

BALLOT THE

A Newsletter of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC)

30

ISSUE 17

October - December 2024

Youth empowerment

Role of IEBC in empowering Kenya's youth through Digital Engagement

75% Kenyans under the age of 35

National Council for Population and Development (NCPD)

Kenyan youth are highly active on digital platforms

Polls conducted in January 2024 showed that

70-90% of respondents use WhatsApp and TikTok frequently.



Global Data Platform Statista

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Supporting women

Commission Pledges to Support Women Attain Full Potential at Workplace, Says DCS Kulundu

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Breaking the stigma

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Lessons from the Unites States Elections



Photo: AI Generated

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The Ballot newsletter is a publication of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC)

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Safeguarding Democracy:
IEBC's Bold Steps in Data Protection



Word from the Commission Secretary/CEO

Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS

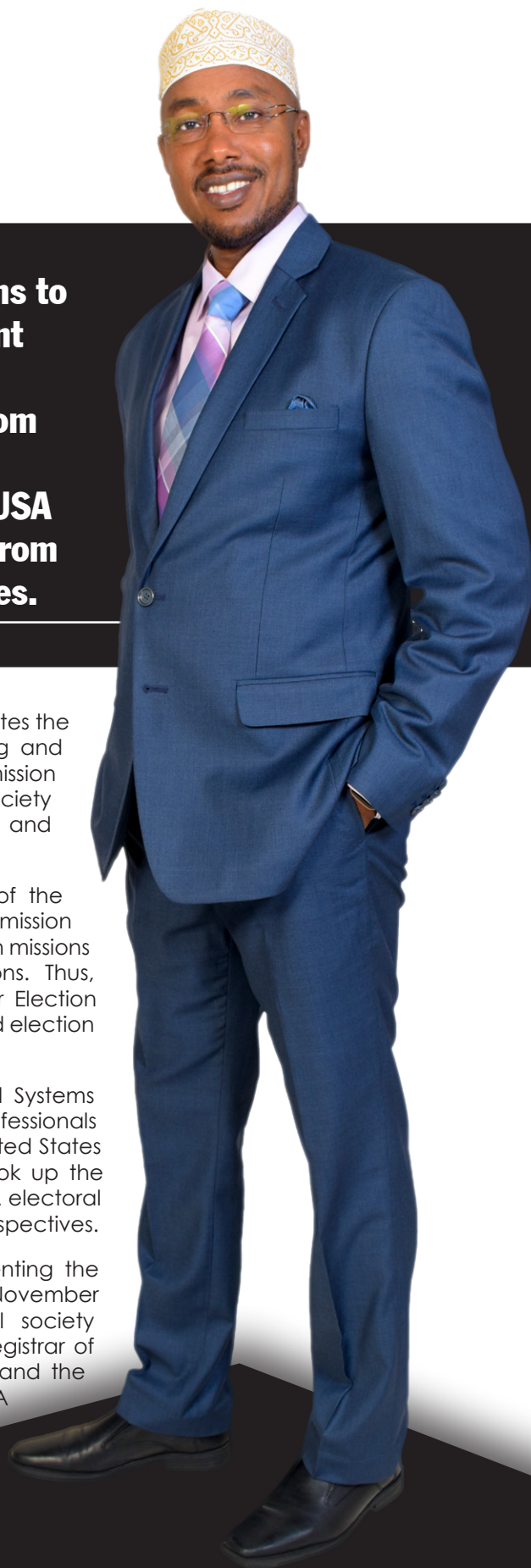
The Commission sends out delegations to learn from other Election Management Bodies' experiences in election observation missions. I led a team from IEBC to learn more about the 2024 United States Election Program and USA electoral system and discuss voting from comparative international perspectives.

Article 88(4)(h) of the Constitution of Kenya mandates the Commission to facilitate observation, monitoring and evaluation of elections. To this extent, the Commission builds partnership and collaboration with Civil Society Organisations to support election observation and promote democracy.

Stemming from the Post-Election Evaluation (PEE) report of the 2022 General Election, it was recommended that the Commission should capitalise on peer exchange and election observation missions to enhance its knowledge, understanding and operations. Thus, the Commission sends out delegations to learn from other Election Management Bodies' (EMBs) experiences in conferences and election observation missions.

Therefore, when the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) sought out the Commission to join other election professionals and stakeholders as part of the observation team to the United States Election Program (USEP) 2024, for exchange of ideas, I took up the challenge and led a team from IEBC to learn about the USA electoral system and discuss voting from comparative international perspectives.

Of course, the Commission was not the only one representing the country. In fact, Kenya sent over 20 delegates for the 5th November 2024 US Presidential Election from political parties, civil society organisation, election management body, Office of The Registrar of Political Parties, Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) and the Judiciary. This was the 60th presidential election since USA gained its independence.



IFES organised an exchange programme for representatives on USA basic electoral system covering strengths and weaknesses, the eve of elections reflections from the presidential campaign trail, information integrity, artificial intelligence and freedom of speech. They also deliberated on trust in USA elections, election technology, 34 years of Americans with disabilities Act and out-of-country and absentee voting.

Indeed, election observations are crucial in cementing democracy as they enhance the quality of elections, build public confidence, boost electoral integrity and strengthen civil society's capacity to promote citizen participation and foster accountability in the electoral processes.

Moreover, it can deter manipulation and fraud or expose such malpractices, hence improve the transparency of the electoral process. This builds trust in the democratic process and boosts the legitimacy of governments that emerge from such elections. Observation can also help in the assessment and advancement of inclusion in

electoral processes.

During the mission IFES also organised an exchange programme for representatives on USA basic electoral system covering strengths and weaknesses; the eve of elections reflections from the presidential campaign trail; information integrity, artificial intelligence and freedom of speech; trust in USA elections; election technology in the USA, 34 years of Americans with disabilities Act and out-of-country and absentee voting. Representative of the EMBs expressed appreciation of what other EMBs are doing and sought clarifications on the topics.

Key Highlights

Early Voting

One of the interesting experiences I observed, which can easily be borrowed into Kenyan electoral processes, is early voting, where voters were allowed to cast their ballots either in person or via mail. Almost all states offer early voting, but the length of early voting period varies from state to state. For example, on the morning of the election, over 88 million mail-in and early in-person votes had been cast. Given that those who have reached majority age in USA is approximately 246 million, the percentage of those who voted early is significant and can influence an election outcome.

Electoral Technology

Voting equipment deployed in the United States varies from state to state and depends on the resources available in the respective state. Some states use electronic devices to record votes, while others use paper ballots. Results tabulation method also varies from state to state.

The United States used several systems. First, there was the optical scan paper ballot systems where voters mark their votes by filling in the box or oval shape on the ballot paper. Second, there was the Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) system where votes are recorded directly into a computer memory through interface such as touchscreens, dials or mechanical buttons; and third, the Ballot-Marking Devices and Systems (BMDS) where voters electronically select their valid contest options on an electronically presented ballot.

Polling

The United States covers several time zones, reflecting its vast geographical expanse making it almost impossible for one to traverse it in a day. Due to time constraints and distance, I only observed one polling station in Washington DC and two in Virginia.

Lessons Learnt

Trust in electoral systems and processes around administration of election is very important. EMBs must strategize on how they can build their trust through engagement of citizens throughout the electoral cycle.

There is a direct relationship between trust and extent of technology used. The higher the trust, the higher the likelihood of technology use acceptability.

Simple electoral technologies enhance transparency and acceptability of election results. Use of technology in polling has eliminated the cost of printing expensive ballot papers with numerous security features.

Artificial intelligence, social and digital media will continue influencing methods of citizen engagement. As EMBs contemplate use of these

It is recommended that, as a Commission, we borrow from the US Presidential Election, especially in electoral technologies used for voting, early voting and the use of social and digital media, including artificial intelligence in elections administration.

tools, care must be taken on their limitations and how inherent risks associated with them can be mitigated.


EMBs must continue to benchmark with best EMBs in advanced democracy but only employ home-based solution that fit their contexts.

Recommendations

It is recommended that, as a Commission, we borrow from the US Presidential Election, especially in electoral technologies used for voting, early voting and the use of social and digital media, including artificial intelligence in elections administration. The Commission must also develop and implement deliberate long and short-term strategies for building public trust in its operations.

Further, let's implement the International Visitors Exchange Program where EMBs learn from practitioners through presentations on key thematic areas and enhance capacity building of staff in the safe use of emerging technologies and include other stakeholders like judiciary, civil society organisations and other duty bearers.

Colleagues, I welcome you to read this 17th edition of the Ballot Magazine. This magazine will always provide the voice and the platform to express yourself and give feedback on our work and electoral processes. Let's keep engaging!



Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS
Commission Secretary/CEO

Editorial

17th

Welcome to the 17th edition of the Ballot Magazine.

This year has seen us not only host election management bodies on benchmarking tours, but also the Commission staff have had opportunities to join observation missions in countries that have held elections in the recent past.

Therefore, this Issue highlights some experiences gained from the election observation missions and lessons the Commission can draw from the USA elections. Further, it discusses other topical issues such as data protection, internet of things, technology facilitated gender based violence and gender disinformation among others.

I urge all of us to interact with this Issue. I am, therefore, confident it provides articles that are inspirational, educational and knowledgeable.

Colleagues, as the year 2024 comes to a close, we appreciate all of you for the contributions and feedback received which have led to improvement of The Ballot. Kudos to the Editorial Team for overseeing the publishing of The Ballot throughout the year.

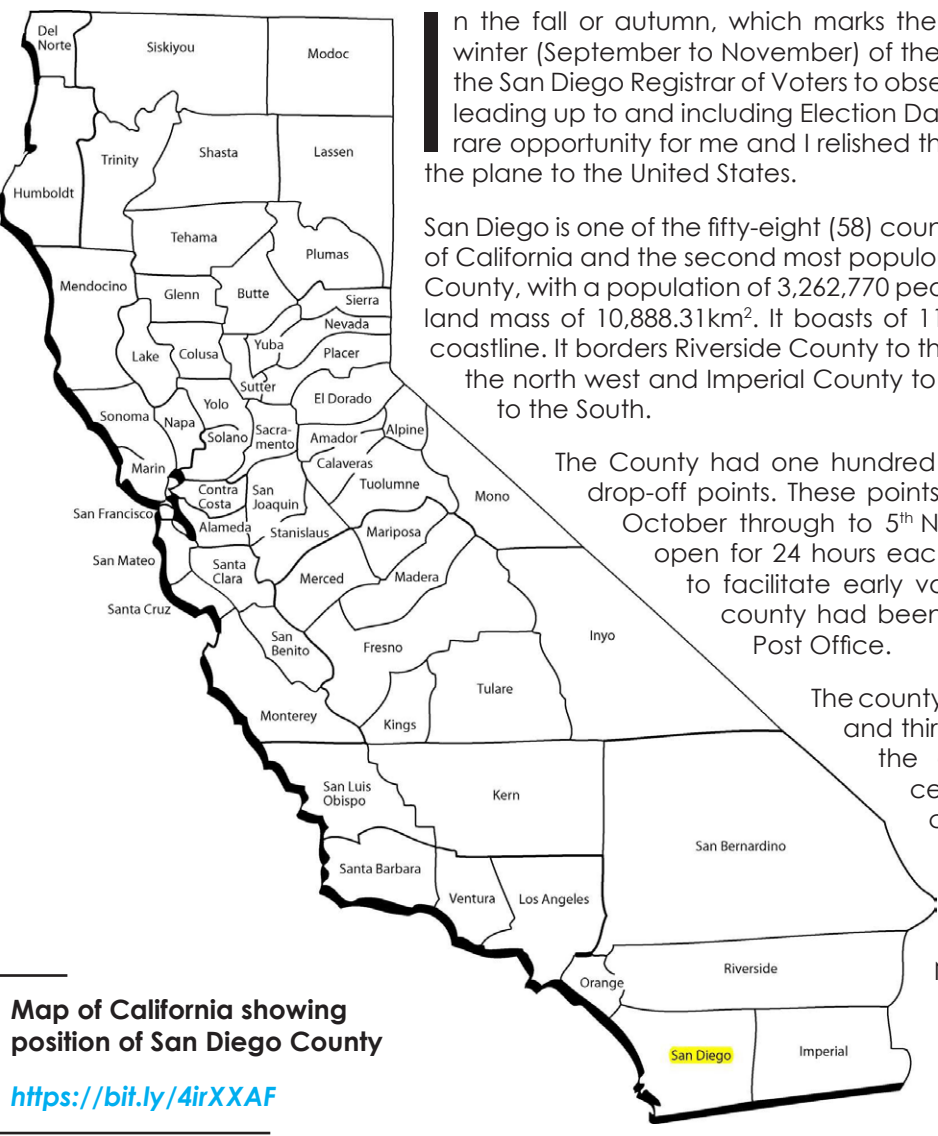
Enjoy the reading!

This Issue highlights some experiences during the election observation missions and lessons the Commission can draw from the USA elections. Further, it discusses other topical issues such as data protection, internet of things, technology facilitated gender based violence and gender disinformation among others.

Efficiency of San Diego poll process

This article details my experience on key technologies and procedures that could inspire improvement in election management in Kenya and other African countries. San Diego is one of the fifty-eight (58) counties that make up the State of California and the second most populous county after Los Angeles County with a population of 3,262,770 people as of 2023

By Charles Maina, Senior Elections Officer, Mwea Constituency



Map of California showing position of San Diego County
<https://bit.ly/4irXXAF>

In the fall or autumn, which marks the transition from summer to winter (September to November) of the year 2024, I was invited by the San Diego Registrar of Voters to observe the electoral processes leading up to and including Election Day on 5th November. It was a rare opportunity for me and I relished the assignment as I boarded the plane to the United States.

