as at high risk of instability and inter-ethnic violence for the country.

The speed of the reform process had created a disjuncture between the traditional power centres and some regions. Inter-ethnic conflicts had emerged in several parts of the country, exacerbated by the existing definition of administrative borders and the tension between the different security forces were exacerbated.

In addition, the level of youth unemployment was at a critical level and the use of social media was too often characterized by hate and violent speeches.

In this context, PEV was designed based on two main underlying assumptions:

- Election-related disputes and tensions can be significant causes of instability and violent conflict during the electoral process in the context of Ethiopia
- Non-state actors have the potential to support the integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process. They can play a major role in promoting a peaceful electoral environment, reducing the dynamics of election-related conflict, but the capacity and resources are too limited.

The project design is therefore based on a multi-stakeholder capacity-building approach to develop and strengthen the skills, instincts, capacities and resources of various non-state actors in Ethiopia through a network of CSOs’ so that they engage in the electoral process and contribute to a peaceful electoral environment.

Capacity building is an important aspect of the project in terms of relevance because there was no prior expertise on how to prevent and address the issue of electoral violence in the country through Non-State Actors.

⁸ The elections were finally held in 2021

Therefore, the project coincided timely with the liberalization of the CSOs legal framework. One of ECES partners from Go Innovation/LEAD Beyond⁹ expressed his appreciation for the relevance of the project because " It was the first-ever opportunity in a country that has almost never received electoral support, to take the lead on electoral content to prevent violence".

According to some of the respondents, during the implementation of the project, some PEV activities were more relevant than others. For example, the dialogue sessions with religious and traditional leaders through the inter-religious council seems to be gaining in relevance, as well as the activities related to election observation, while the design of the early warning mechanism was perceived as a bit too "optimistic" by some of the stakeholders.

However, there is a very broad consensus on the relevance of the project, as CSOs in Ethiopia needed to engage in activities related to the electoral process and contribute to a peaceful electoral environment.

The design is in line with the EU's policy and strategic objectives of supporting Ethiopia's reform process, to strengthen the democratic process but also to respond quickly and flexibly to conflicts and crises

PEV is aligned with the EU policy and strategic objectives to support Ethiopia's reform agenda.

Democracy support is at the center of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the EU's development cooperation with its partner's countries.

The EU provides extensive support to initiatives and programs that seek to develop and consolidate human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law in partners' countries but also which contribute to peace and security.

To that end, the PEV is funded by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP/2019/408-858) which is the EU's financial instrument ¹⁰that focuses on crisis management and peacebuilding (i.e. crisis preparedness, crisis response, conflict prevention and peacebuilding^o;

The financing of the PEV actions through the IcSP is relevant in the context of Ethiopia which is a country facing multiple ongoing security crises and which has been afflicted with persistent insecurity.

During the project period, the PEV gained relevance after tensions escalated in the regions of Tigray, Amhara, Afar and Oromia, requiring reconciliation and mediation efforts throughout the country.

It is worth pointing out that part of the PEV design is based on the recommendations of the previous European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Ethiopia in 2005 and 2010.

⁹ Steadman Harrison - Senior Capacity Development and Training Expert of the PEV- Go Innovation/LEAD Beyond. <https://go-innovation.com/>

¹⁰ On 11 March 2014, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted the Regulation establishing an Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) which succeeds the Instrument for Stability (IfS).

The mission recommended the involvement of civil society organizations in voter education and domestic election observation, as well-balanced coverage of all aspects of the election process from the media.

Even if the context has changed, many of the recommendations remain valid.

3.2. Coherence: To what extent are the project's interventions complementary to other interventions to support the integrity of the electoral process?

In Ethiopia, the EU has established a “democratic package” that is composed of four different interventions related to the overall context for the general elections which took place in 2021, for an approximate envelope of 22.95M EUR:

- European Response to Electoral Cycle Support in Ethiopia (EURECS Ethiopia) (16.55M EURO, funded by the European Union under the European Development Fund (EDF) and by KfW on behalf of the German government and implemented by ECES);
- Prevention, mitigation and management of election-related conflicts and potential violence (PEV-Ethiopia) (3.6M EURO, funded by the European Union under the IcSP-FPI and implemented by the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES) and its partners GO Innovation and the Forum of Federations
- Supporting the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue (1.8M EURO, funded under IcSP-FPI and implemented by the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD));
- Establishing an environment for inclusive, knowledge-based dialogue on the political process in Ethiopia (1M EURO, funded under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace of the Foreign Policy Instrument (IcSP-FPI) and implemented by International IDEA.

There is evidence the project's interventions are complementary to other EU-funded interventions to support the integrity of the electoral process. The architecture conceived by ECES ensures that PEV-Ethiopia actions complement those of the EURECS-Ethiopia project. Taken together, the two projects offer support that reinforces one another's goals and addresses both internal and external elements to the electoral cycle and target all the most relevant electoral stakeholders.

Throughout the project, the PEV established strong links with several partners working with civil society.

This includes strong coordination with NDI and IRI (USAID funding) which provided a grant of 750 000 USD to support the deployment of the CECOIE election observation mission. The NDI representative in Ethiopia commented in an interview, *"We had a very good collaboration and partnership with ECES on CECOIE."*

There was a coordination mechanism between partners to ensure coherence of the activities during the electoral process

There are important synergies of the project with other interventions funded by other partners in the area of democratic governance

In terms of the coordination mechanism at a technical level¹¹, the three main development partners UN, EU, US were meeting in an "election sub-group." within the Governance Technical Working Group within the Development Assistance Group (DAG).

The objective of this sub-group was to provide a platform of coordination for the international community to share information on the electoral process.

3.3. : Effectiveness: To what extent have the interventions of the project supported the development of the capacities of the targeted electoral stakeholders to prevent, mitigate and manage election-related conflicts?

During its implementation, the PEV was able to deliver a very large number of activities covering the 11 regions of Ethiopia, in a rapidly and frequently changing operating environment.

As an implementation mechanism, PEV project activities were carried out by ECES and its partners, primarily through the CSO coalition known as CECOIE, in all regions of Ethiopia including the Tigray, Somali and Oromia regions.

The overall approach of the project has proven to be very effective in terms of outreach, inclusiveness, and geographic coverage, given the social, ethnic, and religious diversity of the country.

CECOIE has 176 member organizations with a broad range of operational sectors, including human rights, youth, women, PWDs, and indigenous groups covering all Ethiopia regions.

Most of the activities were delivered through training, capacity building workshops and peace messaging, advisory support and coaching, continued technical backstopping, consultation forums and dialogue sessions.

The main direct beneficiaries of the project were CSO's from different locations, youth movements, groups facing discrimination and marginalization, the Network of Ethiopian Women's Association, students from universities and instructors, the Inter-Religious Council (IRC), the Christian relief organization, Media houses and students of Journalism and communication, group of Elders, religious leaders and traditional leaders.

Despite the very challenging operating environment, the project was able to achieve most of its originally intended deliverables.

¹¹ There is a donor platform of regular coordination at the political level with the US, UN, EU

The project had to face the suspension of the activities from the 1st of October 2020 to the 31st of March 2020¹² due to the Covid 19 crisis which started in March 2020¹³ and reschedule some of its activities after the election report. As well, the project had to address the progressive deterioration of the security situation after the invasion of Tigray by the governmental troops on 3 November 2020.

The following activities have been carried out in seven key areas of interventions:

Result area 1 Production and dissemination of baseline data, with policy relevance.

