



STRENGTHENING INFORMATION
INTEGRITY DURING ELECTIONS:
**Lessons from National Action
Coalitions in Four Pilot Countries**

Learning Report

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BMZ

German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

ECZ

Electoral Commission of Zambia

EMB

Electoral Management Bodies

NAC

National Action Coalition

NEBE

National Election Board of Ethiopia

OEP

Órgano Electoral Plurinacional [Plurinational Electoral Organ]

SERVEL

Servicio Electoral de Chile [Electoral Service of Chile]

SIGNAL

Strengthening Information Ecosystems in Elections through Global and National Linkages

TSE

Tribunal Supremo Electoral [Electoral Supreme Court]

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

Introduction

In recent years, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), alongside key partners, has developed a suite of innovative approaches to promote information integrity in electoral processes. As the United Nations system's leading provider of electoral assistance, UNDP currently supports more than 50 countries globally, strengthening the capacities of electoral institutions, promoting resilience and fostering digital and media literacy. Central to these efforts is a strong emphasis on building inclusive multi-stakeholder coalitions at both national and global levels. These collaborative platforms foster trust, enhance coordination and promote shared learning across diverse actors working to safeguard democratic resilience.

In response to the growing demand from electoral stakeholders on how to effectively govern and engage with information systems, the Action Coalition on Information Integrity in Elections was established in 2022 under UNDP leadership. Co-governed by six member organizations, the Action Coalition brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, including electoral support organizations, international and regional institutions, government agencies, private-sector organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs). Its overarching goal is to generate actionable recommendations that protect the integrity of information ecosystems before, during and after elections.

Building on this momentum, UNDP and the Action Coalition in 2024 launched the SIGNAL (Strengthening Information Ecosystems in Elections through Global and National Linkages) initiative to promote deeper multi-stakeholder and multilevel collaboration. The SIGNAL

initiative aims to enhance national-level engagement while reinforcing global connections and fostering synergies that strengthen electoral information ecosystems. Building on the success of its global work, the Action Coalition has prioritized localizing its model at the national level to scale impact.

A critical component of this work has been the establishment of National Action Coalitions (NACs) in four pilot countries: Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Ethiopia and Zambia. These NACs serve as structured multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together electoral management bodies (EMBs), media representatives, digital platforms, civil society organizations and other relevant actors to co-develop context-specific responses to promote information integrity in elections. At the same time, they function as bridges between local realities and global dialogues, contributing grounded insights to the global coalition's work and benefiting from international expertise, tools and partnerships.

This report presents an overview of progress achieved across the four pilot countries under the SIGNAL initiative. It highlights emerging good practices, innovative approaches and key lessons learned from the establishment and operationalization of NACs. It also sets out preliminary recommendations based on learning to date. These reflect the first year of implementation and validation with stakeholders, while noting that certain planned activities took place after the data-collection period and are therefore not captured in the findings presented here. In doing so, the report aims to support future programming and guide country-level efforts to strengthen information integrity in elections.

Data-collection and evaluation methodology

The learning methodology integrates multiple data-collection components. A comprehensive methodology was developed to assess the impact of the NACs on three main objectives:

1. **Improved capacity of electoral management bodies to address information integrity**, evaluating the effectiveness of foundational activities in supporting future EMB efforts to strengthen information integrity
2. **Enhanced collaboration among EMBs, civil society, and tech platforms**, focusing on how NAC structure and processes enhance cooperation, and the successes and challenges encountered in fostering partnerships
3. **Increased use of data and evidence in programme and policy responses to promote information integrity in elections**, evaluating the extent to which NAC members utilize data to inform decisions and how effectively data and evidence are integrated into programmatic and policy responses

This report's findings are derived from available data, collected through the following methods:

- **Desk review:** Analysed existing documentation to establish baseline understanding of each NAC's context, objectives and expected impact. Sources included NAC concept notes, meeting minutes, implementation reports, country office monthly reports and best practice guidance.
- **Monthly surveys:** Distributed to UNDP country office focal points to track key indicators and collect both quantitative and qualitative data on NAC progress, meetings, achievements and challenges.
- **Meetings every two months:** Facilitated collaborative sessions with participating country offices and the UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance / Democratic Institutions and Processes team, where NACs presented updates and engaged in peer-to-peer learning.
- **One-on-one interviews:** Gathered deeper insights into implementation processes and challenges from UNDP NAC focal points and Democratic Institutions and Processes team members.
- **Key informant interviews:** Conducted with NAC members in Bolivia and Chile, EMB representatives in both countries, and technology companies in Chile.
- **Global action coalition meetings:** Each NAC discussed progress updates and challenges at three global coalition meetings.
- **Strategic dialogue organized by UNDP Global Action Coalition on Information Integrity and Elections in Madrid:** Provided additional context and comparative perspectives.

Insights from early implementation: challenges, good practices and recommendations

This section presents a synthesis of cross-country implementation experiences from the four pilot NACs in Bolivia, Chile, Ethiopia and Zambia. It identifies common challenges to implementation, highlights good practices and proposes recommendations for the replication of NACs in other contexts.