San Diego is one of the fifty-eight (58) counties that make up the State of California and the second most populous county after Los Angeles County, with a population of 3,262,770 people as of 2023. It has a total land mass of 10,888.31km². It boasts of 113 kilometers of the Pacific coastline. It borders Riverside County to the North, Orange County to the north west and Imperial County to the East. It borders Mexico to the South.

The County had one hundred and fifty-one (151) ballots drop-off points. These points were operational from 8th October through to 5th November 2024. They were open for 24 hours each day including weekends to facilitate early voting as each voter in the county had been sent a ballot through the Post Office.

The county had a total of two hundred and thirty-five (235) voting centers, the equivalent of our polling centers. Some of these voting centers were operational from 26th October to 5th November 2024, while the majority were open from 2nd November to 5th November 2024.

San Diego

Population	Land Mass	Ballots Drop-off Points	Voting centers
3,262,770	10,888.31km ²	151	235



Early voting and accessibility

San Diego County prioritises voter convenience with a wide network of accessible ballot drop-off points and voting locations. For example;

- El Cajon Branch Library: A public library serving a busy area.
- Major Market: A supermarket, increasing convenience for shoppers.

The Ballots drop-off points are unmanned, but the ballots are collected daily by electoral staff and delivered to the "Tallying Centre".

Ballot drop box at El Cajon Branch Library

Sampled voting centers, the equivalent of our polling centers

- Golden Hill Recreation Centre-Clubhouse: A familiar community space.
- Girl Scouts Leadership Centre-Baker Baum Clark Room: Leveraging a community organisation.
- San Diego LGBTQ Community Super Center: Ensuring inclusivity for the LGBTQ+ community.
- Spreckels Masonic Temple Dining Hall: Demonstrating adaptability in choosing locations.
- North Park Recreation Center Meeting Room: Utilising a public meeting room.
- Cherokee Point Elm School Auditorium: A convenient and central location.

The diversity of voting locations ensures voting accessibility for a wide range of citizens, regardless of background or location within the county.

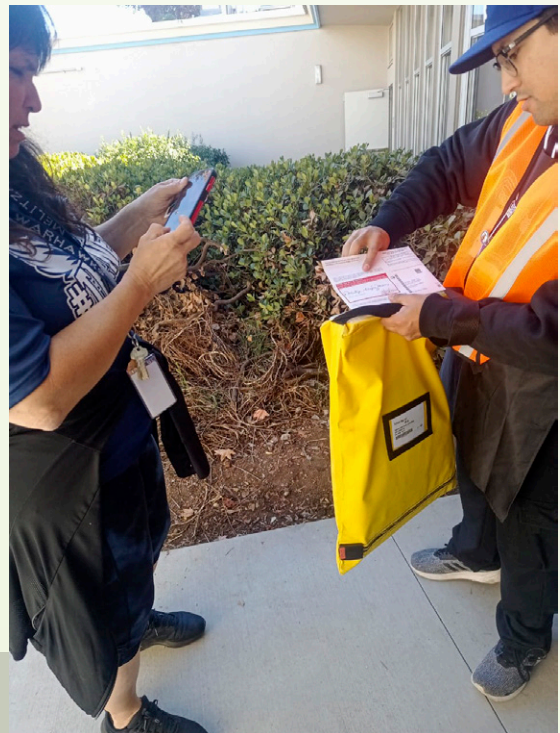
Voting procedures

A voter may either:

- Send their duly filed and signed ballot paper through the Post office to the Registrar of Voters office located at 5600 Overland Drive. Postal services are very efficient in the County.
- Hand deliver the duly filled and signed ballot paper to one of the various ballot drop-off points spread across the county,
- Hand deliver the duly filled and signed ballot paper to one of the various voting centres spread across the county, or
- Present themselves for in-person voting at any of the voting centers.

A voter who presents themselves to the voting center is identified by use of the poll book.

A voter delivers a duly filed and signed Ballot in a sealed envelope



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The electronic poll book

On arrival at the voting center, a voter presents their identification document such as ID, social security number, driving license or post office number to any of the check-in clerks at the voting station who check in the poll book if the person is a registered voter.

The poll books are all networked within a Virtual Private Network (VPN) (with a router in each voting center) so that any voter who visits a Voting Centre is registered on all the poll books as having voted. This mitigates against multiple voting.

The use of electronic poll books and Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs) further streamlines the process, enhancing efficiency and accuracy.



In-person voting

Once identified, the election official directs the voter to one of the many BMDs. The official unlocks the device using a special "key". The voter is presented with a soft copy image of the ballot paper on the screen. The voter proceeds to make their choices on the screen, and then once finished, they print the ballot choices summary. The marked ballot printout is then placed inside the ballot box.



Vote tabulation center

The Registrar of Voters office serves as the central point for vote tabulation, employing a multi-step process that prioritises accuracy and security. These processes include:

STEP
ONE 01

Sorting and scanning
mail ballot envelopes

STEP
TWO 02

Signature verification by
election staff

STEP
THREE 03

Reconciliation to ensure
vote validity

STEP Four 04

Voter notification by the Registrar's office for emerging issues.

STEP Five 05

Reconciliation to ensure vote validity

STEP Six 06

Opening, quality assurance and boxing
Mail ballot envelopes are opened in batches.

STEP Seven 07

Ballot scanning and out-stacking conditions

STEP Eight 08

Scan and tabulate mail ballots

- a. Ballots are examined for damage, tears or markings that could interfere with scanning.
- b. Envelopes with incorrect numbers of ballots or sample ballots are flagged.
- c. A quality assurance team reviews flagged ballots.
- d. Damaged ballots are sent for "remarking."
- e. Ballots marked with colours other than black, or blue are enhanced with a highlighter.
- f. Cleared ballots are placed in cartons for scanning.

Out-stacking conditions include: over votes, blank ballots, ambiguous marks, write-in candidates, damaged ballots and dual-fed ballots. On the other hand, flagged ballots are reviewed by election workers using an "adjudication application."

The integrated vote tabulation system

It is noteworthy the ballot tabulation system can scan and tabulate 300 ballots per minute. Bearing in mind that the ballots are printed on both sides, and that one ballot has about 20 elections, this tabulation system is highly efficient.

The system tabulates and presents a report on each of the 20 elections and captures a digital image of each ballot. This comes in handy in case of an audit.

- a. Scanned ballots are grouped in batches with a cover sheet.
- b. Batch information is recorded on a batch slip and the ballot box.
- c. Ballot boxes are sealed and placed on carts for secure storage.



*Integrated
vote tabulation
system machine*

Election night and beyond

- a. Preliminary results are reported on election night.
- b. Counting and tabulation continue until all eligible votes are included.

Key takeaways for African EMBs

- a. In Kenya, each ballot paper is for a single election while in the 5th November 2024 Statewide elections, the San Diego County elections ballot paper contained 20 elections on a single ballot.
- b. The use of the integrated vote tabulation system ensures fast processing of results, eliminates anxiety and opportunity for propaganda and conflict.
- c. Technology Integration: Electronic poll books, BMDs, and Automated Signature Verification System (ASVS) enhance efficiency and accuracy.
- d. Identification and signature verification: The multi-layered approach safeguards against fraud.
- e. Civic education and engagement: Proactive communication fosters transparency and trust. This is done through bulk emails, phone calls, brochures and flyers. There is also plenty of print and electronic media presence as the election period approaches.

Recommendations

- a. Adoption of new technologies in the electoral process.
- b. Pilot projects implementing elements of the San Diego model.
- c. Capacity building for election staff on new technologies.

By learning from San Diego's experience, African EMBs can enhance the integrity and efficiency of their electoral processes, strengthening democratic governance.

Once voters arrives at the polling center, they are identified and directed by an election official to one of the many Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs). The official unlocks the device using a special “key”. The voter is presented with a soft copy image of the ballot paper on the screen. The voter proceeds to make their choices on the screen, and once finished, they print the ballot choices summary. The marked ballot printout is then placed inside the ballot box.

Legal reforms

Commission seeks consensus on Election Campaign Financing law

By Ruth Makuthu, Ag. Manager, Legal Reforms, Political Parties Liaison and Campaign financing



Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS joined other stakeholders during a multi-sectoral workshop aimed at building consensus on Election Campaign Financing. Participants who attended the workshop included IEBC, Parliament, the Financial Reporting Centre, EACC, DCI, KRA, CBK among others. [Chris Musumba, IEBC]

The Commission participated in a multi-sectoral workshop aimed at building consensus on Election Campaign Financing. The workshop was hosted by the Electoral Law and Governance Institute of Africa (ELGIA).

Participating stakeholders included Parliament, IEBC, the Financial Reporting Centre, EACC, DCI, KRA, CBK, academia, key civil society organizations, and leaders representing various sectors of society.

The key objectives of the workshop were to:

- Evaluate the implementation status of Election Campaign Financing legislation.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of international best practices.
- Contextualize Kenya's constitutional, legislative, and policy framework on election campaign financing.

- Build consensus on election campaign financing reforms.
- Present comparative perspectives from other jurisdictions.
- Strengthen stakeholder collaboration for effective reform.

In his opening remarks, Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS, noted that the Commission faced challenges in operationalizing and enforcing election campaign financing laws, due to a lack of political goodwill to enact the necessary legislation.

Mr. Marjan highlighted the significance of the judgment rendered in the consolidated Constitutional Petitions No. E540 of 2021 and No. E546 of 2021, filed by Transparency International, Katiba Institute, Africog, and Philip Gichane.

The petitions sought judicial intervention to give effect to the implementation of election

campaign financing regulations. He further elaborated that, pursuant to this judgment and with support from development partners, the Commission has:

- Reviewed the Election Campaign Financing Act and generated an Election Campaign Financing (Amendment) Bill, 2024,
- Revised the Election Campaign Financing Regulations, 2024 and
- Identified strategies to address the limits on contributions and expenditures.

Mr. Marjan called on participants, particularly election stakeholders, to sustain the push for regulating election campaign financing, emphasising its necessity as a constitutional requirement.

At conclusion, the Acting Manager for Legal Reforms, Political Parties, and Campaign Financing, Ruth Makuthu, presented the current status of the Election Campaign Financing law, highlighting issues, challenges, and recommendations for improvement.

Constitutional Petitions No. E540 of 2021 and No. E546 of 2021, filed by Transparency International, Katiba Institute, Africog, and Philip Gichane sought judicial intervention to give effect to the implementation of election campaign financing regulations.

We'd Love to Hear
Your Feedback!

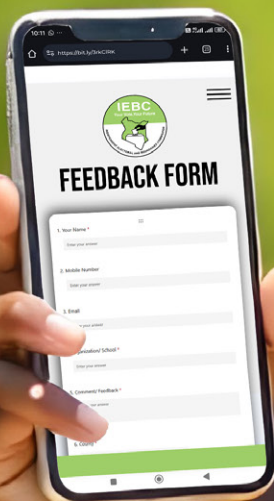


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SCAN ME!

Commission to support women attain full potential at workplace

By **Eddah Karingi, Customer Care Assistant**

The Commission has challenged women staff to perform to their full potential and chase their career dreams. Speaking during the gala of Accountants Women Association of Kenya (AWAK) annual dinner on 13th December 2024 at the Radisson Blue Hotel in Nairobi, Deputy Commission Secretary (DCS) Operations Ruth Kulundu, said this will help women secure influential positions and articulate their needs effectively.

The chief guest of the event was Dr. Fatuma Hirsi, a renowned Communication Management Expert. Dr. Hirsi has broad experience in international and public relations, strategic management

communication, reputation management, marketing and branding.

"I enjoyed every minute of the ladies' engagement and delivered a powerful storytelling address about my life focusing on the theme of the night Navigating the Leadership Journey: The Spirit of Resilience."

AWAK champions for the growth and success of women in accounting and finance through mentorship, professional development and advocacy. In doing so, the body empowers women to lead, innovate and break barriers in the industry.



Commission staff during the gala of Accountants Women Association of Kenya (AWAK) annual dinner on held in December 2024 at the Radisson Blue Hotel in Nairobi. [Eddah Karingi, IEBC]

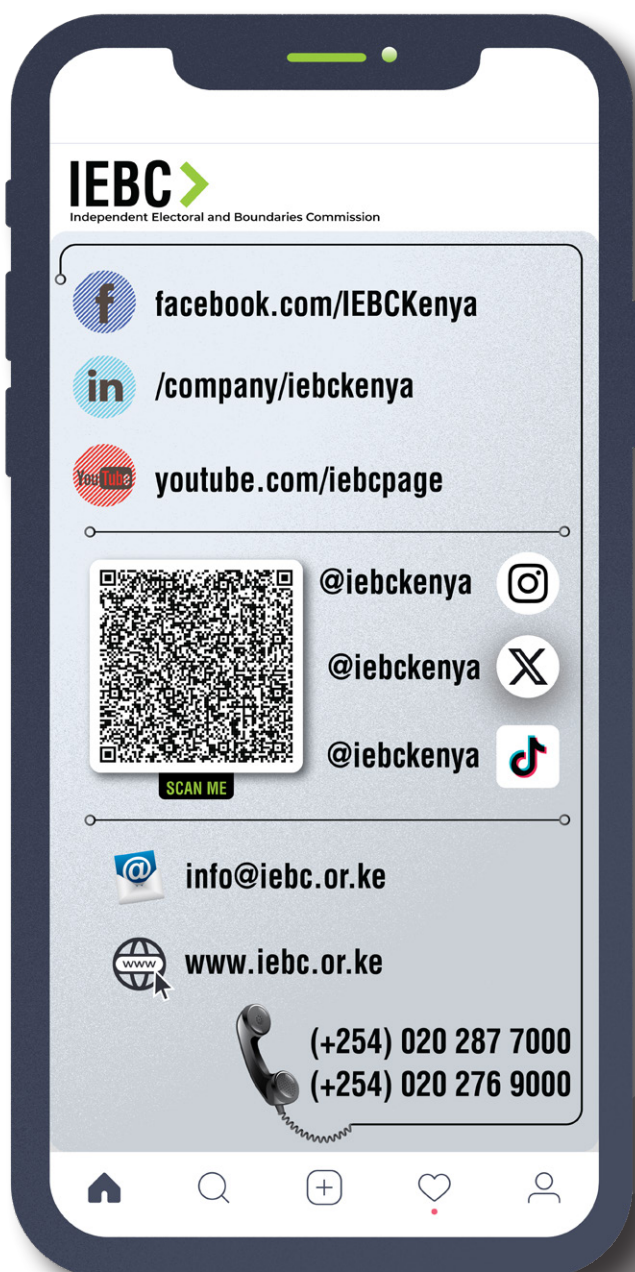
Women staff need to perform to their full potential and chase their career dreams. This will help them secure influential positions and articulate the needs of women in corporate organisations effectively.