This result area is oriented towards both knowledge production and dissemination. Production pertains to establishing several baseline data that the project identified as either partially or completely missing around election conflicts. Dissemination foresees sharing knowledge in a systematic and harmonized way with NSA's.

One of the PEV midterm objectives was to establish databases with the view to share this knowledge with the CSO's and other stakeholders.

The project has undertaken a variety of research to increase knowledge about the root causes of electoral conflict in several regions of Ethiopia.

The underlying assumption behind these studies is that if Non-State Actors gain relevant knowledge on election-related conflicts and violence, they will be more able to address the issues of electoral violence. Hence, ahead of the elections, various analyses and policy recommendations were provided by the PEV.

This includes Electoral Political Economy Analyses (EPEA) capturing drivers and sources of electoral conflicts and violence triggers for the elections in Addis Abeba, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Somali and Tigray regions. The project provided an environmental scan before the Sidama referendum.

The project provided Electoral Security Threat assessment (ESTA) in Addis Ababa and the Tigray region with regular updates during the implementation of the project. Policy Recommendations on the Inclusion of the marginalized people in the electoral processes was delivered. NSA-led mapping of entry points for

¹² REF letter of suspension of the PEV project from ECE Ethiopia to the EU Delegation in Nairobi: ETH-07 Subject: request a full suspension of the project entitled "Prevention, Mitigation, and Management of Election-Related Conflicts and Potential Violence in Ethiopia (PEV-ETHIOPIA)", Contribution Agreement No.IcSP/2019/408-858.

¹³ REF letter of suspension of the PEV project from ECE Ethiopia to the EU Delegation in Nairobi: ETH-07 Subject: request a full suspension of the project entitled "Prevention, Mitigation, and Management of Election-Related Conflicts and Potential Violence in Ethiopia (PEV-ETHIOPIA)", Contribution Agreement No.IcSP/2019/408-858.

structured engagements with youth movements and the potential to capitalize on the structures for early warning and pro-peace messaging were made available.

Relevant baseline data were established and used by the PEV during its implementation particularly to feed and update the project's training program with real data

To some extent¹⁴, the data were made available to CSOs and relevant stakeholders. These baselines were very relevant to support the smooth implementation of activities in a changing and very sensitive environment as electoral violence may differ from one region to another.

A qualitative sample study on the influence of inter-and intra-party violence and wider civic unrest was removed due to the Covid crisis¹⁵ and instead, support to CECOIE in a continuous effort to build the capacity of its members was replaced through online coaching and remote teleworking. This remote activity has been able to enroll 86 participants who did not have previous knowledge on elections of which three of them were enrolled for full Masters program initially. With a total number of 86 participants under phase one, 33 of them were reselected in phase 2 to take three additional modules relevant to CSOs work. Of the 33 participants, 16 of them are currently enrolled into the Master of Electoral Policy and Administration (MEPA).

Result area 2 Establish an NSA Coalition and capacitation of Observers

This result area aims to foster a more tightly knit network of NSA to untap their full potential, to promote inclusivity and a coordinated voice as well as utilize and pool the joint resources of NSA's to make a more meaningful contribution to election conflict prevention

The action was developed under the assumption that if non-state actors are organized into a platform to work towards inclusion, tolerance and peace at the grassroots, regional and national level, this will make a significant contribution to the prevention of conflict and election violence.

PEV contributed significantly to the CECOIE institutional development

In 2019, when the project started, recognizing the urgency of action, and given its relatively short duration of programming, *“The main challenges were to find and strengthen this coalition”*,

¹⁴ Dissemination in the project document involves sharing knowledge in a systematic and harmonized manner with NSAs but due to the highly sensitivity of the context in Ethiopia, the data were scrutinized and disseminated with due diligence

¹⁵ But also due to the ultra-sensitivity of the issue and possible negative impacts on the project when disseminating the result of the research

The CECOIE network had just been established in May 2019 with a limited institutional and logistic capacity. PEV strategy was to continuously expand the network and provide the structure with institutional support.

Therefore, the project covered the fees of a project coordinator for 20 months and the fees of an officer for 22 months (Full time).

As well, the project supported a planning and election strategy meeting with CECOIE / ECES, NDI & IRI to facilitate the design of a coalition strategy draft document. The 3 years strategic plan was validated through a workshop in October 2019 supported by the PEV.

The project managed to convene with other partners and coordinate efforts to raise more funds for the deployment of CECOIE observers¹⁶ and continue CVE through CECOIE member CSOs.

The PEV organized training for the long- and short-term observers. In November 2019, observers from the CECOIE were trained for the Sidama referendum.

Through the PEV, CECOIE recruited, trained, and deployed over 100 long-term observers throughout the election process. They were able to release a detailed report on voter registration.

In June 2021, a few weeks before the general elections, the PEV supported the training of the short term observers and in partnership with NDI, they were able to support the deployment of over 2,000 trained and accredited observers.

Initially, CECOIE was planning to deploy 2000 observers and only NDI and IRI had allocated resources to support the logistic deployment of 1000 domestic observers.

ECES ensured a coordinating role among the donor community to cover CECOIE funding gaps for the deployment of 1000 more observers and created a basket fund with the contribution of the Irish and Danish Embassy. The Danish embassy provided 5 million Danish krone (672,504.79 Euros) and the Irish embassy provided 200 000 Euros for a total amount of 872 000 Euros.

CECOIE issued a mid-day report on election day detailing the setup of polling stations and shortly after election day issued its preliminary report on voting and counting ¹⁷ “

Result area 3. Skills enhancement in leadership and conflict management, media monitoring and journalist capacity building essentially but not only for the NSA coalition.

This result area will see both a substantive quantitative approach with a qualitative approach (the utility of the enhanced skills “on-the-job”). The resulting area aims to generate an extensive pool of capacitated electoral stakeholders in election conflict prevention and media monitoring

¹⁶ The Danish embassy provided 5 million Danish krone (672,504.79 Euros) and the Irish embassy provided 200 000 Euros

¹⁷ Sources, electoral observation report NDI – June 2021.

This result area is built under the assumption that skills enhancement is a necessary prerequisite for electoral stakeholders to level up work around election conflict prevention and management.

CECOE members were capacitated through LEAD training, coalition building workshops, advisory coaching for the NSA ‘, consultation forum on the role of CSO’s in election-related conflicts.

LEAD training has been one of the pillars of the PEV during its implementation

Over 2000 participants, members of CSOs, have been trained in LEAD nationwide from June 2019 to November 2021. The training focused on leadership and elections, electoral cycle and fragility, security of the electoral process and some of the aspects of soft mediation and conflict management aspect at various levels.

The targeted beneficiaries were law school students and instructors, youth, women and PWD ‘, representatives of the inter-Religious Council, representatives of the Federal police, women associations and various CSOs from the CECOE.

In consultation with CECOE specific needs related to leadership, election and skills were identified at a preliminary stage of the project implementation.

It allowed the project to tailor the LEAD training. The PEV was developing the content of the training in local languages. This was increasing the impact. It was a multi-stakeholder approach.

For the multi-religious gathering, *“the training was able to bring the people altogether to the same table which have never met under such set-up before such as pastors, Imam, Muslims, Sikhs, Christian orthodox, bishops and priests.”*

In the Somali region, the PEV did a program with the inter-religious council: *“These people have never been together, this was a very unique activity, and it was an amazing transformation happening in a short period”*.