Challenges to implementations

Despite context-specific variations, several common challenges emerged during the project's implementation and the establishment of the NACs:

- The coalition-building process demands significant time investment, often requiring engagement beyond typical office hours, necessitating dedicated roles.
- As coalitions expand, managing diverse membership becomes increasingly difficult. Meetings can lose direction due to unrelated discussions or external conflicts among members, even involving legal disputes, which create tension.
- Sustaining consistent, motivated participation from all members remains challenging, as does ensuring the inclusion of all critical stakeholders, particularly hard-to-reach technology platforms.
- In some contexts, the concept of a NAC may be entirely new, requiring extensive information, capacity-building and support to align members' understanding and expectations with coalition objectives.
- Designing complementary work agendas that avoid duplication of efforts presents ongoing challenges, especially when multiple organizations have overlapping mandates.
- Electoral cycles create intense time constraints – particularly in the times leading up to elections, when coalition activities are most needed but resources are most stretched.
- Maintaining neutrality and impartiality becomes particularly challenging in highly polarized political contexts, where coalition members may face pressures.
- Developing sustainable frameworks that effectively operate beyond initial project phases necessitates addressing inherent funding challenges.

Good practices

Based on the experiences of the NACs, particularly those with more established activities, several good practices have emerged:

- Regular, formalized and organic meetings foster coalition activity. Bilateral meetings with key actors serve as an effective preparatory strategy for broader NAC engagement. Consistent coordination and communication, including through WhatsApp groups, help maintain coalition cohesion. Cultivating personalized relationships also has proven beneficial.
- Establishing robust governance structures ensures focus on agreed mandates and supports effective challenge resolution, as evidenced by the NAC in Chile.
- Diversifying membership to encompass both public and private actors is crucial to include and leverage diverse perspectives, including CSOs, traditional media and other United Nations agencies.
- Prioritizing research before full implementation is crucial, recognizing and addressing unique electoral contexts and periods and including audience vulnerabilities and media consumption habits.
- Adopting an evidence-based approach strengthens coalition effectiveness and credibility. Robust monitoring efforts and established information-sharing mechanisms, such as the monthly updates to NAC meetings from the Chilean Electoral Service (SERVEL), are crucial for informing activities.
- Collaboratively identifying joint plans and activities that leverage diverse member perspectives and skills, such as the NAC thematic working groups in Chile, prevents the duplication of efforts.
- Implementing capacity-building and training initiatives facilitates the effective sharing of experiences among members. NAC sessions where EMBs explain processes directly contribute to addressing misinformation within the coalition itself.
- Strengthening the capacity of the entire information integrity ecosystem represents an important expansion of the original NAC mandate, as identified by the NAC in Bolivia.
- Integrating NAC support into existing projects, such as the Democracy Strengthening in Zambia Project, demonstrates effective resource optimization.
- Ensuring the diversification of stakeholders (media, academia, civil society, feminist groups, fact-checkers and international agencies) creates beneficial information exchange within the coalition.
- Fostering mutual understanding among stakeholders strengthens coalition coherence and collaboration. Establishing a shared language, clarifying terminology and aligning on objectives across diverse groups ensures that all members, government, civil society, media and technology actors operate with a common understanding and can coordinate effectively towards shared goals.

Preliminary recommendations

These recommendations are preliminary, reflecting lessons that have emerged after the first year of implementation. They are based on data collected to date, as well as validation through consultations with NAC members and stakeholders. While many recommendations are directed to the NACs themselves, they also highlight how UNDP country offices, donors and partners can best support NACs to advance this work.

- **Recommendation 1: Prioritize time for coalition building.** Effective coalition building requires significant time investment to build trust and relationships among members. This is essential for collective decision-making, recognizing expertise and delivering robust outputs. Support from donors can help ensure that adequate time, space and resources are dedicated to this process.
- **Recommendation 2: Foster continuous coordination and integration.** Sustained coalition activity depends on regular coordination and communication. NACs are most impactful when embedded in larger, coordinated efforts on information integrity rather than as stand-alone activities. UNDP country offices, national implementing partners and donors can help by linking NACs to wider governance, civic engagement and digital initiatives.
- **Recommendation 3: Maximize synergies from diverse expertise.** Leveraging the diverse perspectives and skills of NAC members is critical. Clear structures, such as terms of reference, help define roles, reduce overlaps and promote collective action. External partners can provide technical assistance and resources to strengthen governance and inclusivity within NACs.
- **Recommendation 4: Enhance data monitoring and utilization capacity.** NAC activities should be guided by evidence and tailored to priority audiences. Building members' capacity to gather, analyse and apply data is essential. Support from UNDP country offices, development partners, donors and technology partners can strengthen national monitoring systems and ensure that insights are effectively shared among all stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 5: Ensure long-term sustainability.** Coalitions must plan to sustain themselves beyond a single election cycle. Developing long-term strategies, including resource mobilization, is essential. Donors, institutional partners and UNDP country offices play a key role in facilitating continuity by integrating NACs into broader democratic governance and electoral support programming.
- **Recommendation 6: Strengthen democratic anchoring and local ownership.** Multi-stakeholder coalitions are most effective when they contribute to democratic transformation rather than acting as stand-alone coordination mechanisms. To achieve long-term impact, NACs should be locally anchored, inclusive and built on shared leadership and trust among diverse actors. Donors can help by strengthening the ecosystem around the NAC, independent media, civic participation and open dialogue while ensuring that leadership and agenda setting remain locally driven, enabling coalitions to stay nationally owned and democratically anchored.