"At the heart of my mission lies the dedication to serve humanity through effective communication and leadership guidance," she said.

In her speech, DCS Kulundu encouraged women, especially those in the Commission, to always chase their dreams undeterred. Further, she emphasized on the need to support women at the workplace.

The Commission will strengthen structures to ensure women excel in their work and remain resilient to enable IEBC deliver on its mandate.

In attendance was IEBC staff led by the DCS Kulundu.



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Balang belatedly receives the Order of the Grand Warrior, OGW award

By Chris Musumba, Ag. Senior Public Relations and Events Officer



Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS hands over the OGW national award to Gedeon Balang. Looking on is Moses Sunkuli, the Director Voter Registration and Election Operation. [Chris Musumba, IEBC]

Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS handed over the OGW National award conferred upon Gedeon Balang, the Manager Electoral Operation, who had been feted during the Jamhuri Day celebrations on 12th December 2022, but had not been presented with the award.

Balang, who received the Order of the Grand Warrior (OGW) title was among the over 500 Kenyans who had been honored by President

William Ruto during the 57th Jamhuri Day celebrations for exemplary work to the public and the country.

The awards feted at State House Nairobi, recognise distinguished and outstanding contributions to the nation in various capacities including military, public service, healthcare, and justice systems.

The award is in honour for exemplary work to the public and the country and was feted at State House Nairobi. It recognises distinguished and outstanding contributions to the nation in various capacities including military, public service, healthcare, and justice systems.



MENTAL HEALTH

Fighting stigma: Understanding and managing mental health during election period

By **Judith Kajo, Human Resource Officer**

During the election period, election officials often work long hours and under intense pressure, from dealing with high-stakes situations and managing stressful logistics to facing the emotional strain of contentious political environment. The demanding nature of their jobs can take a significant toll on their mental health such as intense stress, anxiety and burnout. Other factors like financial struggles, abuse within family systems, and other personal struggles can also worsen the election officials' mental health.

Thus, identifying and addressing the mental health needs of election staff is essential not only for their well-being, but also for the integrity and efficiency of the electoral process. By fostering a supportive environment, we can help ensure that our dedicated election officials remain resilient and capable of carrying out their vital roles.

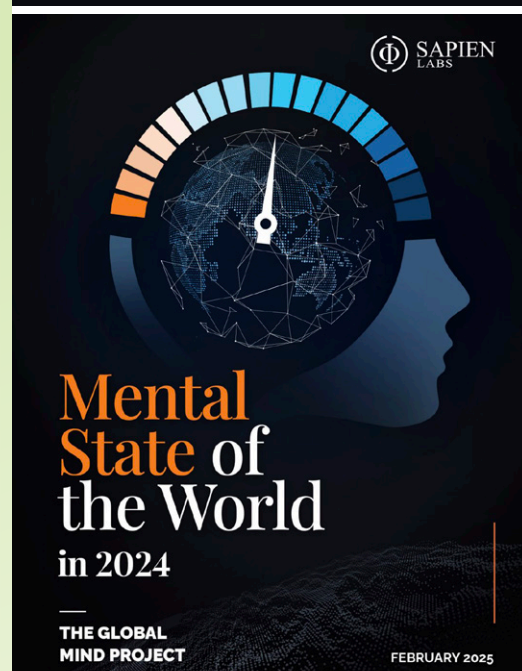
Mental health concerns and disorders can take all shapes and forms, and they can sometimes be hard to distinguish from “normal” behaviour. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health disorders continue to rise worldwide. In 2024, it is estimated that approximately 1 in 5 people globally were affected by mental health issues. This statistic underscores the urgent need for effective mental health solutions.

The 4th Annual Mental State of the World Report released in March 2024 showed that Kenya was ranked 4th, with its citizens who are either distressed or struggling ranging an average of 23. Among Kenyans, depression and anxiety disorders are the leading mental health illnesses, followed by substance use disorders. Along with depression, 61% of Kenyans feel lonely, 52% feel helpless and 33% report feeling of anger. The Public Service Commission revealed that the number of civil servants experiencing mental health issues has tripled to over 14,000 in 2023, up from 4,000 cases before 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Additionally, a majority of the Kenyan population associate mental health or its issues such as depression and anxiety, with negative narratives. This consensus leads to a low focus on the importance of mental health. It tends to alienate those who experience chronic symptoms and can make an individual feel distressed over lack of energy, for instance, or even more afraid to reach out for professional help.

The mental health of election staff and their family members is critical, particularly during high-stress periods such as election years. The unique pressures associated with managing electoral processes can lead to significant mental health challenges, not only for those directly involved in the elections but also for their families and friends who may experience secondary stressors.

4th Annual Mental State of the World Report



The 4th Annual Mental State of the World Report released in March 2024 ranked Kenya as 4th with depression and anxiety disorders being the lead mental health illnesses, followed by substance use disorders. Along with depression, 61% of Kenyans feel lonely, 52% feel helpless and 33% report feelings of anger.

Kenya Ranked 4th

23%

Kenyan citizens who are either distressed or struggling with Mental Health

Leading Mental Health Illness

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders

61% feel lonely,

52% feel helpless

33% feeling of anger

Public Service Commission revealed that

the number of civil servants experiencing mental health issues has tripled

4,000
in 2020

14,000
in 2023

250%
Increase

1. The impact of electoral processes on election officials

- a. **Anxiety and stress:** The uncertainty surrounding election outcomes, coupled with the responsibility of managing voter concerns and potential conflicts, can result in heightened anxiety levels. Staff may worry about their performance and the implications of any mistakes made during the election process.
- b. **Burnout:** Long hours and high demands can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and depersonalisation towards voters or colleagues.
- c. **Depression:** The cumulative effects of stress and burnout can contribute to feelings of hopelessness with staff feeling unsupported or undervalued in their roles.
- d. **Physical health issues:** Election staff may experience headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances or gastrointestinal issues due to prolonged stress.
- e. **Substance use:** In an attempt to cope with stress, some individuals may turn to alcohol or other substances as a form of escapism or self-medication.

2. Impact of electoral processes on families and friends' secondary stress

- a. Family members and friends may worry about long hours away from home or the emotional toll that stressful situations could take on their loved ones.
- b. **Isolation:** Due to demanding work schedules during elections, staff may have less time for family and friends' interactions leading to isolation.
- c. **Conflict:** The stress experienced by election workers can spill over into family dynamics, potentially leading to misunderstandings or conflicts at home.

3. Importance of addressing mental health concerns

Addressing these mental health concerns is crucial for several reasons:

- a. **Workplace efficiency:** Mentally healthy staff lead to better job performance and efficiency during elections. Healthy employees are more likely to be engaged and effective in their roles.



- b. **Voter confidence:** When election staff are supported in managing their mental health, they are better equipped to handle voter inquiries and concerns effectively, which enhances public confidence in the electoral process.
- c. **Family well-being:** Supporting the mental health of election workers also benefits their families by fostering healthier relationships and reducing secondary stressors associated with work-related pressures.
- d. **Long-term resilience:** By prioritising mental health support during elections, organisations can build resilience within teams that will benefit future electoral processes as well as other high-stress situations outside of elections.

In conclusion, there is a need to focus on the crucial areas of awareness, anti-stigma campaigns, and human rights protection. In coming years, the mental health and psychosocial services should strive to keep addressing ongoing concerns such as disrupted continuity of care, human rights issues, and the added challenge of mental health challenges.

Recognising and addressing the mental health concerns faced by election staff and their families is essential for maintaining a healthy workforce capable of executing fair elections, while ensuring that those involved do not suffer undue psychological distress during this critical civic duty. Fortunately, more resources are available both in-person and online on addressing mental health concerns. Therefore, election staff and/or families and friends are encouraged to seek help when mental health symptoms surface.



Stigma

IEBC participates in national conference to address technology aided by gender based violence and gender disinformation in Kenya

Some of the challenges that the Commission encountered in the Fight Against Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) include misinformation and disinformation about electoral staff which leads to profiling, information gaps on electoral information and digital divide since Kenya has a huge population that is yet to embrace technology.

By **Purity Njeru, Manager Communications and Public Affairs**

The Commission participated in a national conference on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) and Gendered Disinformation (GD) in Kenya, which was held at the Pride Inn Azzure in Nairobi on 9th December 2024.

The conference was organized by Ministry of Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage in collaboration with National Democratic Institute.

Thought leaders, policymakers and advocates deliberated policy gaps, legal reforms and strategies for safer digital spaces in politics. The workshop was graced by Hon. Chief Justice, Martha Koome, who noted that while technology had offered transformative avenues for removing barriers in access to resources, employment, empowerment and active participation in socioeconomic and political spheres, it had provided a platform for amplification and perpetration of violence against women online.

She urged participants to remember that women and girls have a right to enjoy their freedom free of discrimination and violence both online and offline. Thus, their privacy and data protection be safeguarded.

The Commission was represented by Purity Njeru, Manager Communications and Public Affairs, who participated in Panel 1 which focused on Promoting Gender Sensitive Digital Security Practices in Public Spaces and Electoral and Political Processes.

In this panel, she discussed:

Specific challenges that IEBC encountered in addressing TFGBV during elections, particularly for women candidates, voters, and electoral staff; and measures in place or planned to promote gender-

Remember women and girls have a right to enjoy their freedom free of discrimination and violence both online and offline. Thus it is imperative that their privacy and data protection be safeguarded.





Purity Njeru, Manager Communications and Public Affairs (second left) during a national conference on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) and Gendered Disinformation (GD) in Kenya. [Courtesy NDI]

sensitive digital security during Kenya's electoral processes?

She observed that some challenges that the Commission encountered in TFGBV are misinformation and disinformation about electoral staff which leads to profiling, information gaps on electoral information, digital divide since Kenya has a huge population that is yet to embrace technology among others.

To promote gender-sensitive digital security during Kenya's electoral processes, the Commission shares targeted electoral information; collaborate with stakeholders including social media platforms to help in dealing with misinformation/disinformation; establishes a national election communication center where the public can freely call in and report incidences for appropriate action to be taken.

Moreover, the Commission partners with agencies like National Gender and Equality Commission, UNWomen among others to conduct daily and periodic media monitoring to flag out and mitigate threats and hate speech in media including the digital space.

Women are encouraged to file complaints with the electoral code of conduct committees at the national level and peace committees in the counties among others.

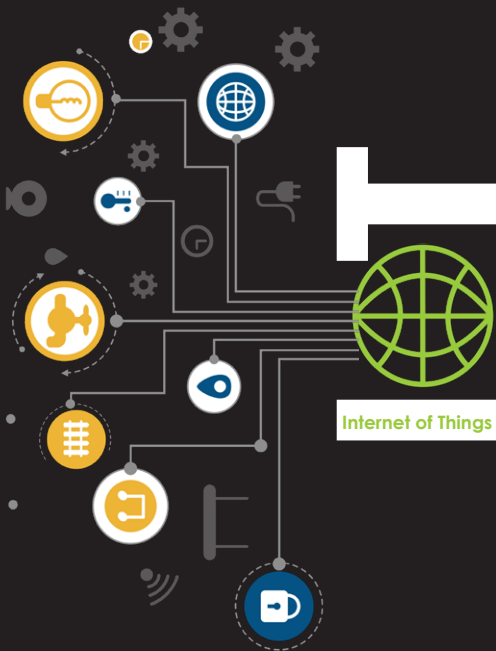
With the escalating threats posed by TFGBV and GD, participants agreed that there was need for institutions to collaborate and strive for:

- a. Enrichment of the existing framework to incorporate aspects of TFGBV,

- b. Capacity building on TFGBV, GD and data protection,
- c. Social media platforms to come up with policies to curb TFGBV and GD, and
- d. Promote responsible sharing of information.



Internet of Things offers innovative solutions to enhance electoral process



By Leonard Lewar,
System Administrator

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a network of interconnected devices embedded with sensors, software, and other technologies that enable them to collect and exchange data over the Internet without human intervention. These devices can range from ordinary ones such as household appliances and wearable devices to more complex systems such as industrial machinery and smart-city infrastructure.