From the beneficiaries' side, the reactions were very positive during the interviews conducted by the evaluator: *“the training was very helpful, it has helped me, I have never taken any training, it was very informative training “*.¹⁸,

Training of Trainers (TOT) was trained under the PEV to further scale up the activity

The Training of Trainers (ToT) model is intended to engage master trainers in coaching new trainers that are less experienced with a particular topic or skill, or with training overall.¹⁹

¹⁸ Members of the Secretariat of the CECOE – CSOs

¹⁹ file:///C:/Users/sverg/AppData/Local/Temp/17_279600_TrainersModel-FactSheet_v3_508Final.pdf

As a result of attending a ToT, participants should be able to apply current practices in delivering training on a selected evidence-based program

Hence, the project supported the training of trainers in leadership development and election expertise (LEAD TOT) for 57 CECOE facilitators in August 2019 and January 2021 represented from different regions of Ethiopia.

The Media monitoring was set up to monitor the media delivering information during the electoral process

The project as well supported the establishment of a media monitoring unit for the NSA coalition and nine media monitors were recruited and trained to produce daily press reviews. As well, media training and LEAD training were given by the PEV to Media houses and graduate students of Journalism and Communication.

They were trained on issues such as conflict-sensitive reporting, hate speeches and fake news.

The importance of impartiality and ethical reporting was at the center of the training.

Hence under this result area, two rounds' Media Lead training targeting Media houses were organized in Addis Ababa in October 2019, two Lead training were organized for undergraduate students of Journalism and communication in March 2020 and four media training were organized in Jigijiga and Addis Ababa in February 2021 June 2021. Altogether 8 workshops were organized, and 237 journalists and media representatives were trained.

The workshops were relevant in the context because manifestations of unethical reporting in the media were identified by the PEV as a factor that potentially could threaten peace and security in the context of the Ethiopian electoral process in an already conflict-prone society. The implementation of this key area coincided with the announcement of the adoption of the new media law in February 2021 based on liberal aspirations.²⁰

This key area tried to strengthen the capacity of the Media and CSOs' to safeguard information integrity during the electoral context.

It provided media monitoring equipment and addressed misinformation and unethical reporting through various training programs for journalists and students.

Result area 4. NSA-led election conflict prevention, mitigation and management activities spanning from grassroots conflict coordinators to an informal, flexible mediation group of elders.

This result area is supposed to focus on establishing forums where alliances between electoral stakeholders from various professional confines can be formed, essential to expand on the platform that the NSA network

²⁰ The new legal framework improves freedom of speech and conditions for free media and establish a media regulatory body in Ethiopia after year of repression.

constitutes and level up by associating with other electoral stakeholders that possess another outreach potential, leverage, skills and knowledge.

This key area was built under the assumption that alliances between electoral stakeholders from diverse communities had the potential to expand the platform of the NSA and to scale up to the next level by partnering with other electoral stakeholders who have additional advocacy potential, leverage, skills and knowledge.

Activities in this area focused primarily on building alliances between NSAs and other electoral stakeholders through multi-stakeholder forums.

Under this key area, PEV supported an informal Election Mediation Group of Elders in July 2020 in Gambella. Seven workshops of capacitation and advisory support for women mediators in fragile localities were organized in the capital of Ethiopia and various regions for a total number of 266 female participants from the CECOIE.

The activity which aims to provide knowledge on women's empowerment, leadership, election knowledge and election-related conflicts to participants, has a very high completion rate (133 %). It has been very meaningful given the importance of increasing women's participation in mediation processes in their respective communities to resolve conflicts and build peace²¹ (The UN Security Council - Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security).

In line with the PEV planning and budget adjustments, the setting up of an alternative election conflict resolution mechanism (EDR) was removed and conducted through EURECS which had similar activities.

As well, the monitoring of breaches of the code of conduct of political parties and the media initially scheduled in the workplan has been removed partially because of the highly sensitive context.

Result area 5. Election Conflict Early Warning Network

NSA nation-wide networks and infrastructures are supposed to be used as an Early Warning network meant to feed into the monitoring and reporting on the escalation of potential violent conflict and flashpoint areas. The ERV early warning mechanisms foresee strong ties with a rudimentary situation room.

This key area was designed by the PEV under the assumption that if NSAs was capacitated to revive, coordinate and utilize an early warning network composed of local electoral conflict mediators, then this mechanism will deter and prevent electoral violence.

²¹ Research shows that the participation of women at the peace table improves the negotiation process, contributes to a more comprehensive peace agreement, and bolsters the prospect of sustainable peace.

file:///C:/Users/sverg/AppData/Local/Temp/ipi_e_pub_women_in_conflict_med.pdf

An election-related early warning system (EWS) was set up with the support of the PEV

In line with its objective, the project supported the identification of different options for the establishment of an election-related early warning system (EWS) through the mapping of existing early warning systems, the drafting of the concept note, the collection of technical documentation and the recruitment and training of 24 regional focal persons (RFPs). The entire process was completed in May 2021.

The Focal Points who belong to CECOIE are responsible for updating the database in their respective localities, collecting and monitoring the information's related to Incidents along with detailed causes and consequences of conflicts every week.

Due to the conflict in the Tigray region, the early warning system was not made operational in this region.

Monthly electoral safety and security reports, flash reports and early warning reports were prepared by the CECOIE and shared with the NEBE. The project has been able to provide real-time data on security incidents, security development in several regions.

The activity has received a mixed feeling of appreciation from the various stakeholders interviewed during its implementation.

According to one of the NEBE board members²²: *“There is already several existing interventions of early warning in the country, from government officials, national security task forces, regional-based task forces, various partners. The information was already available from other sources, and we need to look at the added value of the information compared to what we already have, but that helped in a way triangulate some of the information's that the NEBE has mostly from the national task force²³”*.

Based on the above discussions and on the interviews which took place between the evaluator and key several stakeholders including the EUD in Kenya, it appears that Ethiopia has an early warning system that is extremely rudimentary, which is coexisting with the PACT²⁴ 's Conflict Early Warning and Rapid Response System (CEWRR) but which is still at his experimental phase. The CEWRR is being piloted in the regional states of Oromia, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples, and Gambella, covering five zones, 12 woredas and 60 kebeles. It will eventually be scaled nationally

²² Mrs Bizuwork Ketete NEBE board member

²³ The National Security Task Force, of which the NEBE is a member, oversees broad election security matters, with the NEBE responsible for the security of the polling stations and their offices as per Proclamation 1162/2019.

²⁴ Sept 2019. Ethiopia's Ministry of Peace officially launched the Conflict Early Warning and Rapid Response system, or CEWRR. With funding from a range of international partners, including the European Union, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and USAID, Pact is supporting the effort by providing technical guidance, management and monitoring and evaluation services as Ethiopia's government pilots and scales CEWRR. CEWRR is being piloted in the regional states of Oromia, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples, and Gambella, covering five zones, 12 woredas and 60 kebeles. It will eventually be scaled nationally.

In this context, *“the PEV had not enough time to create either from scratch a new system, to connect with the existing one or to create capacity with several beneficiaries that can be reached out, in the space of the life of the project. Hence the added value of an added civil society system is in doubt because it requires work and an enormous amount of effort to make it work properly.”*²⁵

However, among the respondent of this evaluation, there is a sharing view, that security has been a growing concern over the last past months and that the information’s provided by the early warning mechanism of the PEV offers the possibility of counterbalancing public early warning information’s, led by the government.

According to the Project Coordinator: *“it is good to have multiple early warning systems coming from different sources”*.

In conclusion, the introduction of an NSA-led early warning mechanism in the project activities provides some challenges but present valid points of relevance.

