



Kenya

Political Situation

On March 4, 2013, Kenya held its first elections since 2007, when post-election violence resulted in 1,500 deaths and the displacement of more than 600,000. Despite some flaws in the electoral process, domestic and international election observers characterized the polls as mostly credible. The elections marked the first polls since the passage of a new constitution in August 2010, which introduced sweeping changes to the political system, including: the creation of a new devolved system of government that transfers authority for many government functions from the national level to 47 newly-created counties; reduced presidential powers; the introduction of a bicameral system; the introduction of majority and minority parties in the national assembly; a more defined separation of powers between the three branches of government; electoral reforms; a restructured judiciary; security sector and land reforms; affirmative action for under-represented groups; and an expanded bill of rights.

Many political and logistical obstacles will have to be overcome to ensure the successful implementation of the constitution and associated legislation, especially during the transition to devolved government. While progress has been made to provide some of the necessary foundations for general elections and the devolution process, the overall reform process has been marked by delays and uncertainties. The political polarization that was evident in the pre-election period has continued into the post-election period, and may pose challenges during the transition to devolution.

The success of devolution in Kenya will depend on the extent to which political leaders understand and respond to citizens' concerns, share information freely, solicit feedback about their own performance, and respect the rights of minority populations. Going forward, government institutions, civil society, political parties and citizens face a challenging period as they prepare for devolution, and Kenyan leaders are under increasing pressure to continue rebuilding their country and avoid a repeat of the 2007 post-election crisis.

Current Activities

NDI has supported Kenyan efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and advance democratic reforms since 1993. Programs initially provided skills training to women interested in politics and worked with nonpartisan civic groups to monitor elections. Since 2001, NDI and its local partners have benefitted from the support of various donors, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the British Foreign Office.

Political Parties

NDI has helped Kenya's major political parties build consensus on issues of national importance, engage in dialogue with each other and the election commission, comply with the new constitution, and enhance their ability to represent citizens' interests. NDI's assistance has helped political parties improve their understanding of the needs and priorities of Kenyan citizens to develop representative, issue-based policy platforms.

Through work with parties and civil society, NDI also is helping women and young people overcome barriers to political participation. The Institute supports the Inter-Party Youth Forum, which brings together youth from the main political parties in Kenya. NDI also helped women candidates share their platforms through radio programs during the nomination period; nine of these women went on to be elected during the March 4 polls.

NDI has contributed to the constitutional implementation process by supporting the participation of political parties and civil society organizations in discussions on what should be included in new legislation being debated in parliament. The Institute supported improved communications between political party leadership and the electoral commission during the reform process through the creation of political party liaison committees (PPLC). The PPLCs have been established nationally and in each of the 47 counties and provide a venue for regular dialogue on contentious issues during constitutional implementation. An NDI Leadership and Campaign Academy was created in 2011 to equip potential candidates with the knowledge and skills to run successful campaigns and become strong leaders once elected. It has trained 1,688 potential candidates, including more than 700 women. A manual accompanying the training has reached thousands more. On election day, 50 LCA graduates were elected into office in Kenya.

Election Observation

In addition to its work with political parties, NDI works with the Kenyan Election Observation Group (ELOG), a coalition of 11 civil society organizations, to independently monitor electoral and political processes. Since its inception in 2010, NDI has worked with ELOG to strengthen its capacity as a long-term, systematic domestic monitoring organization. Ahead of the 2013 polls, NDI supported ELOG to deploy 542 long-term observers in July 2012 to provide analysis and information about the electoral environment in the months before the elections. NDI also worked with ELOG member organizations to conduct monitoring in four thematic areas: women's participation; campaign finance legislation; politically-motivated violence; and auditing and updating the voter registry.

In May 2012, NDI hosted a pre-election delegation to Kenya to consider the state of electoral preparedness, review the broader political environment, examine factors that could affect the credibility of the electoral process, and offer recommendations to support increased dialogue and consensus building toward peaceful, credible elections. The delegation found that remarkable progress has been made in reforming Kenya's election laws, and it developed a set of 44 recommendations to the electoral commission, political parties, religious and civil society leaders, and citizens to remove uncertainties that could threaten the integrity of the elections.

On election day, with NDI support, ELOG deployed approximately 1,500 trained, accredited, nonpartisan rapid response monitors to a statistically representative sample of polling stations to conduct a parallel vote tabulation. During election week, ELOG released statements with information from PVT observers on the opening of polls, the voting process, and the vote tallying process. Following the release of the official election results, ELOG released a final statement verifying that the official results fell within the PVT projected ranges for each candidate.