The IoT is transforming industries by connecting devices to the Internet, enabling them to collect, share, and analyse data. IoT applications span various sectors, improving efficiency, convenience, and decision-making. Key application areas of IoT are:

- a. **Smart homes:** IoT remote automates and controls household devices like lights, thermostats, security systems, and appliances.
- b. **Healthcare:** IoT remote monitors patients, real-time data collection from medical devices, and predictive healthcare.
- c. **Smart cities:** Smart cities use IoT to enhance transportation, water management, waste disposal, and public safety such as smart traffic lights, waste management systems and water quality monitoring. Konza is proposed to be a technology city in Kenya.
- d. **Industrial IoT (IIoT):** In manufacturing, IoT enhances automation, predictive maintenance, and operational efficiency. Sensors and smart machines collect data to optimise production, reduce downtime, and ensure quality such as predictive maintenance, smart manufacturing, supply chain management.
- e. **Agriculture:** IoT applications in agriculture include smart farming, where sensors monitor soil conditions, crop health, and irrigation systems, leading to better resource management and higher yields.
- f. **Transportation and logistics:** IoT is revolutionizing transportation by providing real-time data for fleet management, route optimisation, and cargo tracking. Kenya is the process of building intelligent transport using IOT.
- g. **Retail:** IoT helps retailers provide personalised shopping experiences, streamline inventory management, and improve customer service. Smart shelves, beacons and RFID tags are examples of IoT tools used in retail.
- h. **Energy management:** IoT plays a significant role in energy management by enabling the smart grid, monitoring energy consumption, and improving the distribution of energy in real-time such as Smart meters (KPLC smart meters, Kenya Pipeline Company – smart oil transportation valves), energy-efficient buildings, and smart grids.
- i. **Environmental monitoring:** IoT sensors can monitor air quality, water quality, radiation levels, and other environmental factors. This helps in disaster management and reducing the impact of pollution, and climate change monitoring.
- j. **Supply chain and inventory management:** IoT enables real-time tracking of goods and materials, improving inventory accuracy, reducing waste, and optimising logistics in supply chain operations such as RFID tracking, real-time location tracking, and demand forecasting.

Election management

In the context of election management IoT applications can offer innovative solutions to enhance various aspects of the electoral process. Some of IoT applications in election management are:

- Biometric voter registration and verification: IoT devices equipped with biometric sensors can be used for voter registration, capturing biometric data such as fingerprints and facial recognition.
- Electronic voting machines (EVMs): IoT-enabled EVMs can provide secure and transparent voting processes by recording and tallying votes electronically.
- Real-time monitoring of polling stations: IoT sensors deployed at polling stations can monitor various parameters such as voter turnout, queue lengths, and equipment functionality in real-time.
- Security and surveillance: Cameras, sensors, and drones can enhance security and surveillance at polling stations and election facilities.
- Logistics and supply chain management: IoT technology can optimize logistics and supply chain management by tracking the movement of election materials.
- Public awareness and engagement: IoT-enabled communication tools such as mobile apps, SMS alerts can facilitate voter education, communication, and engagement.

Conclusion

These IoT applications in election management have the potential to improve efficiency thus, credibility of electoral processes and consolidation of democracy. Fusion between the current manual and technology (IoT) will improve believability of the outcome of the election results. However, technological and infrastructural development is still a challenge in the global south.



Procurement

IEBC resolves two decade audit issue to secure 20 generators procured by defunct ECK in 2007

By **Chris Musumba, Ag. Senior Public Relations and Events Officer**

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has finally secured 20 Olympian Generators, the last batch of 90 electric motors procured by the defunct Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) in 2007.

This resolution marks the end of a 17-year-long audit query that had plagued the Commission and its dealings with supplier Mantrac Kenya Limited.

The procurement issue originated in 2007 when the ECK sought a reliable power solution for polling and tallying centers. Mantrac Kenya Limited was contracted to supply 90 generators, each costing Kshs. 748,200, with a total value of Kshs. 14,964,000 for the remaining 20 units.

While 70 generators were delivered, 20 remained unsettled due to administrative changes following the disbandment of the ECK.

In September 2023, Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS appointed a five-member committee, led by Dickson Kwanusu, to resolve the issue. The team confirmed that the generators had been inspected, accepted, and fully paid for. Acting Director of Supply Chain Management, Ms. Khadija Ramadhani,

expressed relief over the resolution, stating that the Commission was pleased to see the matter concluded.

Mantrac Kenya Limited, which had safeguarded the generators for 17 years, urged IEBC to collect them as they required warehouse space. Kenneth Kamau, the company's Power Systems Manager, emphasised their commitment to corporate social responsibility in ensuring the generators remained secure and operational.

The generators will undergo testing before being deployed to remote IEBC field offices, strengthening operational efficiency in areas with unreliable electricity.

"The Committee is currently identifying field offices and warehouses that need a generator with priority given to remote areas. This will inform, among others, budget for delivery of the generators," said Kwanusu.

This successful resolution not only clears a longstanding audit concern, but also ensures the generators fulfill their intended purpose in enhancing electoral preparedness.



Khadija Ramadhani, Ag. Director Supply Chain Management (DSCM) with Dickson Kwanusu, Manager Administration receive dummy key from M/S Mantrac Kenya Limited officials when they collected 20 Olympian Generators.
[Chris Musumba, IEBC]

Law reforms

IEBC joins stakeholders to draft legal reform matrix to guide conduct of 2027 General Election

By **Ruth Makuthu, Ag. Manager, Legal Reforms, Political Parties Liaison and Campaign financing**

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) took a significant step toward strengthening Kenya's democracy and electoral process by actively participating in a high-level technical workshop on legal reforms from 23rd to 26th October 2024 in Machakos town.

Hosted by the Elections Observation Group (ELOG), in Machakos County, the workshop brought together key stakeholders from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and electoral duty bearers, to discuss critical reforms ahead of the 2027 General Election.

IEBC's delegation was led by the Ag. Manager Legal Reforms, Political Parties, and Campaign Financing, Ms. Ruth Makuthu. Participants provided updates on ongoing reforms and identified priority areas requiring immediate attention.

A key outcome of the workshop was the development of a draft reform matrix, designed to track the implementation of proposed changes. This tool will enable CSOs to lobby for the adoption of minimum reforms necessary for a credible election.

Additionally, the technical team reached joint resolutions, which will be shared with participating institutions before wider stakeholder engagements.

The draft reform matrix is designed to track the implementation of proposed changes. This tool will enable CSOs to lobby for the adoption of minimum reforms necessary for a credible election.

The workshop emphasised collaboration and inclusivity in driving electoral reforms.

With the 2027 General Election on the horizon, the IEBC's active involvement in these discussions underscores its commitment to a fair and transparent electoral process.

The Commission, alongside its partners, remains dedicated to implementing these reforms to safeguard the integrity of Kenya's democracy.



Participants who graced a high-level technical workshop on legal reforms organised by Electoral Law and Governance Institute for Africa (ELGIA). [Courtesy ELGIA]

Commission supports Botswana to conduct special voting for citizens living in Kenya

By Chris Musumba, Ag. Senior Public Relations and Events Officer

In a remarkable show of regional and international cooperation, the Commission stepped forward to assist Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana conduct Special Voting process for its citizens, who are residing in Nairobi on 19th October 2024.

This collaboration underscored the IEBC's commitment to strengthening diplomatic ties and supporting democratic processes beyond Kenya's borders.

The initiative was set in motion following a courtesy visit by Botswana's High Commissioner to Kenya, His Excellency Andrew Sesinyi, to the IEBC headquarters.

Welcomed by the Commission's Chief Executive Officer, Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS, the High Commissioner formally requested the IEBC's assistance in providing polling booths for Botswana's special voting exercise, scheduled for 19th October 2024, at the Botswana High Commission offices in Nairobi.

Botswana was preparing for its General Election on 30th October 2024, which would determine the composition of its 13th Parliament and local councils. As part of its electoral framework,

Botswana designated Kenya among the foreign nations where its citizens abroad could participate in special voting, ensuring the diaspora exercised their democratic rights.

In response to Botswana's request, Marjan reaffirmed the IEBC's full support, emphasising its dedication to upholding electoral integrity and fostering international collaboration. The provision of polling booths was aimed at ensuring a smooth, secure, and credible voting process in Nairobi, in line with global electoral standards.

This partnership highlights the IEBC's growing reputation as a reliable electoral institution capable of extending its expertise and resources to support democracy worldwide. It also reflects the strong bilateral relations between Kenya and Botswana, founded on mutual respect and shared values.

As Botswana moved closer to its General Election, the IEBC's role in facilitating the special voting process in Nairobi played a crucial part in enabling Botswana's citizens to participate in shaping their country's future. This collaboration stands as a testament to the power of international solidarity in advancing democracy and good governance.



Botswana High Commissioner to Kenya, Andrew Sesinyi (left) when he paid a courtesy call to IEBC and was welcomed by Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS. [Chris Musumba, IEBC]

IEBC empowers youth to engage in election through digital spaces

Kenyan youth are highly active on digital platforms. According to a global data platform, Statista, YouTube recorded 80 million visits in Kenya between September and November 2023. Polls conducted in January 2024 showed that 70-90% of respondents use WhatsApp and TikTok frequently. Additionally, 42.6% of Instagram's Kenyan audience falls within the 18-24 age bracket.

By **Joyce Onyango, Partnerships Officer**

The role of youth in any society cannot be overstated. As the backbone of both the present and the future, young people play a crucial role in shaping national progress.

Countries such as Japan, with rapidly aging populations, face significant challenges like shrinking workforces, which threaten economic stability. This highlights the urgent need for youth involvement in all facets of society, including politics and governance.

For years, Kenyan youth have been told that they are the leaders of tomorrow. However, following the anti-Finance Bill demonstrations and the ensuing assertiveness of the youth regarding matters governance, it is evident that the youth are no longer content with waiting—they want to participate in governance today.

This is understandable, considering that youth is a transitory demographic. The Commission has a responsibility to engage and facilitate their involvement in shaping the country's present and future.

Despite making up approximately 75% of Kenya's population per the Kenya Population and Housing Census Reports (KNPHS 2019) as reported by the Kenya Population and Development Conference (KPDC) 2025 held in Nairobi under the theme 'Navigating the Future, Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development in Kenya', individuals under the age of 35 remain underrepresented in the electoral process.

Impact on youth

Few youths run for office, and many do not participate as voters. By the next General Election, a significant portion of those who were under 35 during the last polls will have moved out of this category. This raises critical questions: What

message does this send to younger citizens? How does it affect those still in college or just leaving high school? The risk of growing apathy cannot be ignored.

Unfortunately, elections are rarely a subject of keen interest unless controversy arises. The five-year electoral cycle further compounds this issue; as public disenchantment often sets in between elections when elected officials fail to meet expectations.

This disengagement fosters the misconception that the electoral body is responsible for electing bad leaders. It is our duty to shift this narrative and make citizens, especially the youth, understand that leadership quality depends on their choices. One solution lies in continuous voter education.

Turn to technology

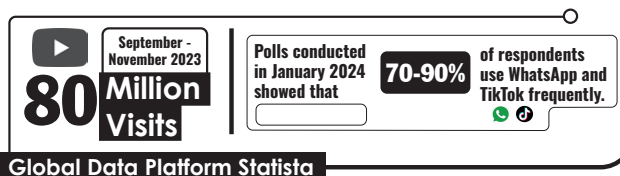
Traditionally, voter education efforts have relied on government and donor funding, but recent years have shown how unpredictable these resources can be. Fortunately, technology provides an alternative.

Kenyan youth are highly active on digital platforms. According to a global data platform, Statista, YouTube recorded 80 million visits in Kenya between September and November 2023. Polls conducted in January 2024 showed that 70-90% of respondents use WhatsApp and TikTok frequently.

Additionally, 42.6% of Instagram's Kenyan audience falls within the 18-24 age bracket. These statistics present a clear mandate: we must embrace digital tools more effectively. Social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) offer 'Live' features that function as digital town hall meetings. During the 2024 protests, X-Space discussions attracted hundreds of thousands of participants—figures that traditional stakeholder engagement methods

75% Kenyans under the age of 35
National Council for Population and Development (NCPD)

Kenyan youth are highly active on digital platforms





A young voter sanitizer at the Polling Station. Youth are no longer content with waiting for their turn and want to participate in governance today. [Daniel Mathenge, IEBC]

could never achieve. Furthermore, these platforms allow posts to be promoted, ensuring that key messages reach a targeted audience.

Podcasting has gained significant traction globally, and Kenya is no exception. Numerous local podcasts cover a wide array of topics, including politics, economics, lifestyle and true crime.

Collaboration

The Commission could tap into this space by collaborating with established podcasters to discuss electoral matters. While launching an official IEBC podcast presents logistical and intellectual property challenges, guest appearances on popular shows would expose electoral discussions to diverse audiences.

Per *Eastleigh Voice* notes that in 2024, there were around 13.05 million social media users in Kenya, accounting for approximately 23.5% of the population. However, traditional voter education methods remain essential. Established channels, including radio, television, and community outreach programs, must not be discarded.

A balanced approach that integrates both modern and traditional communication strategies is key to ensuring comprehensive voter education.

Kenyan youth are ready to step up and take charge of their present and future. The role of the Commission is to facilitate their participation in the electoral process. It is a lot to say that the Commission, ahead of the 2022 General Elections constituted the Youth Coordinating Committee (YCC), a conglomeration of youth-led and youth-serving organisations that worked with the

Commission in voter education and mobilisation.

Through the YCC the Commission managed to carry out voter registration in colleges and universities and train voter educators in about 49 universities countrywide.

The YCC, also organised voter education concerts in partnership with some of the country's top artistes such as Octopizzo, to mobilise youth to show up for inspection and verification of the register of voters.

The Commission also employs numerous youth as on-the-ground voter educators and election officials, a move that is aimed at giving electoral activities a more youthful face that may attract the interest and participation of more youth.