In terms of process, it presents added value for the CSOs who are more aware and conscious of factors that generate electoral violence in their communities. In terms of achievement, it is an ambitious initiative that will require more resources and investment to be fully operational.

Result area 6. NSA-led Election Situation Room

This result area put in place an Election Situation Room as part of the early warning and rapid response mechanism for an immediate resolution of diverging views with risk for conflict escalation in real space and time. The ESR is an embodiment of the early warning and rapid response mechanism that culminates into a physical space before, during and after E-Day.

Initially, the establishment of the Electoral Situation Room was supposed to be set up in all regions but finally, it was set up for the Sidama Referendum in November 2019 as a learning experience for the elections and for the general elections of June and September at the Golden Tulip in Addis Ababa, in partnership with NDI.

The establishment of an electoral situation room supported by the PEV in partnership with NDI

The Sidama Election Situation Room was more of a pilot initiative before the general elections, and it was an opportunity for the PEV to provide technical advice and support to CECOIE for the organization of the Situation Room.

The activity was carried out by Data Clerks divided into two teams, aboard, the CECOIE secretariat, desk officers and runners, with the technical support of partners.

²⁵ Francesco Carboni. Programme Officer, Foreign Policy Instruments East and Southern Africa section, Delegation of the European Union to Kenya.

The Situation Room has been implemented through the Apollo software to collect and analyse real-time information sent by the domestic observers deployed in the regions before, during and after the vote.

The ESR also provided reports on critical incidents, giving NEBE, government officials, and civil society organizations the opportunity and basic information to respond immediately upon incidents reports (e.g., access denied to polling units or temporary detention of domestic observers) through contacts and facilitation with NEBE and security forces).²⁶

Each day, press briefings were organized by the Council and the Secretariat to provide information on the voting process and openly disseminate available information.

The Situation Room provided CECOIE members with an incredible opportunity to get involved closely in the monitoring of electoral process and to participate in the dissemination of the results.

CECOIE observers deployed in the polling stations were reporting at regular intervals by coding text messages directly into a computer database that was connected to the situation room.

The members of the CECOIE secretariat who were interviewed during this evaluation consider that "*CECOIE has acquired new skills by participating in the functioning of the election situation room. It was a unique and educational experience*".

The Election Situation room was visited by many stakeholders including the European Union Delegation to Ethiopia, Danish Ambassador to Ethiopia, representatives from the UK, Finish, USAid, Irish and French embassies; and the AU Head of AU EOM His Excellency Obasanjo Olusegun and AU high-level officials

"The visitors were briefed upon arriving at the situation room and they were very impressed by CECOIE performance to observe the election systematically and professionally."

The situation room has brought a lot of visibility to CECOIE but also transparency to the electoral process.

Because of the project support, CECOIE has built up a good reputation in the media despite the external and internal challenges encountered.

Result area 7. Civic and voter education outreach and NSA-led dialogue

The outreach is thought to generate and incite a public debate that can be captured and capitalized on by NSA's active at the grassroots level. There is potential for NSA to form a wide set of activities around the outreach campaign such as election round table debates, radio shows or filmed street interviews

The result area is built under the assumption that if the electoral process relies on networks, platforms and NSAs, with a focus on women's and youth groups, to develop and disseminate peace messages, then this will contribute to reducing conflicts and election-related violence.

²⁶ Source: Third monitoring report of the PEV

During the electoral process, civic and voter education was primarily carried out by NEBE, with the support of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and political parties. Several CSOs were accredited by the NEBE to deliver voter education.

PEV has supported CECOIE in civic and voter education which was campaigning for an inclusive and peaceful electoral process

Therefore, in line with the PEV objectives and with the NEBE voter education strategy, the PEV organised a call for proposal and 6 CSOs which were accredited by the NEBE were selected by ECES to undertake voter education activities on behalf of the PEV.

The selected applicants to conduct the CVE Public Outreach Strategy (POS) were BEGDAN, Center of Concern, Ethiopian Woman's Federation, Green Art, SID-Ethiopia and Redeem.

These organizations were able to reach an estimated 500,000 beneficiaries, mainly through outreach activities focused on their area of intervention.

Under this key area, dialogue sessions were organised with religious leaders on nonviolence messaging led by women using LEAD training as an effective way to disseminate information on best practices on nonviolence during electoral periods.

The project supported Peace Messaging Workshop to train stakeholders for the Sidama referendum in November 2019 as well.

Dialogue sessions led by women and youth were also organized between the Interreligious Council and the youth and between the Interreligious council and the elders.

Participants commented very positively on these dialogues.

Through the basket fund created by ECES and financed by the Danish and Irish Embassies, five CSOs from the CECOIE benefited from financial support and were engaged further to proceed to civic and voter education.

During an interview conducted by the evaluator, NEBE acknowledged the important role played by the project in civic and voter education.

3.4. Efficiency: To what extent the resources mobilized to support the development of the project have been cost-effective and present value for money for the donors?

The project demonstrates a high level of efficiency given the context in which it operated.

ECES in Ethiopia was fully operational as soon as the activities started in June 2019. This was a challenge as the structure was not familiar with the context nor with the many stakeholders.

“In 2019, ECES was a new organization in Ethiopia, and they were just established in the capital, carrying a significant amount of technical expertise in the area of elections but not having the country knowledge.”²⁷”

In November 2019, ECES and its partners demonstrated that they were fully operational and capable of supporting CECO's engagement in an important public consultation. The residents of Ethiopia's Sidama Zone were voting in a referendum to decide if they wanted to become the country's tenth semi-autonomous state. ECES did the first training for the temporary secretariat of CECO in June 2019 which led to the creation of CECO.

The PEV was able to support CECO in deploying its members and conduct several activities such as domestic observation and voter education.

The results of the Referendum were announced by the CECO through the election situation room supported by the project and NDI.

Several factors facilitated this proficient level of operation.

The partnership with GO Innovation and Forum of Federations who were already established in Ethiopia and working with thematic expertise within the Ethiopian context facilitated the smooth implementation of the activities.

The implementation of the project has been carried out by ECES and its partners, the Forum of Federations (FoF) which was established in the country in 2008 and registered as an international organization and Go Innovation. Go Innovation has been in Ethiopia since 2006 and works closely with national civil society organizations in response to their need. Go innovation is providing a training program on leadership.

Sharing of tasks between ECES, FoF and GO Innovation was based throughout the implementation of the PEV on organizational excellence and reputation to complement each other toward best achievements of anticipated results This partnership was successful and facilitated the smooth implementation of the activities.

ECES management team were able to demonstrate their extensive experience working in crisis-affected countries and their flexible and proactive²⁸ approach facilitated the delivery of the project activities

The project was able to operate and adapt very quickly to changing circumstances, reschedule activities, and even provide alternative options to continue to deliver capacity to CECO members when the federal and state governments of Ethiopia declared the State of Emergency to contain COVID. As an adaptive solution to the restrictions imposed by the government, the delivery of remote sessions was organized by the PEV²⁹.

²⁷ Francesco Carboni. Programme Officer, Foreign Policy Instruments East and Southern Africa section, Delegation of the European Union to Kenya.

²⁸ Essential Meaning of proactive.: **controlling a situation by making things happen or by preparing for possible future problems**

²⁹ MEPPA trainings

Similarly, part of ECES' proactive approach to implementing the activities was to obtain permission from the Department of Public Health to continue teaching in classrooms limited to the number of people that could be accommodated at one time.

These initiatives facilitated the level of delivery of the project during a difficult context and they have been commendable and recognized by all stakeholders.

