Innovative Practice 2019 on Independent Living and Political Participation

# A step-by-step toolkit to monitor voter participation

# United States / IFES – Election Access Observation Toolkit

## Summary:

### The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), headquartered in Washington, D.C., works to support the participation of people with disabilities in political life. To that end, it developed an election access observation methodology whereby people with disabilities and their organizations are trained as official observers and use checklists to collect data on access to the electoral process. As of 2018, 13 countries had employed the IFES’s methodology, resulting in the formation of a free-to-download Election Access Observation Toolkit.

## Problems Targeted:

### Election commissions and other government stakeholders often lack information on the barriers to political rights encountered by voters with disabilities, as well as evidence-based data to evaluate the accessibility of elections.

## Solution, Innovation, and Impact:

### IFES developed an election access observation methodology, which assists in specifically collecting data to address barriers to political access for people with disabilities. Based on lessons learned from implementing access observations, IFES developed its Election Access Observation Toolkit. The toolkit provides step-by-step instructions for organizing an election access observation, including how to contextualize observation checklists. In addition, the toolkit aims to involve people with disabilities themselves in the process by training them to conduct the targeted observations, thus empowering them to serve in a political leadership role and self-advocate with policy makers.

### Between the start of the practice in 2011 and the online publication of the toolkit in 2018, nearly 1,600 people with disabilities have benefitted, and IFES has trained 87 long-term and more than 1,500 short-term observers.

## Funding, Outlook, and Transferability:

### Election access observations have been funded by the governments of Australia, Canada, and the United States. Costs vary by country context, but a typical observation costs approximately $25,000, which includes training people with disabilities as observers.

### As of 2018, the methodology has been applied in 13 countries: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Ukraine. Based on recommendations collected through observations, countries have adapted their electoral processes accordingly. For example, the Election Commission of Nepal committed to making 1,000 polling stations accessible in their strategic plan.

### Using the toolkit, election access observations can be replicated by disabled people’s organizations around the world.

## About the Practice at a Glance:

### NAME OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICE: Election Access Observation Toolkit

### ORGANIZATION: International Foundation for Electoral Systems

### COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION: Worldwide

## Facts and Figures:

### The first election access observation was conducted in Indonesia in 2011.

### Between 2011 and 2018, IFES has trained 87 long-term and more than 1,500 short-term observers.

## Contact:

### Virginia Atkinson

### vatkinson@ifes.org

### [IFES Website](https://www.ifes.org/)

## Links and Further Reading:

### [Haiti report 2016](https://eaccess.s3.amazonaws.com/media/attachments/resources_mainresource/479/Haiti_Final%20Audit%20Report_2016_ENG.PDF)

### [Indonesia report 2014](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/indonesia_election_access_monitoring_report_2014.pdf)

### [Kosovo 2014](https://eaccess.s3.amazonaws.com/media/attachments/resources_mainresource/478/Kosovo_DAM_Report_2014.pdf)

##  Quote:

“My presence as an observer was an unusual experience. Members of the election commissions realized that the voting from home option is not the only way. I am convinced that there should be more people with disabilities as observers.”

* Iryna Tverdokhlib, observer in the Ukraine

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