PEE Report

These, among other efforts by the Commission, bore fruit. According to the *Post Election Evaluation Report for the August 9th 2022 General Election*, The Commission recorded that the number of youth who contested for various elective positions rose by 788, from 3,091 in 2017 to 3,879 in 2022.

This enthusiasm was, however, not reflected in the voter registration numbers. According to the former IEBC Chairperson Mr. Wafula Chebukati, only 39.84% of youth registered as voters, a 5.27% decline in comparison to 2017.

For us to make elections more appealing and truly inclusive, we ought to adopt flexible, youth-friendly voter education strategies and leverage digital media." The future of Kenya's democracy depends on the youth. The time to engage them is now.



The Commission's senior management met with members of the technical working group of Kenyans in the diaspora to discuss ways of strengthening engagement and address challenges related to their democratic rights.
[Edgar Aswani, IEBC]

Diaspora groups meet IEBC, moot ways to enhance voter engagement

The Commission presented an overview of election management in Kenya, including statistics on the participation of diaspora voters in the 2022 General Election.

By Edgar Aswani, Ag. Senior Communication and Media Liaison Officer

The Commission has taken steps to enhance collaboration and improve diaspora voting. In November 2024, the Commission's senior management met with the members of the technical working group of Kenyans in the diaspora to discuss ways of strengthening engagements and address challenges related to their democratic rights.

During the meeting, the Commission presented an overview of election management in Kenya, including statistics on the participation of diaspora voters in the 2022 General Election. The technical working group expressed concerns over the limited number of registration and polling stations, particularly in large countries such as the United States, which currently has only three polling stations.

In response, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to progressively realising the

participation of Kenyan citizens living abroad, as enshrined in the law. Efforts to expand voter registration and improve access to polling stations are ongoing, ensuring that diaspora voices are effectively included in Kenya's democratic process.

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Efforts to expand voter registration and improve access to polling stations are ongoing, ensuring that diaspora voices are effectively included in Kenya's democratic process.



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**Your Vote,
Your Future**

Other Elections

IEBC oversees conduct of Garissa University Students Council polls

By **Abdi Yunis Mohamed, Ag. County Elections Manager, Garissa County**

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) successfully oversaw the Garissa University Students Council Elections held on 23rd November 2024, in Garissa Township.

The institution, located within Waberi Ward of the Garissa Township Constituency, sought IEBC's assistance to manage the electoral process efficiently.

Prior to the elections, the Senior Elections Officer for

democratic values among the youth. With a student population exceeding 5,000, Garissa University holds student council elections annually.

The university has its own electoral commission, comprising lecturers and student representatives. Guided by their Constitution, student rules and regulations and the Kenyan Constitution, the university's electoral commission manage nominations, candidate vetting and campaign oversight.



Students are identified using a nominal roll during the Garissa University Students Council Elections held on 23rd November 2024, in Garissa Township. [Abdi Yunis Mohamed, IEBC]

Fafi Constituency, Mr. Noor Gedi, conducted voter education sessions for students and tutors. These sessions emphasised the principles of democracy and the importance of electing responsible leaders.

Planning

"The Commission held a series of meetings with the University Electoral Commission to plan for a smooth election and advised on the number of personnel and materials needed," said Gedi.

As part of its broader mandate, the Commission continues to engage with students to instill

On election day, students were identified using a nominal roll, and voters' names were crossed off with a red pen. After voting, their index fingers were marked with indelible ink to avoid repeat voting.

The Garissa University Students Council Elections occur in two phases. In the first phase, 12 delegates are elected.

These delegates then vote in seven student council officials, including the President, Deputy President, Secretary-General, and Directors for Academics, Finance, Welfare, and Sports. In this election cycle, all seven positions were filled unopposed.

Data

IEBC takes bold steps to safeguard democracy through data protection

By Chris Musumba, Ag. Senior Public Relations and Events Officer

In 2019, Kenya enacted the Data Protection Act, 2019 - making it a primary statute on data protection in the country and as such, each state agency was required to incorporate mechanisms to strengthen and support this new law.

The Act and the attendant regulations regulate the processing of personal data, rights of data subjects and obligations of data controllers and processors. It's critical for the Commission, being both a data controller and processor, to observe this law. Data controller is an agency that collects or possesses data, and the processor is a third-party engaged by the controller to do data processing.

Additionally, the legislation provides for registration with the regulator, the principles of data protection, rights of data subjects, lawful processing of personal data and conduct of Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) among others.

To comply with the Act and the attendant regulations, the Commission developed a data inventory and conducted data protection impact assessments in a workshop that was held in Nairobi from 9th to 11th December 2024.

It was part of the awareness campaign being incorporated by the Commission for data safety. The implementation of the Data Protection Act is geared towards safeguarding personal information in an increasingly digital world. In doing so, the participants sought to prepare a data inventory for all Commission's processes and conduct Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for all Commission processes.

Further, the meeting appraised the participants on data protection legal provisions, sensitised the participants on IEBC Risk Assessment and Treatment Methodology (RATM), developed a data inventory and conducted a DPIA using the template (Third schedule (r51(1))).

The Commission needs to build a Data Protection Culture to ensure everyone in the organisation understands the importance of data protection through trainings, Webinars and news articles.

During the meeting, the participants underpinned the need for the Commission to follow the Guidance Note for Electoral Purposes, which

Key Actions in 2024

- **Data inventory & impact assessments:** A Nairobi workshop (9–11 December 2024) equipped staff to map the Commission's vast data ecosystem—from voter biometrics to candidate details—and conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs).
- **Transparency first:** Aligning with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner's Guidance Note for Electoral Purposes, the IEBC now prioritizes notifying voters how their data is used, ensuring compliance with Section 29 of the Act.
- **Tech-driven security:** The Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system, capturing fingerprints and facial data since 2013, remains central to secure voter identification.

Challenges & progress

Despite gaps flagged in a KPMG audit—like delayed public DPIA disclosures—the IEBC is advancing. "Protecting voter data isn't optional; it's our duty," stressed CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS noting redacted ID numbers in public voter lists and locally hosted databases.

What's next?

- Finalizing a pending DPIA activity.
- Launching staff training and a draft Data Protection Policy.
- Combating risks like AI-driven data breaches ahead of 2027.



Commission's Director of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Michael Ouma (front row centre) when he opened the workshop to develop a data inventory and conduct data protection impact assessments held in Nairobi from 9th to 11th December 2024. [Ian Maleya, Intern IEBC]

was issued by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, to assist data controllers and data processors dealing with voters' data to understand their obligations under the Act. One of the key principles that the guidance note addresses is data transparency.

In addition, the note provides that the IEBC must comply with the obligations under section 29 of the Data Protection Act, which states that data controllers and data processors must notify data subjects of the purpose and reasons for

information, sexuality etc.

Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS in a speech read on his behalf by Director of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Michael Ouma, noted that unauthorised access or breach of such data can lead to dire consequences not only for the Commission, but also for the data subjects.

"The Commission has a mandatory responsibility to protect the personal information in its possession," said Marjan.

IEBC must comply with the obligations under section 29 of the Data Protection Act, which states that data controllers and data processors must notify data subjects of the purpose and reasons for the collection of personal data.

the collection of personal data, in so far as is practicable and in line with the principle of data transparency.

Indeed, the Commission holds huge personal data of over 22 million registered voters besides the other categories of data in its possession being prospective candidates for the various elective positions, temporary election officials, employees, litigants, election observers, vendors, media personnel, political party agents and petitioners. Some of the sensitive data that is controlled or processed at IEBC include: health, children, biometrics, ethnicity/racial information, wealth

The CEO added that despite several challenges in data protection such as the gaps identified in the KPMG audit report in regard to the management of the personal data of voters, failure by IEBC to make its data protection impact assessment public, or published a data protection policy or notice, the Commission is on the right path towards compliance with the Data Protection legal framework.

Ouma on his part said in the build-up to the 2027 General Election, the Commission must operate carefully so as not to share Personal Identifying Information (PII) with political parties.

"During the next election, we will have a high interest in the PII and with the advent of Artificial Information (AI), such data must be protected and only shared out to responsible agencies," said Ouma.

To understand data inventory, it can be defined as an elaborate list of information assets identified, tracked and organised to provide an objective position of what data is collected, where it is stored, its custodian, how it is utilised and persons with access to data.

Importantly, the Commission conducted the 2022 General Election with the data processing and handling guided by the enabling legal framework that included data protection and privacy. These elections were conducted after the implementation of the Data Protection Act, 2019.

"This legislation, along with its accompanying regulations, significantly transformed the methods used by various organisations to collect and handle personal data, including that of voters," said Marjan.

The Commission, as a data controller and processor, is bound to conduct elections in line

In addition, the note provides that the Commission under section 29 of the Data Protection Act must notify data subjects of the purpose and reasons for the collection of their personal data, in so far as is practicable and in line with the principle of data transparency.

"Indeed, the Commission managed to collect and process the personal data of 22.1 million voters, which are hosted locally. Further, IEBC redacted the voter's national ID and passport numbers contained in the lists of registered voters published outside polling stations," said Marjan.

The Act classifies data Inventory as data types (personal, business and system), data sources (databases, applications, excel worksheets and physical documents), data owners, usage, authorisation for access, retention and compliance requirements. This is important as it helps in developing data protection strategy like the length of retention, transfer protocols outside the country and determine the regulations/legal framework that is applicable to collection and processing the data. Moreover, it helps in classification of data and protection measures, data minimisation, conduct of data impact assessment, complaints handling in

The Commission, is bound to conduct elections in line with the principles of data protection and should ensure personal data, including voter identification details, is processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.

with the principles of data protection. According to section 25 of the Data Protection Act, the Commission should ensure personal data, including voter identification details, is processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.

The CEO pointed out a practical application of data transparency in elections like the use of the Biometric Voter Registration System (BVR), which encompasses digital voter roll and the device used for voter identification at polling stations.

"The BVR captures a voter's facial image, fingerprints, and PII including name, gender, identity card or passport number, and telephone number. First introduced in 2013, the BVR system has been utilised for voter registration, identification, and verification ever since," he said.

This is steered by the Guidance Note for Electoral Purposes released by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC) that is meant to assist the Commission in understanding its obligations under the Act. One of the key principles that the guidance addresses is the principle of data transparency.

case of data breaches and effective use of data.

Law and regulations

Therefore, there are several laws and guidelines that guide how organisations secure data in their possession. They include the Constitution under Article 28 – Right to have human dignity respected and protected, Article 31 – Right to privacy (person/home/property; information relating to family or private affairs unnecessarily required/revealed; privacy of communication) and Article 35 – Right to access of information (including right to correction or deletion of untrue or misleading information that affects that person).

There's also the Data Protection Act, 2019 supported by regulations such as Data Protection (General) Regulations, 2021; Data Protection (Registration of Data Controllers and Data Processors) Regulations, 2021; Data Protection (Complaints Handling and Enforcement Procedures) Regulations, 2021; Registration Regulations, 2020; registration of persons (National Integrated Identity Management System) rules, 2020 and the IEBC data protection policy framework, which is in a draft form awaiting approval by the Commissioners.

The CEO further noted that despite several challenges that the Commission faces in management of the personal data such as the gaps identified in the KPMG audit report, lack of training, and inadequate funding to implement the Act, IEBC remains on the right path towards compliance with the Data Protection legal framework.

"IEBC must take deliberate steps towards investing in innovation in election technology and consider progressively digitising all aspects of the electoral process. This includes the development of tamperproof super KIEMS application to provide a one-stop-shop for services such as voter registration, electronic voting, tallying and display of results," said Marjan.

"Data is the oxygen that fuels every organisation. Therefore, protection of personal data is

crucial from both a legal and policy perspective. The laws in place have set very high standards for handling personal data.

Marjan said the Commission is required to incorporate a data protection culture as a long-term compliance and security of data collected and processed in the entire electoral cycle. He challenged the participants to propose quick wins and recommendations that ensure the Commission builds a strong data protection culture, complies with relevant data protection laws and raises the bar of protecting the massive personal data that it holds.

At the end of the workshop, one activity on Data Protection Impact Assessment remained pending and it would be completed at a later date subject to availability of resources.

Check Your Registration Details



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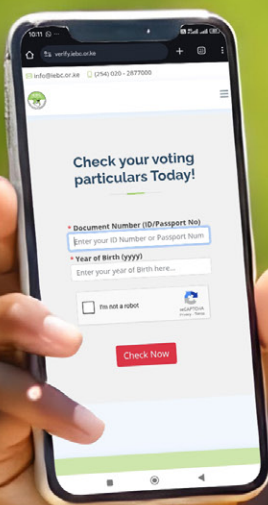


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Fiscal plan

Budget plan: IEBC provides 3-year roadmap to 2027GE

By Linda Mworia, Ag. Customer Care Officer



Commission staff during the three-Year Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) workshop in Naivasha.
[Linda Mworia, IEBC]

With the 2027 General Election on the horizon, the IEBC is sharpening its financial strategy through a 3-Year Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). This blueprint ensures every shilling drives electoral credibility.

- **“Irreducible Minimums”:** Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS urged aligning budgets with core mandates - voter registration, tech upgrades, and results transparency - to shield against funding cuts.
- **Collaborative Workshops:** Senior managers and County Elections Managers convened to streamline spending, emphasising value-for-money in services like the tamper-proof KIEMS platform.

In an era of shifting government priorities, MTEF locks in resources for critical programs. “We’re not just budgeting; we’re future-proofing democracy,” Marjan asserted. There is need to digitising electoral processes end-to-end and balanceing innovation with fiscal responsibility.

 In an era of shifting government priorities, MTEF locks in resources for critical programs.