It is worth acknowledging the ultra-sensitivity of the political environment in a country that has no colonial experience and that, until recently, has received relatively low levels of development assistance, particularly in the area of democratic governance.

ECES and its partners were able to conduct the project smoothly and continually assess the level of political sensitivity and risk taken by the project during its implementation and adjust some of the initially scheduled activities before and after the Tigray crisis.

The human resource plan was adequate to the activities for an efficient delivery

As per the Human Resource Plan, the project has mobilized 14 experts with various competencies and skills.

The experts were all recruited through a competitive process, and for the international experts, the recruitment process was conducted from ECES' database of qualified experts, which is very diverse in the field of elections.

For the local experts, the Forum of Federations conducted the recruitment process supported by ECES. Their positions have been fulfilled and personnel selected against developed TORs (which were published at the time of announcing the vacancies) as well as the following general criteria.

The level of local experts is quite good even if very few of them have been involved previously in an election project. Most of the local experts shared their enthusiasm to work in the PEV project and have been integrated into a team of qualified international experts.

There is good collaboration between national and international project experts who rely heavily on their national colleagues to overcome the language barrier with the public and contextualization of project implementation to the local reality.

The project team members were carefully selected, and the team was composed of "*a good mix of expertise, a good mix of countries, men and women, a lot of south/south interaction, different ages and groups.*"³⁰ *The project chose well its people. The people were chosen well individually but also as a group it felt very diverse but as individuals, it felt like a strong competence.*"³¹

According to CECOIE Secretariat, the experts recruited by the project have a lot of experience, knowledge, share best practices, and are very flexible. This is quite a positive assessment

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31 Foreign Policy Instruments East and Southern Africa section, Delegation of the European Union to Kenya.

The level of expertise of PEV international experts was mentioned several times by stakeholders. It is remarkably high and appreciated by all parties interviewed. *“There was particularly exceptionally kind of individuals as well in the project with experience as seniors with a real capacity”*. (Project coordinator³², Senior Capacity Development and Training Expert³³, Project officer³⁴, Election expert³⁵ ...)

The evaluation finds that the project team structure had a lot of relevance as the Action was perceived not exclusively as a European intervention.

The excellent relationships between the project and the EU delegations in Ethiopia and EUD in Kenya facilitated the project implementation throughout the electoral cycle context.

The EU adopted a flexible approach to ensure that the project could reach its potential in terms of results in the context. As the PEV does its best to adapt to the needs of beneficiaries in a challenging context, the European Union Delegation in Ethiopia and the European Union Delegation to Kenya, representing the Foreign Policy Instruments Section for Eastern and Southern Africa, both demonstrated a high level of commitment and flexibility in supporting the effective and efficient delivery of the PEV project.

Numerous formal and informal consultations took place between the EUD’s and project management throughout the PEV implementation and two no-cost extensions were authorized to extend the implementation period and to facilitate the project delivery throughout the electoral cycle.

‘There was never a point where it was conflicting or problematic and issues are usually fairly easy and manageable’.³⁶

This is a rather positive evaluation for the project and the EU, and there is a strong suggestion that this good mutual understanding facilitates the implementation of the project.

The project is managed with a cost-effective approach. There is a lot of cost-sharing between the two projects led by ECES in Ethiopia (EURECS and PEV)

There are many synergies between the PEV and EURECS projects; As a result, both projects share many operating costs, including experts.

All these measures of cost-sharing are making the two projects administratively extremely competitive in terms of human resources and office sharing.

³² ECES

³³ GoInnovation/LEAD Beyond

³⁴GoInnovation/LEAD Beyond

³⁵ FOF

³⁶ Francesco Carboni. Programme Officer, Foreign Policy Instruments East and Southern Africa section,

ECES' budget follows the same principles for all its projects, namely based on real costs with a provision for indirect costs of 7% (based on the total amount of eligible costs). That 7% allow covering the costs related to indirect management of the project as well as costs related to project design and implementation that cannot be included in the budget.

Some budget lines related to human resources are rationalized so as they are shared between the two budgets, based on the expected pro-rata of the EU contributions and project and as well some experts, although paid by one project, make their expertise available to the other project.

This is a good management practice which when the two projects pursue the same overall objective and show complementarity.

During the retroactive period, EURECS was thus able to benefit from many facilities already put in place by the PEV project to advance the implementation of activities. As well, it is expected that the PEV will be able to benefit from the EURECS facilities when the project will reduce its activities as it will approach its closure after December 2021.

A management structure has been set up to ensure a coordination mechanism between the two projects and the sharing of running costs. These provisions between EURECS and the PEV are efficient.

Both projects have a Project Coordinator more specialized in the project specifics i.e., Prevention of Violence and Electoral Administration and Electoral Assistance to electoral management bodies.

A Project Coordination Unit (PCU) was established in June 2019 to implement the PEV project's activities and ensure information-sharing, synergies, and coordination mechanisms between EURECS and PEV and proceed to the monitoring of the activities. The PCU function as a coordinating hub and as a repository of knowledge, centrally placed in between the two projects and the various stakeholders, beneficiaries and development partners connected to them.

The PCU is led by the ECES representative in Ethiopia and Senior Electoral Advisor, and mandated by ECES HQ, under the supervision of the Founder and Executive Director of ECES, to oversee the implementation of the PEV and EURECS, EURECS + and CECOIE basket found, Ethiopia projects in its various aspects.

The budget and arrangements mechanisms between PEV and EURECS have been designed to ensure the best possible value for money and ratio costs/activities.

This ensures that implementations of both projects are done in full conformity with EU regulation and ECES Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) but also with security diligence regarding the updated security threat assessment provided by the senior election security expert.

Throughout the action, the PCU is providing annual narrative and financial monitoring reports under the supervision of the Monitoring and Reporting Officer and administrative and financial department.

ECES managed to raise more funds for CECOIE and provided the Irish and Danish Embassy with a very credible financial management system that they could rely on.

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had experience working with the ECES in another context and the experience was positive. Considering that the coalition had limited capacity in terms of the secretariat and financial management, the ECES basket fund was a very credible option for providing support to CECOIE.

The representative of the Danish Embassy³⁷ stated during the evaluation that *"they are very satisfied with the partnership with CECOIE and also with ECES."*

Similarly, the Irish Embassy had a long-standing partnership with Ethiopian civil society, but there were procedural issues in working with the Ethiopian Civil Society Forum. The institutional set-up provided by ECES to channel its funds to CSOs was very practical.

The representative of the Embassy of Ireland³⁸ declared during an interview with the evaluator: *"We are very interested in this partnership with ECES because we have been able to support a local initiative through it, such as CECOIE."*

Communication and visibility of the PEV was very effective and supported by a communication strategy. A communication expert has been hired to work to ensure implementation.

In outlining the "Visual Identity Elements" of the grant contract, the project produced a Communication and Visibility Plan. The guidelines have been elaborated jointly with ECES project partners and following the "European Commission's Visibility Manual for EU External Actions".

As per the ECES project strategy, the project visibility plan operates on several levels, addressing activities and/or communications to:

- i. Inform in a strategic manner - which may require visibility or careful discretion - electoral and political stakeholders about the support provided by the Project and its related activities.
- ii. Raise awareness around the project, for example, project communications and initiatives, key meetings and coverage of workshops/conferences/activities.
- iii. Illustrate the specific impact of the project with EU funding.
- iv. Produce visibility materials and features within the project framework that are made available to all stakeholders/partners, such as the Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections – CECOIE, the National Election Board of Ethiopia – NEBE, media, and others.
- v. Provide updated information on activities to a wide range of target audiences mainly through the project-dedicated website (<http://democracy-support.eu/eurecs/>), ECES website (EU) and democracy support package's social media pages as well as of ECES; Facebook pages:

³⁷ Danish Embassy – Team leader governance

³⁸ Embassy of Ireland in Ethiopia - Governance senior program manager - Muluemebet.Alula

www.facebook.com/eu4democracy.ethiopia; www.facebook.com/eces.eu, Twitter accounts: @EthiopiaEurecs, @ECESeu, Instagram: @eu4democracy.ethiopia, @eces.eu.

Therefore, EU contribution is being ensured in the action through a communication and visibility plan. The PEV website was very much appreciated by the partners of the action. It provided a lot of visibility and a communication expert hired by EURECS was created regular content for the social media and the website. The expert was tracking particularly relevant information on youth and women participation in the project activities.

The choice of ECES to implement the Action presents several added values for the EU.

During the design and formulation of the project, there was a lot of negotiation with EU headquarters and the EU delegation about how the EU funds to support the electoral process would be channeled, either through ECES or another implementing partner such as EISA or through a UNDP basket program.

Over the years ECES had demonstrated its ability to provide effective assistance in capacity building programs, particularly in fragile countries in democratic transition.

The choice of ECES to implement the Action in the partners' country presents several added values for the EU represented by the EU Delegation in Ethiopia.

- i. The project team was fully operational at the beginning of the implementation despite the fact the ECES was new in the country
- ii. ECES presents substantial added value in terms of visibility. With a contribution of more than 22.95 M EUROS in a democratic package: "it brings more recognition of the Government of Ethiopia ECES implements the action in close partnership with the EU delegation.
- iii. From a financial perspective, ECES was able to pre-finance program activities for a 4 months period, which was a significant advantage given the ultra-tight electoral agenda, time constraints, and the urgency of starting the project in 2019.³⁹ The availability of funds is a very crucial factor to operate in the sector of CSOs' and the late start of the activities is usually a negative factor because the period for implementing the programs need to be long enough,
- iv. ECES flexibility for the re-allocation of funds to adapt to ongoing changed circumstances. (Covid crisis, postponement of the elections, request of no-cost extension, cost-sharing with EUERCS.).

³⁹ Under the agreement with the EU, ECES has taken all the financial risks associated with this pre-financing agreement. Under retroactivity and until the signature of the grant contract, ECES from a legal point of view was to bear all financial risks associated to the implementation of activities and their associated costs.

3.5. Impact - Is there evidence that the project's action has had a positive effect to prevent, mitigate and manage election-related conflicts and potential violence?

There are several reasons to believe that the PEV had an impact on various communities.

The project was able to structure and accompany most of the main NSA's in exercising their rights in the electoral process after the democratic reforms took place in the country.

Since the project started in June 2019, the PEV made a significant contribution to support the establishment of CECOIE as a network of CSOs so that most of its members share a common objective and work together in various activities, to deter, prevent and mitigate possible electoral violence.

In less than 2 years, CECOIE became a vibrant network of CSOs, occupying civic space throughout the electoral process.

PEV has succeeded in building an extensive pool of capacitated electoral stakeholders that can operate in election conflict prevention in various regions of Ethiopia including the Tigray, Somali, Oromia regions.

Supporting and continuously building an effective and sustainable coalition in Ethiopia was entirely into the PEV strategy to reach diverse communities and interests that had the potential to play a role in the general environment surrounding the elections for a more inclusive and peaceful electoral process.

Despite the various challenges, the coalition was able to complete all the electoral cycle and observe all elections for 2 years including the Sidama referendum which was the very first experience of electoral observation of CECOIE.

NEBE's recognition of the role of CECOIE in the electoral process is undeniable

Preliminary results suggest that CECOIE, as a representative body, has in less than 3 years become a legitimate network in the eyes of the CSOs it represents but also in the eyes of other stakeholders it seeks to influence.

This includes NEBE, which has accredited its members to conduct domestic observation and voter education, and which regularly receives flash reports from the CECOIE early warning network. This legitimacy is strong at the moment, and it is a precondition to the survival of the network.

One member of the CECOIE Secretariat stated: *“without the PEV, we would not have been as successful as now and the secretariat continues to work because of PEV support. we had no adequate staff, no adequate structure, we had no permanent Secretariat. I was hired to achieve a dream so that CECOIE becomes the first coalition in Ethiopia capable to engage in the electoral process”.*

According to several stakeholders interviewed during this evaluation, *“it seems that the COS's enjoys significant public confidence from the public”.*

The project demonstrated that civil society has a legitimate role to play in the dynamics to prevent electoral conflicts and related violence

The general elections of 2021 were generally perceived as quite peaceful elections despite the very conflictual environment. The turnout as well was quite high.

Even if it is difficult to measure to which extent the outcome of the elections can be attributed to CECOIE, due to the involvement of other CSOs in the electoral process, there is strong evidence that CECOIE coalition members became important players in the electoral process. They have been empowered by the project on a variety of issues and there is strong evidence that they promoted peaceful elections.

PEV generated a strong appetite for learning about election-related violence

According to the people interviewed, the numerous training and workshops demonstrated that there was a real appetite for the project's activities among the CSO members and especially among the university's students. It was a life-changing experience for many of the participants of the training

Participants were highly engaged, their reach, technical ability, knowledge and effort helped people understand the electoral process in more detail, the possible sources of conflict and how to mitigate these conflicts peacefully.

One of the successes of the project has been the ability of the project to conduct so many dialogues with communities from various regions about their values in their local language. The multi-multi-stakeholders were very effective and highly relevant.

For the members of the CECOIE secretariat: the dialogue sessions with traditional leaders and elders on nonviolent messages have been very successful and impacted the beneficiaries.

“We have a theory of change when we bring the experience together with new knowledge, new learning and give the opportunity to dialogue, we see humans’ growth, development. The fact that we were able to open space for dialogue around crucial issues in Ethiopia and gather people in the classroom on leadership development, it was proved to pay off”⁴⁰.

The Lead training could have seemed many too advanced for the context of Ethiopia, but the activity proved to have an enormous impact, especially the inter-religious meetings and the meetings between communities religious and traditional leaders.

“Ninety-eight per cent of the population is religious in Ethiopia. If you take the message to the religious leaders, they go further than what the project can do. Religious leaders understood that they could contribute

⁴⁰ Steadman - go innovation - Senior Capacity Development and Training Expert -LEAD program, leadership development

to the environment of the elections and not only religions. They understood that they could provide civic education, monitoring.”⁴¹

Election observation and voter education supported by the PEV increased the transparency and inclusiveness of the elections

The NDI noted in the election observation report that *“Despite a high number of CSOs accredited, interlocutors indicated that only about a half of them were able to conduct voter education and their reach remained marginal. Finance was a challenge for many organizations that may have believed that accreditation would be accompanied by funding”*.

There is no doubt that the PEV did contribute to the enhancement of the transparency and credibility of the electoral process through domestic observation, voter and civic education, advocacy. The electoral process was made transparent and tangible. *“NEBE was on alert knowing that they had watchdogs.”⁴²*

In conclusion, the evaluation findings suggest that voter education and dialogue sessions on nonviolent messages were an important aspect of the PEV strategy to promote peaceful elections. They provided citizens with knowledge on how to prevent and discourage violence.