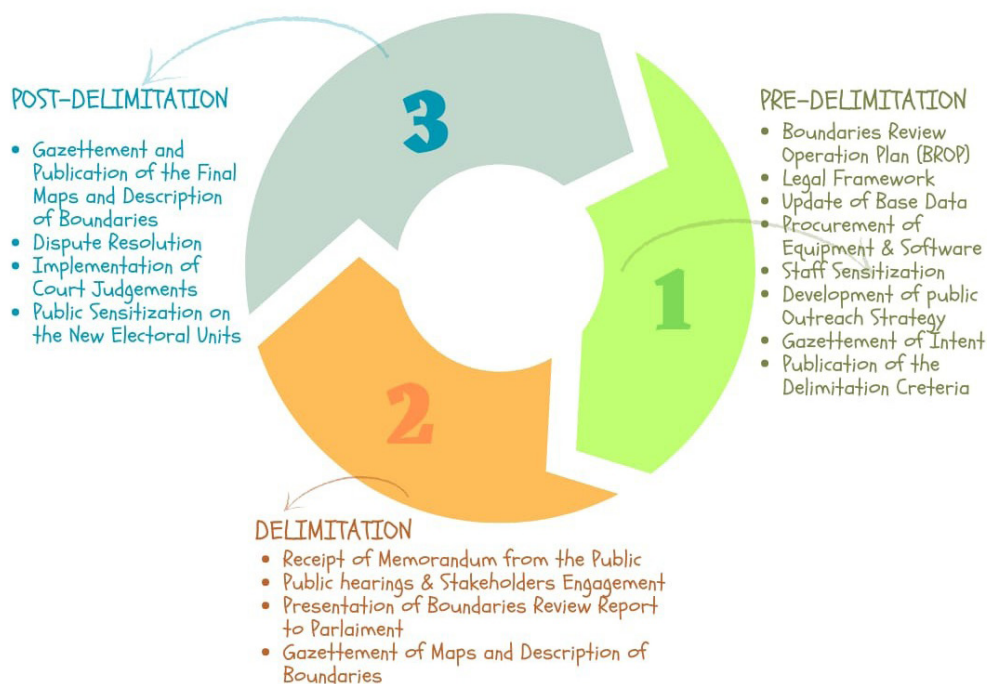


Post boundary delimitation phase is where decisions can be challenged

By Mathew Thiga, GIS Analyst and Irene Kyatu Ag. Manager Boundaries

Post Boundary Delimitation phase is the last phase of the review of the electoral boundaries cycle. In Issue 14 of the Ballot we defined what delimitation of electoral boundaries was and highlighted that there are three phases in the delimitation of electoral boundaries cycle. In issue 15, we discussed the Pre-Boundary Delimitation phase where the IEBC undertakes the preparatory administrative delimitation activities that include: developing of the delimitation of electoral boundaries roadmap, review and propose amendments (where necessary) for the delimitation laws, procure equipment and software, undertake staff sensitization, develop public outreach strategies and gazette the beginning of the delimitation.

The Electoral Boundaries Delimitation Cycle



Consequently, in issue 16 we discussed the delimitation of electoral boundaries period which involved nationwide engagement with the public (public hearings/participation). This encompasses submission of memoranda (written and/or oral) by all interested parties arguing their respective positions on why or why not electoral units may or may not be reviewed in a particular manner.

The Commission also publishes and shares the preliminary report with the public and Parliament for feedback. Thereafter, the Commission reviews feedback and makes amendments to the electoral boundaries if and where necessary. After this process, the Commission makes decisions and publishes the description and maps of the electoral units.

In this issue 17, we will discuss the activities in the post delimitation of electoral boundaries, where if the electorate(s) or any interested party(ies) is/are not happy with the Commission's decision, have recourse where they can challenge these decisions. Below are the steps and activities in this phase.

Dispute resolution

Utilising Article 89 (10) of the Constitution of Kenya, Article (10) states that “A person may apply to the High Court for review of a decision of the Commission”. Article (11) elaborates the timeline that such an application may be tabled by stating that “An application for the review of a decision made under this Article shall be filed within thirty days of the publication of the decision in the Gazette and shall be heard and determined within three months of the date on which it is filed”.

The above legal avenue is also espoused under Section (4) of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Act, CAP 7C (IEBC Act) which provides that:

“A person may apply to the High Court for review of a decision of the Commission made under the Constitution and this Act”. Paragraph 10 (2) of the Fifth schedule to CAP 7C provides the timelines for filing, hearing and determination of disputes that may arise from the Commission’s decision.

(a)

Implementation of court judgements

Upon conclusion of the disputes, the Commission reviews its decisions as per the Court Directive. The net effect is that the judgement is final and the Commission does not re-undertake the delimitation of boundaries.

(b)

Public sensitization on new electoral units

In this phase, once the Commission implements the court’s judgement, the Commission shall, upon publication of the electoral boundaries, facilitate sensitisation of the public and disseminate the new maps of the new electoral units. This is an important phase where the electorates, politicians and the public are educated on the number, names and extent of boundaries of their respective electoral areas.

(c)

This article discusses the activities in the post delimitation of electoral boundaries where, if the electorate(s) or any interested party(ies) is/are not happy with the Commission’s decision, they can challenge these decisions.

Evaluation of the electoral boundaries process

Upon conclusion, the Commission will conduct a self-appraisal and also engage external stakeholders to evaluate the delimitation processes from the pre-delimitation stage, actual delimitation and come up with a report. The objective is not only to identify challenges and successes, but also understand by drilling down into what worked, what did not work and why this was the case, and to mitigation measures for the next delimitation.

(d)

In conclusion the post-delimitation phase avails opportunities for disputes resolution and evaluation of the process which accords the Commission and stakeholders to evaluate the process which informs future review of electoral units.

Nigerian Delegation

benchmarks on poll management, strategies used for women inclusion

The strides, which the Commission has made in promoting women participation in elections in Kenya which include: halving of payable fees for registration of women candidates, establishment of women coordinating committees across the country as well as rolling out the gender and inclusion policy.

By Daniel Mathenge, Website Administrator

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) hosted a delegation from the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on 2nd October, 2024 and discussed issues related to election management and its impact on women's political representation.

The delegation was supported by the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) in collaboration with the United Nations Women (UN Women) to benchmark in various countries and learn best practices in promoting gender responsive legal/constitution reforms.

The delegates were informed of the strides the

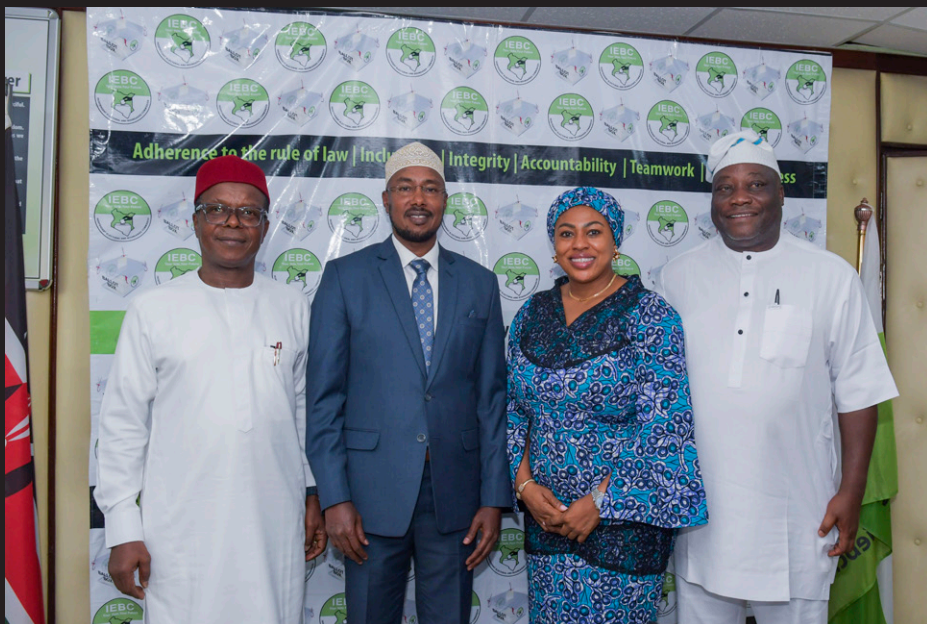
Commission had made in promoting women participation in elections in Kenya which include: halving of payable fees for registration of women candidates, establishment of women coordinating committees across the country as well as rolling out the gender and inclusion policy.

The Commission Secretary/CEO, Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS observed that in order to make significant strides towards promoting women's political participation, an Electoral Management Body needs to take the electoral-cycle approach that looks at women participation in pre-election, election and post-election phases.

To make significant steps towards promoting women's political participation, an Electoral Management Body needs to take the electoral-cycle approach that looks at women participation in pre-election, election and post-election phases.



Commission Secretary/CEO Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS (front row 3rd left) hosted a delegation from the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and discussed election management and impact on women's political representation. [Daniel Mathenge, IEBC]



Commission participates in high level meeting on building collaborative democracy for sustainable Kenya

By Purity Njeru, Manager Communications and Public Affairs



Panelists engage in discussion during a High Level Meeting on Building a Collaborative Democracy for Sustainable Kenya Today and Tomorrow in Nairobi. [Courtesy/Centre for Multiparty Democracy Kenya]

Given that strengthening democracy is an ongoing process, the engagement provided an opportunity for institutions within the sector to receive feedback from stakeholders and respond to their concerns.

The Commission participated in a High Level Meeting on Building a Collaborative Democracy for Sustainable Kenya Today and Tomorrow at Movenpick - Westlands on 10th December 2024. The conference whose objective was *Reflect, Participate, Reform* was organised by Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD)-Kenya.

In June 2024, Kenya witnessed the emergence of the Gen Z Uprising—a powerful movement driven by youth demanding political, social and economic change. This wave of activism shook political structures, urging parties to rethink their engagement strategies.

Thus, through presentations, a dynamic youth panel discussion and question and answer sessions, the meeting explored Kenya's generational shifts in activism & governance.

What can Kenya learn from powerful movements? How will the political landscape respond to youth demands for a voice? What's next for Kenya's multi-party democracy?

It was observed that Kenya's path to accountability and inclusion lies in reforms that promote transparency, equal participation, and access to resources for all. Thus a fairer society can be built through: a) Strengthening the rule of law, b) Ensuring political inclusivity, c) Monitoring public service performance, d) Empowering marginalised communities.

Through the high-level meeting that convened diverse stakeholders (political leaders, civil society representatives, public officials and development partners), CMD-Kenya sought to chart a path towards restoring trust in the political system while upholding the core values of democracy and human rights.

Some of the emerging issues on IEBC were:

- a. The delay in recruitment of Commissioners,
- b. The stalled voter registration,
- c. The need for targeted voter education, especially for the youth, and
- d. The need for enhanced transparency in results management system.

Given that strengthening democracy is an ongoing process, the engagement provided an opportunity for institutions within the sector to receive feedback from stakeholders and respond to their concerns.

More events are lined up by CMD-Kenya to allow institutions to engage with stakeholders and address emerging issues. The Commission was represented by Purity Njeru, Manager Communications and Public Affairs.



Technology

How Artificial Intelligence leverages on digital, social media to influence election outcomes in Kenya

Digital AI tools like ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Copilot (Microsoft) offer opportunities to improve electoral efficiency, campaign monitoring and voter engagement, but also raise concerns about potential misuse. The Commission participated in a two-day regional conference on the use of AI, digital and social media in elections bringing together 117 participants.

By Chris Musumba, Ag. Senior Public Relations and Events Officer

Participants representing electoral management bodies, policymakers, civil society organizations, technology companies, judiciary members, and academia attended a two-day regional conference on the use of AI, digital and social media in elections hosted in Nairobi.
[Chris Musumba, IEBC]



Emerging technology like Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) wields great influence on the electoral process and demands innovative responses from Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in the delivery of their mandates.

Digital AI tools like ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Copilot (Microsoft) offer opportunities to improve electoral efficiency, campaign monitoring and voter engagement, but also raise concerns about potential misuse. It is on this premise and the need to sail on the crest of the technological wave that the Commission participated in a two-day regional conference on the use of AI, digital and social media in elections on 4th & 5th December 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The conference, organized by Electoral Law and Governance Institute for Africa (ELGIA) with support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID-Kenya) and UKAid, brought together 117 participants representing electoral management bodies, policymakers, civil

society organisations, technology companies, judiciary members and academia to explore how technology is shaping the future of democracy and elections in Kenya and across Africa.

The participants were taken through the impact of AI throughout the three phases of the election cycle, especially in voter mobilisation, voter education, registration while evaluating its potential to strengthen electoral democracy. Special attention was given to the infrastructure requirements for AI implementation in emerging democracies and its role in enhancing transparency and accountability in election management.

The conference also focused on dangers brought about with misinformation and disinformation in electoral processes and examined the consequences of unregulated artificial intelligence in the generation and dissemination of harmful content. This paved way for the regulators and fact-checkers to deliberate on methods to counteract fake news and uphold democratic



Photo:
AI Generated

The speed, the near to perfect accuracy, and volumes of AI generated outputs, makes AI the most enticing, persuasive, and unavoidable technology to adopt in this era.

integrity. The discussions underscored the necessity for cooperative efforts to ensure the integrity of elections in the digital era.

There were also open dialogue and plenary on regional AI developments throughout Africa, with representatives from IEBC, UNDP, Independent Election Commission (IEC) of South Africa, Somalia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and UNESCO providing valuable perspectives on formulating comprehensive AI strategies for election management. Participants aimed to establish AI standards for Kenya and East Africa by utilising the Principles and Guidelines for Digital and Social Media in African Elections as a foundational reference.