“More than preventing electoral violence, which is the title of the program, this project is valuable because of its contribution to enabling a healthier civil society and institutional approach to democracy. It does not prevent violence (riots and gathering and manifestation), it is more valuable and sustainable because it provides a platform for players that are not normally invited to the table to talk. By giving them the capacity to do it in a structured manner, it has for sure left an impact.”⁴³

3.6. Sustainability. To what extent are beneficiaries taking ownership of the project? Will they be able to sustain the results of the action (programmatically, politically, and financially)?

The project has several very strong durable elements which contribute to its sustainability and scalability in specific key areas

The various policy-relevant studies and research conducted under the PEV provide written material and baseline data for future interventions. They are solid and sustainable elements of the project, although it is not yet clear how the information will be disseminated more widely and through which channel.

Undoubtedly, the LEAD capacity developments training was a life-changing experience for most of the beneficiaries of the project. The training has provided them with a deepened understanding of the dynamic

⁴¹ Steadman - go innovation - Senior Capacity Development and Training Expert -LEAD program, leadership development

⁴² Member of CEEOE

⁴³ Foreign Policy Instruments East and Southern Africa section, Delegation of the European Union to Kenya.

of electoral violence. It was a short but intense experience that most likely had an impact on their long-term mindset.

It is assumed that one of the most valuable resources of the project could be the various collaborative forums and platforms that were established during the multi-stakeholder dialogues and that will remain after the life of the project.

Similarly, the media monitoring centre is a very sustainable part of the project. Monitors were trained, equipment was purchased, and capacity was transferred to CECOIE by the experts of the PEV.

This know-how and technicality are very sustainable elements that will be useful to civil society actors during the upcoming electoral periods. As per the media expert hired for the project, CECOIE can also train new monitors.

The main factors contributing to the challenges of sustainability and scalability are the short life of the project and the lack of resources for CECOIE.

The sustainability of CECOIE as a permanent structure has been a recurring and growing concern of most stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation especially as the election cycle is not fully completed.

The PEV provided the operational capacity to the CECOIE secretariat so that it could properly discharge its function for the duration of the project. Thus, the fees of several members of the Secretariat were covered through the project. This includes funding for the CECOIE Program Coordinator (July 2019- June 2021), CECOIE Program Officer (July 2019- June 2021), CECOIE Communication Officer (April 2021- Oct 2021).

This support was necessary to develop the institutionalization of CECOIE as a solid structure with a dedicated human resource capable of carrying out a program of activities with its partners throughout the electoral cycle

Since June 2021, the basket fund established by ECES has covered the fees of the members of the Secretariat until December 2021, with the addition of a program assistant.

This is a very big challenge of sustainability while although general elections have been held in June and September 2021, there are some regions where these elections could not take place for logistical challenges and insecurity. This suggests that the electoral cycle is not completed because of pending elections.

Ethiopia has 547 constituencies nationally, but the polling could not be organized in 26 constituencies in Amhara⁴⁴ and Oromia⁴⁵ region and some constituencies in the Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz region.

NEBE has cancelled plans to hold elections in Tigray, which is currently largely under TPLF control.

⁴⁴ 18 constituencies in Amhara region

⁴⁵ 8 constituencies in Oromia region

The electoral commission⁴⁶ announced in a statement dated 21 September 2021 that “We *have not decided how and when the election will be held in these places. However, since the number of constituencies is small, we will decide when to hold the election collectively together*”.

At the time of the interview, in December 2021, the CECEO secretariat was not sure how it would be able to maintain its staff and operate in the future. The secretariat and activities are highly dependent on the donors.

Financial sustainability appears to be central to the resilience of the CECEO and this could potentially affect its operational capacity.

The project had a very limited implementation timeframe, and some interventions would have been more sustainable if a follow-up could have been done on a longer period

According to the PEV coordinator, “the project had trained the TOT, but the project has not tested them. There is a need to have a follow-up mechanism after coaching the TOT to make sure the initiative is sustainable, there was no roll-out resources of the TOT during the life of the project”.

This would have been instrumental to further scale up the activity.

3.7. Gender, youth and vulnerable groups: To what extent have the interventions of the project addressed the issues of human rights, women's, youth and disenfranchised groups?

In line with its original design, the project has worked a lot to engage youth, women and vulnerable groups in its activities

To increase the inclusiveness of the electoral process, the PEV project document included in its design several activities to engage women, youth and people living with disabilities in various activities.

In line with its original design, many activities have been implemented. The activities were the following: Policy recommendations on inclusion in the electoral process were provided, mapping of entry points for structured engagement with youth movements, workshops for youth, qualitative study on women ‘s political participation, youth and women associations benefited from the LEAD sessions for women, youth and PWD’s, LEAD essentials for marginalized groups, training of elders, capacitation and advisory support for women in fragile localities, public outreach for women and vulnerable groups

There is evidence that PEV is a gender-sensitive project that has developed many activities to increase the participation of vulnerable groups.

⁴⁶ Electoral board spokeswoman Solyana Shimeles

In their report of electoral observation June 2021, the NDI stated that “Thus, despite progress in some respects, women, ethnic minorities as well as persons with disabilities (PWDs), internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other groups remained largely disempowered in the electoral process”.

4. Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The overall design of the PEV was highly relevant in the context of Ethiopia which opened the democratic space to non-state actors after years of repression.

The financing of the Action through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace which focused on crisis management and peacebuilding was very relevant as well.

In less than 28 months, the PEV demonstrated that CSOs’ members could not only do voter education and observe the elections, but they could work on various election-related issues.

PEV established through CECOIE an institutional mechanism with the CSOs’ to deter and prevent electoral violence. The project did a lot to address the issue of violence and to some extent, there is evidence that the project participated in the 2021 peaceful general elections.

PEV contributed to the establishment of an extensive pool of capacitated electoral stakeholders through the consolidating of an influential network that can operate in election conflict prevention in various regions of Ethiopia including the Tigray, Somali, Oromia regions.

Currently, CECOIE has 176 member organizations involved in human rights, youth, women, PWDs, and indigenous groups covering all Ethiopia regions.

ECES and its partners delivered strong thematic expertise in a country where the context was complicated. Strengthening and developing a network of CSOs’ to deliver the activities have proven to be effective in terms of outreach, inclusiveness, and geographic coverage, given the social, ethnic, and religious diversity of the country and the time constraints.

During the evaluation process, one respondent, a member of the CECOIE coalition reported that the project did a very good job in terms of geographic coverage and that it "*engaged a lot of civil society members.*"⁴⁷

In addition, PEV through an inclusive approach has been one of the strong voices of the most vulnerable groups, working towards inclusion, tolerance and peace at the grassroots, regional and national level.

As well, NEBE acknowledged the important role played by the project in civic and voter education.

The result of the project suggests that PEV contributed to a healthier civil society whose members have come to understand the extent to which they can contribute to transparent, peaceful, and inclusive elections in their community and build a more mature democracy. This is a milestone.

⁴⁷ Ref: CECOIE coordinator

After 27 months of implementation, the project has reached its term and many stakeholders interviewed suggested that in the current Ethiopian context, the design of a PEV 2 would be strongly recommended based on the lessons learned.

4.2 Lessons learned & Recommendations

1. The valuable contribution of civil society to a peaceful environment in the Ethiopian context

Lessons learned: The project demonstrated that civil society has a legitimate role to play in the dynamics to prevent electoral conflicts and related violence

Lessons learned: The value of electoral violence prevention work is crucial in a country prone to community-based conflict. During the project period, the PEV gained relevance after tensions escalated in the regions of Tigray, Amhara, Afar and Oromia, requiring reconciliation and mediation efforts among communities throughout the country.

Recommendation: In light of the numerous conflicts⁴⁸ in Ethiopia and the volatile environment, Ethiopian civil society should continue engaging in various activities to prevent, mitigate and manage violence in communities that may occur during and outside of election periods.

2. The overall approach of the project has demonstrated good performances within the time constraints.

Lessons learned: The multi-stakeholder capacity-building approach to develop the capacities of the civil society through a coalition of the CSOs' within a limited period has proven to be effective in terms of outreach, inclusiveness, and geographic coverage

Lessons learned: Training in leadership and electoral governance fit perfectly in this type of context and can be combined to add value to capacity building in the area of elections and conflict prevention.

Recommendation: For the project and donors, to capitalize on the positive outcome and to continue building on the methodology that has proven to be effective and if necessary, to export this expertise from one country to the other “If you got the right expertise and it is solid expertise, it can, be applied to another context, and adjust a little bit, then the value formula can be transported “⁴⁹

Recommendation: If a similar project was to be implemented with similar objectives, a multi-stakeholder capacity-building approach with a leadership component should be developed through a network of CSOs.

3. Recruitment of the Project Team and diversity

⁴⁸ A context with a lot of victims of armed conflicts, internally displaced person

⁴⁹ Fransesco Carboni - EEAS-Nairobi – kenya

Lesson learned: The PEV team members came from different countries, with a lot of south/south interaction, different ages and groups but with strong expertise. It was a very diverse team that managed to be integrated very quickly into the Ethiopian context where actors are rather suspicious of foreigners.

Recommendation: In a country like Ethiopia, where there is some mistrust and sensitivity to foreign aid, the cultural diversity of the implementation team is an added value that facilitates the smooth implementation of activities. It facilitates the building of bridges between individuals to overcome cultural differences.

4. The electoral cycle of Ethiopia is not completed yet

Lessons learned: The electoral cycle is not completed yet because of pending elections in some constituencies that are expected to be organized by the NEBE in the coming months. As well, as per the constitution of Ethiopia⁵⁰, local elections have to be organized.

Recommendation: These forthcoming elections present various challenges including a sensitive political environment and CECOIE has an important role to play to prevent electoral violence and increase the integrity of these elections.

5. CECOIE network is a legitimate body, but which requires support

Lessons learned: CECOIE is a young network and preliminary results suggest that it has become a legitimate and influential network in the country in less than 3 years, but its institutional sustainability presents some challenges in the absence of further donor support.

Recommendation: Providing operational and institutional support to CECOIE for the forthcoming election. It would be advisable that the Secretariat receive core funding support so that it can still function

6. The donor community can play a very important role to coordinate and support CECOIE sustainability

Lessons learned: Several donors were interested to finance the activities of CECOIE but they preferred to channel this support through a mechanism of sub-grant organized by ECES through the basket fund due to “ administrative challenges “.

Lessons learned: The deployment of the domestic observers had a funding gap. ECES provided the Irish and Danish embassies with a very credible financial management system that they could rely on to contribute to the financing of deployment of the observers. The establishment of the Basket Fund has been a good practice to overcome some of the procedural challenges, but the delays were very tight and the late disbursement of funds was a logistical challenge.

Recommendation: Raising funds for CECOIE through the establishment of a platform and increasing information and awareness among the donor community on the electoral agenda, the needs of the CSOs’ and resources available long before the elections.

⁵⁰ Under the current constitution, Ethiopia conducts local, regional, and federal elections.

Recommendation: Strengthening the administrative and organizational capacity of CECOIE to manage grants and provide rigorous accountability to facilitate CECOIE financial sustainability.

Recommendation: For the coalition and CSO's, identifying and anticipating the needs and working openly and transparently on the budgets so that the donors get a clear picture of what resources are needed long before the elections.

7. Increasing the sustainability of the project activities through an extension of the timeframe

Lessons learned: The project had a very limited implementation period, and some interventions, such as training of trainers (TOT), would have been more sustainable if follow-up could have been done beyond the project period. This would have been instrumental to further scale up the activity.

Lessons learned: The introduction of an NSA-led early warning mechanism in the project activities provides some challenges that suggest that it requires more resources and investment to be fully operational and sustainable.

Lessons learned: There was a real appetite for the project's activities among the CSO members and especially among the university's students. It was a life-changing experience for many of the participants of the training.

Lessons learned: The LEAD training proved to have an enormous impact, especially the inter-religious meetings and the meetings between communities *religious and traditional leaders*. These dialogue sessions gained relevance during the life of the project in a country where 96 % of the population is religious.

Recommendation: Designing a PEV 2 that will be implemented throughout the electoral cycle, with an implementation period of at least a minimum of 3 to 4 years to increase impact and sustainability

Recommendation: Targeting youth and university students to increase the impacts

8. Promoting an inclusive electoral process

Lessons learned: In terms of leadership, Ethiopia has a strong male-dominated environment despite various engagements to empower women in the electoral process women. As well youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and internally displaced persons (IDPs)⁵¹ are underrepresented in the electoral process. This suggests that these issues have not been tackled enough.

Recommendation: Engaging more women trainers in the activities of capacity building, more women coach in similar projects to increase the voice of women.

Recommendation: Increasing awareness-raising activities, especially voter education, and targeting women, youth and marginalized communities, especially in remote areas, throughout the electoral cycle and using a wide range of media and indigenous languages.

⁵¹ NDO – election report -domestic observation report 2021

INTERVIEWS

PROJECT TEAM

- Adina Borcan - Institutional Communication Expert
- Ambachew Deresse - Senior CSOs and Political Expert
- Ameni Gassoumi, Enaam AlArj - Finance Manager
- Amirouch Nedjaa - Media monitoring expert
- Daria Paprocka - Election Expert (Electoral political economy analysis)
- David LE NOTRE ECES Representative in Ethiopia and Senior Election expert
- Franck BALME – EURECS coordinator
- Gorka Gamarra –ECES finance and coordination assistant
- Jack Michael Bryan - Project officer (GoInnovation/LEAD Beyond
- Lidya Yeshaneh - Communication Assistant
- Maeregu Habtemariam - Election Expert (FoF)
- Melete Gebregiorgis Tekle -Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Officer
- Rindai Vava – PEV Project Coordinator
- Sisay Melese - Senior Political Party Expert
- Steadman Harrison - Senior Capacity Development and Training Expert (GoInnovation/LEAD Beyond
- Yohannes Yadagne - National Capacity Development and Training Expert (Go Innovation)
- Zefanias Matsimbe - Senior Election Trainer

UE & IDP 's

- Franklin Oduro - NDI Director -Ethiopia
- Alula Muluemebet - Governance senior program manager. Irish Embassy – Ethiopia
- Trine Louise Maggard -Team leader Bilateral Affairs –Danish Embassy -Ethiopia
- Lope Galleco – EUD Ethiopia EEAS-Addis Ababa -Ethiopia
- Fransesco Carboni - EEAS-Nairobi – kenya

NEBE

- Bizuwork Kelete - NEBE board member
- Yenew Zegeye – NEBE Senior officer

CECOE, Media, IRC

- Abera Hailemariam- Program Coordinator / Director of CECOE
- Edna Alemayehu- Program Officer- CECOE
- Biniam Abate- Election Observation Coordinator
- Moti Daba – IRC- training participant
- Meraf Admasu -CECO participant training (Women/youth capacity building training)
- Daniel Yohannes- Media training participant