Speaking at the event, the Commission Secretary/CEO, Mr. Marjan Hussein Marjan, MBS, noted that the degree of uncertainty in use of AI through digital and social media is unprecedented.

“ T h e

speed, the near to perfect accuracy, and volumes of AI generated outputs, makes AI the most enticing, persuasive, and unavoidable technology to adopt in this era. In this age and the present world, the application of AI will define the future of elections.

“The application of AI will define the future, and therefore Africa must develop new capabilities, new tools and new regulatory frameworks to ensure that AI works for it, its partners, its interests, and its values, and not against it,” observed Marjan.

Borrowing from a recent address by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to the Security Council (<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21880.doc.htm>) on AI's dual nature, it was noted that while AI can accelerate human development, it also poses

significant risks when maliciously applied.

“The advent of generative AI could be a defining moment for disinformation and hate speech — undermining truth, facts and safety, adding

a new dimension to the manipulation of human behaviour and contributing to polarisation and instability on a vast scale,” said Guterres.

The UN made the first step to form a multi-stakeholder High-Level Advisory Board for AI that was expected report back on the options for global AI governance, by the end of 2024.

“My upcoming Policy Brief on a New Agenda for Peace will also make

Photo:
AI Generated

recommendations on AI governance to Member States,” said Guterres.

Of concern to many is that, today with use of AI, anyone can develop deep fakes, which are just one new AI-enabled tool that, if unchecked, could have serious implications for peace and stability. The unforeseen consequences of some AI-enabled systems could create security risks by accident. The damage already being caused on social media cannot be laboured to display. These are tools and platforms that were designed to enhance human connection, but are now used to undermine elections, spread conspiracy theories and incite hatred and violence.

During the conference, Felix Odhiambo, Executive Director at ELGIA, noted that the recent decision by Africa Union (AU) to adopt guidance to harness

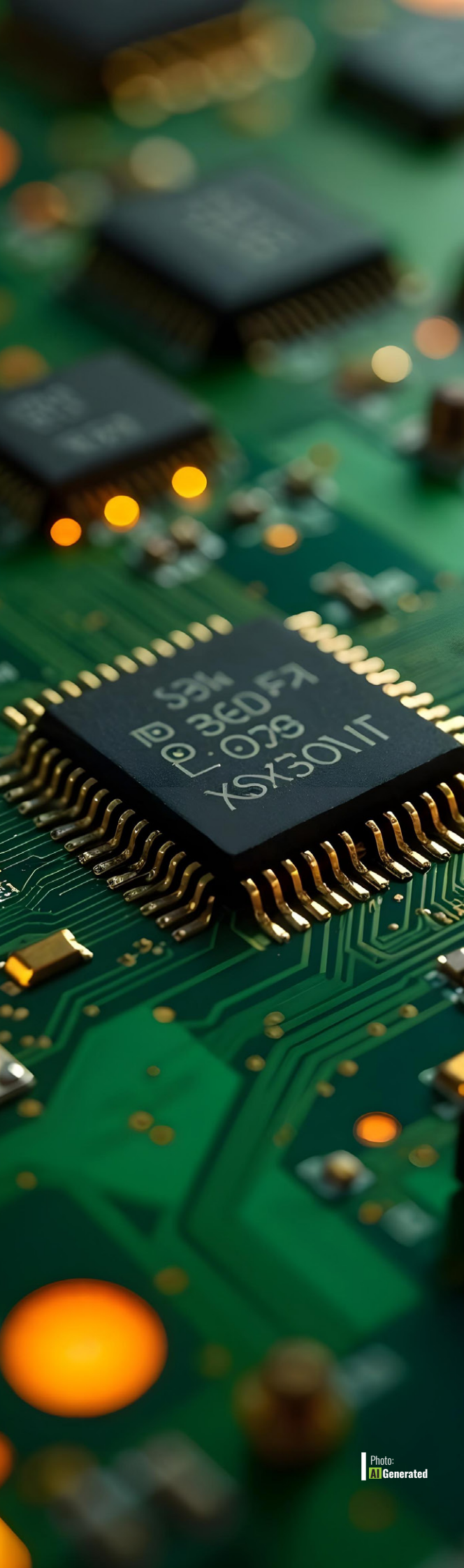


Photo:
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artificial intelligence to meet Africa's development is the best step in the right direction. However, he pointed out that it brings with it opportunities and challenges in use of AI in election management and requested for a strong legal framework to ensure ethical use of AI tools.

Further, Marjan noted that during this era of AI, digital and social media, 26 African countries, since 2022, held credible elections despite many adverse impacts emanating from digital and social media platforms. These countries experienced first-hand damage caused by unregulated use of social media to brew and spread misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, fake news, fake accounts and propaganda before, during and after elections.

"Quite common allegations among all are misuse of digital and social media, use of the traditional mass media and big tech companies to influence election outcomes, electoral malpractices, electoral insecurities among others. What we learn locally from our continent and beyond is that no EMB is spared from the challenge caused by AI, digital and social media whether positively or negatively. We must, therefore, take deliberate steps to positively embrace the three aspects," said Marjan.

Wiper Political Party Leader, H.E Kalonzo Musyoka, noted that ahead of 2027 General Election, technology will be important to guide the campaigns, voter education and voter registration. AI is changing the way things are done and has the capacity to change people. This reality must be borne in the minds of those in election management.

Hon. Eliud Owalo, the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Executive Office of the President, who represented Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, said that AI is crucial in elections as it will reduce the number of election petitions by increasing the accuracy of election outcomes and it has the ability to produce tailor made messages targeting individual voters informed by preferences and demographics leading to personalised voter outreach.

"Further AI can be used in resource allocation, improvement of data management, storage and analysis of electoral data and to enhance timeliness for real time decision making, thus reducing human error and reinforcing public trust in the electoral process. AI can also be used to monitor public opinion by analysing conversations and trends on social media," said Owalo.

Furthermore, Marjan noted that recently, the Commission used its X-platform (formerly Twitter Space) to engage the public, especially the youth, in understanding its mandate and answering questions. He also posited that the Commission has established its presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Tik Tok and LinkedIn. Forbes Advisor, in 2023, placed the number of social media users worldwide at 4.9 billion people and it is expected that this number will increase to about 5.85 billion users by 2027.

In recognition of the opportunities presented by AI and

the number of voters that can be reached on social media, Marjan noted that Election Management Bodies (EMBs) across Africa have cautiously embraced the use of AI, digital and social media in electoral activities including integrating AI into election management to improve the accuracy and fairness of elections, while preventing fraud.

AI systems like interactive chatbots and fact-checking tools are empowering citizens and marginalised groups to influence policy discussions, ensure respect for human rights, and hold governments to account.

AI tools can detect and counter the spread of fake news, deep fakes and bots, that mostly thrive on digital and social media thus ensuring a more informed and less manipulated electorate. Further, AI can be used to fight hate speech in heterogeneous settings by identifying the banned terminologies within the shortest time.

Though there is considerable confidence and traction to adopt AI, digital and social media in electoral administration, these platforms may have potential risks that can ruin the gains made by many EMBs in Africa and so the need for necessary cautions when planning to introduce

them.

Some of the recommendations made during the conference included the establishment of state agency to develop, review and establish regulatory frameworks for artificial intelligence technologies, improved cooperation between technology firms and governmental agencies, and the fortification of cybersecurity and data protection legislation. The conference underscored the necessity of capacity building, especially in enhancing the digital literacy of judiciary members and court personnel.

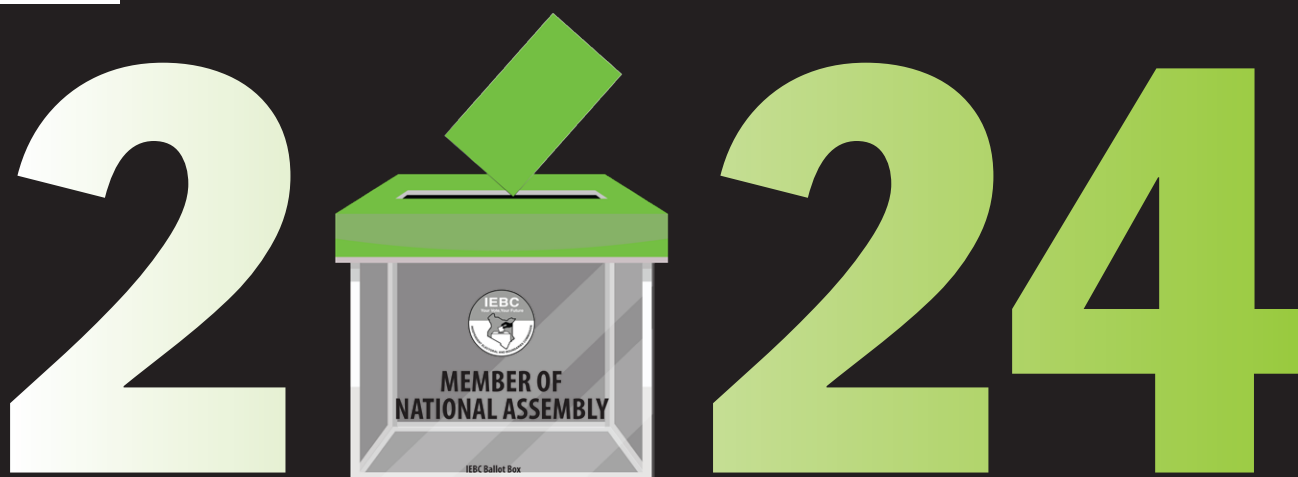
Further, it showcased Kenya's proactive approach in tackling the challenges and opportunities associated with AI in electoral processes, thereby setting a benchmark for other African countries in navigating digital transformation within democratic frameworks.

The resolutions and recommendations passed from the conference will provide important input in the conversation on use of AI, digital and social media in the electoral process.



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Lessons learnt from the Year of Elections as 70 countries voted

Over four billion people representing about half of the world's population, more than 70 countries, voted in 2024. In Africa, 20 countries, representing 37% of the Continent, scheduled elections in 2024. Comoros, Mauritania and Tunisia held presidential elections while Ghana, Botswana, Rwanda, Mauritius, South Africa, held general elections.

By **Dickson Makachia**, Strategy Officer

The year 2024 was described as the election year in human history. This was according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Over four billion people representing about half of the world's population in over more than 70 countries voted in 2024. From developed to developing nations, citizens across the globe went to the ballot to elect their leaders, consequently testing the state of the world's democracy.

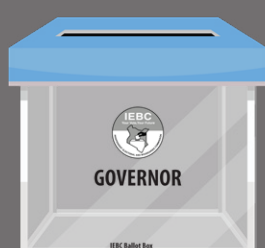
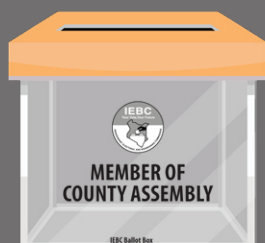
In June 2024, the Europeans cast their votes to choose 720 representatives of the tenth Parliament of the European Union (EU). Apart from the EU, notable countries in Europe that went into polls included the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. In Asia, India, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Jordan held elections. In Africa, 20 countries representing 37% of the Continent, scheduled elections in 2024. Comoros, Mauritania and Tunisia held presidential elections, while Ghana, Botswana, Rwanda, Mauritius, South Africa, held general elections.

Rwanda had the highest voter turnout at 98.2% of the registered voters, while Tunisia witnessed the lowest voter turnout at 28.8%. Several political parties boycotted the Tunisian election with critics accusing the government of an authoritarian rule.

Averagely, the globe's 2024 elections recorded a 61% voter turnout. In India, the elections were held in seven phases between April and June 2024. Nine hundred and sixty eight million eligible voters out of the 1.4 billion people out of these 642 million people turned out to vote. The election recorded the highest number of women (312 million) participating in history.

Notably, the United States of America conducted her presidential election in November 2024 that saw the incumbent party voted out. The election was highly influenced by campaigns on social

Apart from the EU, notable countries in Europe that went into polls included the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. In Asia, India, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Jordan held elections.



media platforms mainly X, You-Tube, Telegram, Instagram and Facebook. Nonetheless, the global economic powerhouse witnessed a flurry of misinformation targeting the two leading candidates.

In Venezuela, the declaration of the incumbent president as the winner of the 28th July 2024 election led to eruption of chaos in the country's capital with some sections of the local and international community disputing the election results. However, the Venezuelan Supreme Court (TSJ) reviewed the presidential elections and certified the results proclaimed by the National Electoral Council. The outburst of anti-government protests and subsequent pro-government demonstrations as a counter mobilisation strategy resulted in violence, human rights violations and deaths of some protestors, thus highlighting the nation's troubled democracy.

On the brighter side, the use of a fully automated voting system with audits at all stages in Venezuela demonstrated the possibilities of technology in enhancing electoral processes. If applied correctly it could pave way for adoption in various jurisdictions to improve accessibility, efficiency and transparency of elections.

Technology continues to expand exponentially, especially with the advent of AI, machine learning, robotics, cloud computing and Blockchain Technology. These innovations are revolutionising and reshaping the future of all industries. The Romanian electoral authority applied blockchain technology to count and validate votes in the November 2024 presidential elections. Blockchain technology enhances security and transparency of transactions through its cryptographic, traceability, ownership and decentralised mechanisms. Romania as the first country in Europe to implement the technology in a national election ensured that the data at the polling stations was logged as transactions on a blockchain.

Further, the 2024 elections came at a time when AI grew in prominence. Politicians world-wide used AI chat bots to deliver campaign promises and interact with voters in text, audio and video formats. A gubernatorial election candidate in Japan responded to over 8,000 questions from voters using an AI avatar. The independent politician managed to finish 5th amongst 56 candidates. On the downside, the misuse of AI to create deep fakes and spread false information was a challenge across the world.

Accessibility is a key pillar of elections efficiency and integrity worldwide. In the Ghanaian 2024 elections, the Electoral Commission ensured that universal voter suffrage was exercised through Special Voting. Eligible voters who would not have been able to vote on the main election day were given a chance to vote 5 days earlier in 328 centers across the country. About 131,478 voters were expected to vote in the special election.

The people who participated in the Special Voting included journalists, police, military, intelligence service and ambulance service personnel. It is imperative for EMBs to put in place special arrangements that expand voting opportunities for all eligible voters, thus enhancing accessibility and convenience of voting.

With numerous nations participating in elections in the new age, it is a vital opportunity for EMBs to benchmark and learn from each other on varying approaches and systems to enhance electoral processes. Further, it is critical to appreciate how electoral stakeholders can adapt to the rapid technological advancements including the advent of important technologies to develop policies and laws that strengthen democracy. Kenya's next general election will be held in 2027.

Learning from other nations world over, is essential for the IEBC in conjunction with all electoral stakeholders to prepare adequately through concerted voter education efforts, strategic review and policy direction, electoral and legislative reforms to improve the conduct of elections.



During the United States election, the electoral administrators across the country maintained transparency to build confidence in the system. There were lots of mis/disinformation that sought to undermine confidence in the results.



Vote Integrity

USA election introduces new ways of campaign and voter engagement

Election season was marred by perceived concerns about foreign interference, artificial intelligence, and other restrictions that are a threat to the vote, which is a striking important aspect of the 2024 US election that ran smoothly.

By William Kahindi, Ag. Senior Research Officer

The Commission can draw lessons from from the USA elections as follows:

a) **Electoral preparation and transparency:** During the United States (US) elections, many American citizens were apprehensive about election security, the timeframe for learning the results and how peaceful the transfer of power would be. The election administration officials across the country, especially in key swing states (Arizona, Michigan, North Carolina and Pennsylvania) informed members of the public how these states were preparing to conduct safe, secure and transparent elections.

Throughout the conversations, the Webinar panelists asserted that while it would take some time to certify the results and get them to a County Board of Elections, they were committed to protecting the democratic process. The election officials committed themselves to work in a transparent, secure and efficient way.

b) **A smooth election process and a status quo shakeup:** Prior to the election, the election season was marred by perceived concerns about foreign interference, artificial intelligence and other restrictions that are a threat to the vote, despite these the 2024 US election ran smoothly. As an EMB, IEBC's staff need to draw lessons on how election officials conducted elections under challenging circumstances.

The 2024 Presidential election introduced novel ways of campaigning, thus redefining the whole political campaign and voting, adopting modern campaigning aspects. The race introduced new methods of voter engagement and technological advances in outreach strategies that have reshaped the electoral landscape.

c) **Maintaining transparent measures to rebuild national confidence in a system that was fraught with deep distrust:** During the United States election, the electoral administrators across the country maintained transparency to build confidence in the system. There were lots of mis/disinformation that sought to undermine confidence in the results, seeking to prevent voters from casting their vote and have their vote counted. The elections saw radical transparency like in State of Arizona where observers sat in the counting rooms and watched through transparent glass all the ballots, moving from the point where they

were opened, verified and tabulated.

d) **Embracing newfound roles as “Explainers-in-Chief”:** The US Election adopted Explainers-in-Chief roles where traditional roles of poll workers was to attend meetings, get involved, understand the processes and all the layers that are in place to ensure that people’s votes count and are counted accurately. The poll officials in the US election had trustworthy information to share with the public. This was a breakthrough. Poll workers had boots-on-the-ground experience and it became an interesting facet of the work they were doing even as they spoke to these processes resulting to increased confidence in the electoral processes.

e) **Seeking additional avenues to expand democracy and access to voting information:** Since the new constitutional amendment in 2020, the US has seen back-to-back records for the highest turnout elections in their history. This can be attributed to the policies in place from election day registration to the ability to vote from home or vote by mail, or the ability to vote early in person translating to more engagements among citizens. For instance, the judicial system handled a high number of litigation seeking to prevent voters’ votes in Philadelphia, cast by eligible voters on or before election day, from being counted or to prevent certification. There are also provisions in law for decades where people can be at the polling places on election day to see the opening and closing of polls.

Your Vote, Your Future





Some of the students who stopped by the Commission stand seeking electoral related information.
[Daniel Mathenge, IEBC]

ASK Show

Hundreds of students, public visit iconic IEBC booth at the Nairobi International Trade Fair

The Commission stand attracted a huge interest from members of the public, dignitaries and students seeking electoral related information. This granted an public the opportunity to learn more about electoral processes and activities and interact with various electoral equipment and materials.

By **Chris Musumba, Ag. Senior Public Relations and Events Officer**

Each year, the IEBC exploits opportunities granted by external activities, which have the capacity to bring people together to carry out voter education.

Such was the case in 2024 when the IEBC participated in the Agricultural Society of Kenya's Nairobi International Trade Fair (NITF) at the Jamhuri showground from 23rd to 29th September 2024. The theme of the show was 'Promoting Climate

Smart Agriculture & Trade Initiatives for Sustainable Economic Growth'. It attracted over 250 exhibitors from various sectors, including agriculture, national and county government, manufacturing, housing, small and medium enterprises, banking, higher education institutions, hospitality and local traders among others.

As expected, there was a huge interest from members of the public, dignitaries and students

seeking electoral related information. This granted the public the opportunity to learn more about electoral processes and activities and interact with various electoral equipment and materials.

This is one of the many strategies that the IEBC uses to deploy the Voter Education function to empower citizens to exercise their sovereign power either directly or through holding their democratically elected representatives accountable.

Indeed, Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK) shows and trade fairs have turned out to be perfect activities that the IEBC used to showcase to the public its electoral and boundaries delimitation processes.

However, owing to the directive on implementation of stringent government austerity measures in 2024, the IEBC could only participate in the NITF out of the 19 international, national, regional and satellite shows countrywide.

Consequently, the IEBC strategically secured an exhibition stand in a permanent building, which offers better ambiance, corporate customer experience and larger space to showcase electoral processes; and was feted the best Independent Commission Stand.

The objective was to provide a one-stop shop to undertake voter education to boost public participation in the electoral processes. Some of the achievements recorded from the participation in the NITF saw the IEBC promote public dialogue around its operations, gain positive profile of the IEBC brand, increase voter education and enhanced stakeholders' goodwill.

To enhance the public understanding of the IEBC's role, the theme was interpreted as follows:





Commission staff from headquarters and Nairobi County office who participated in the 2024 Nairobi International Trade Fair in a group picture outside the IEBC Stand. [Daniel Mathenge, IEBC]

Election of leaders to steer economic growth:

- The IEBC conducts elections and referenda through which the electorate elect leaders who can steer initiatives for economic growth;
- Delimitation of electoral boundaries enhances equitable representation, thus contributing directly to sustainable sharing of resources for economic development; and
- Voter education creates an informed public that can make informed decisions such as electing visionary leaders.

Contribution to maintenance of peaceful environment for agriculture and economic development initiatives:

- The IEBC conducts free and fair elections that promote a peaceful environment in the country conducive for economic development; and
- Use of green energy and digital resources for environmental conservation and mitigation for climate change. The Commission adopted clean green energy through use of solar powered lighting, biodegradable materials at the expense of plastics, and used electronic register of voters, shifting from printed registers – to conserve the environment.

Participation in CSR activities such as planting

of trees, conducting elections in schools and assistance to the needy to alleviate chronic need. The IEBC:

- Participated in tree planting initiatives to increase tree cover to mitigate against climate change;
- Conducted elections in schools and instilled democratic tenets to pupils; and
- Provided assistance to the needy and gave motivational talks to enhance their hope and confidence to enable them to play their role in economic initiatives.

Thematic booths

The IEBC had the following booths focusing on key thematic areas:

a. Election legal framework

This booth was set up to educate people on the laws guiding boundary and election processes. The section attracted students and the general public. The students were keen on:

- How the IEBC conducts elections?
- How the IEBC can help them conduct students' elections?
- The boundaries delimitation process for Constituencies and Wards.

The older audience was interested in:

- Why the IEBC has not conducted the



pending by-elections?

- ii. Why IEBC has not done boundaries delimitation?
- iii. Why IEBC is not conducting voter registration and voter transfer?
- iv. Why the IEBC does not have Commissioners?
- v. How to recall the elected officials?
- vi. How IEBC uses "so much money" allocated to it?
- vii. The role of the Commission in Referendum.
- viii. Why the IEBC is always sued?
- ix. How to de-register as a voter?

b. Technology in election

This booth highlighted the evolution of technology and use of Kenya Integrated Election Management System (KIEMS) in elections. The materials displayed included Electronic Voter Registration (EVR) kit and its accessories, Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) kit and its accessories, Electronic Voter Identification Device (EVID) – poll book and Electronic Voter Identification Device (EVID) – handheld. It also had on display the results transmission phone, KIEMS – Morpho tablet, KIEMS – Smartmatic tablet, and Thuraya Satellite Modem.

The stand received a diverse audience ranging from students and general public keen on the evolution of technology and, in particular, the integration of different electoral systems into the

KIEMS.

The Commission explained to the public how to check their voting status by either scanning a QR code or manually entering the verify URL into a web browser, provided there is internet access.

c. Boundaries delimitation

This section presented a brief explanation of what delimitation of electoral boundaries is and the ensuing processes, including the physical features used to determine boundaries. The Commission picked on Kibra constituency map, where the NITF is located, as an example to orient the visitors.

The section also showcased public outreach tools used during delimitation of electoral boundaries

The aim was to provide a one-stop shop to undertake voter education to boost public participation in the electoral processes. IEBC promoted public dialogue around its operations and enhanced stakeholders' goodwill.



which included the evolution of electoral boundaries displayed on a website with electoral maps detailing the years' electoral boundaries delimitation have been conducted, and how the number of constituencies have been changing.

It also exhibited the electoral boundaries cycle, which is a diagrammatic description similar to the electoral cycle that details the phases with corresponding activities of boundaries delimitation. In addition, there was the Boundaries Hub, which is a website designed to educate the public on electoral boundaries delimitation. Users could interactively explore their constituency maps, frequently asked questions (FAQs) on electoral boundaries and how to participate in the delimitation process with a utility to submit memorandum.

Further, there was the delimitation of boundaries dashboard, an online tool that summarised the number of memoranda received, where they came from and the issues in the memoranda.

It showed public outreach tools used during delimitation included the evolution of electoral boundaries displayed on a website with electoral maps detailing the years' electoral boundaries delimitation were done.

Finally, visitors learnt about the mapping of polling stations and how it is linked to results transmission and solving disputes arising from review of electoral boundaries.

d. Polling station/Tallying center

This booth was set up purposefully to inform and educate the public about what entails voting, counting and tallying processes on election day. It had the evolution of electoral boundaries on a website with electoral maps detailing the years' electoral boundaries delimitation had been conducted and how the number of constituencies had been changing.

Adequate space was allocated for model polling/tallying station where the public especially, school going children were given an opportunity to experience the voting process. There were also various election materials including KIEMs kit, sample ballot papers, stamps, polling booths, ballot boxes with their respective lids, seals, envelopes, sisal twine, hacksaw, biro pens, ruler, statutory and non-statutory forms and polling station diary.

Visitors were taken through a simulation of activities before, during and after polling. However, of keen interest, was the counting and tallying of results.

e. Customer care center

Having gone through all other sections, the visitors ended up at the Customer Care Center, where the Commission prioritised exceptional customer service in service delivery as it directly ratifies public trust and confidence in the electoral process.

A positive customer experience ensures that the electorate feel respected, heard and empowered. The team aimed to not only provide information, but also ensure every visitor left feeling supported, informed and confident.

The customer service desk was the final stop for visitors. It provided the visitors with an opportunity to give feedback following interaction with staff on various aspects of election management. This was captured by use of visitor's book or through the QR code-enabled feedback forms. Besides, the staff on call, expounded and clarified any lingering questions.

The report from the QR code-enabled feedback forms was used to deduce feedback from over 2,000 visitors, which was a sharp rise compared to the 1,200 visitors that came in during the 2023 NITF. This turnout highlights significant interest in learning the electoral process. In general, the comments left behind by the visitors can be summed up in the word cloud below:



Conclusion

A majority of the visitors who had a fixed or negative perception that the elections are always rigged were taken through the election processes and left convinced of the integrity and transparency of election management.

However, there is need to enhance public outreach campaign to raise awareness of the Commission's mandate and operations and counter any mis/disinformation.

To crown the moment, the Commission was feted "The best Independent Commission Stand". The special recognition shows the important role that the Commission holds in moving Kenya towards a stronger democracy.



#YourVoteYourFuture
#Talk with IEBC

Our Vision

A credible electoral management body that meets the democratic aspirations of the people of Kenya.

Our Mission

To conduct transparent, efficient, and impartial elections; and undertake boundary delimitation for equitable representation and sustainable democracy.

Core Values

Adherence to the rule of law	We conduct our businesses within the law.
Inclusivity	We respect gender, race, class and disability in the conduct of electoral activities.
Integrity	We conduct our affairs with utmost honesty.
Accountability	We endeavor to be responsible for our actions.
Teamwork	We work collaboratively as colleagues to achieve Commission goals.
Innovativeness	We transform the electoral process by exceeding the expectations of Kenyans.

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