



An Overview of the Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool)

International IDEA
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Acronyms and abbreviations

CSO	civil society organization
EMB	electoral management body
ERM Tool	Electoral Risk Management Tool
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
SSA	security sector agency



1. Introduction

Understanding and explaining outbreaks of election-related violence is a complex task; predicting whether forthcoming elections will turn violent, which factors may underlie or trigger violence, and what can be done to prevent violence is even more difficult. One way to address the problem is to empower those who have immediate responsibility to prevent and mitigate election-related violence, such as electoral management bodies (EMBs), security sector agencies (SSAs) and other state and non-state agencies.

International IDEA's Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool) is designed to enhance users' capacities to understand risk factors, analyse risk data, and take action to prevent and mitigate election-related violence. The ERM Tool is integrated into a software application that provides three interactive modules (*learn—analyse—do*) which can be used in combination or as stand-alone resources.

- *Knowledge Resources* consists of a digital library that allows users to learn about different electoral risk factors.
- The *Analytical Instruments* module allows users to upload and analyse different types of data, generate risk maps and alerts, and create a risk and action register.
- The *Prevention and Mitigation* module includes comparative prevention and mitigation actions presented throughout the electoral cycle.

To make the ERM Tool globally relevant and applicable, each module is designed to be customizable. This allows users to focus on what is relevant in a given country and electoral context.

The ERM Tool can accumulate and store large amounts of qualitative, quantitative and geospatial data that can grow from election to election. These data will enable the user to enhance understanding of the critical electoral issues, conduct cross-election analysis, direct electoral reform efforts, and plan and implement successive electoral processes.

Finally, the software integrates an option which allows users to provide feedback. Such feedback will assist the further development of the Tool and ensure that it becomes a truly global tool. International IDEA and its partner organizations will facilitate future development of the ERM Tool and users' exchanges.

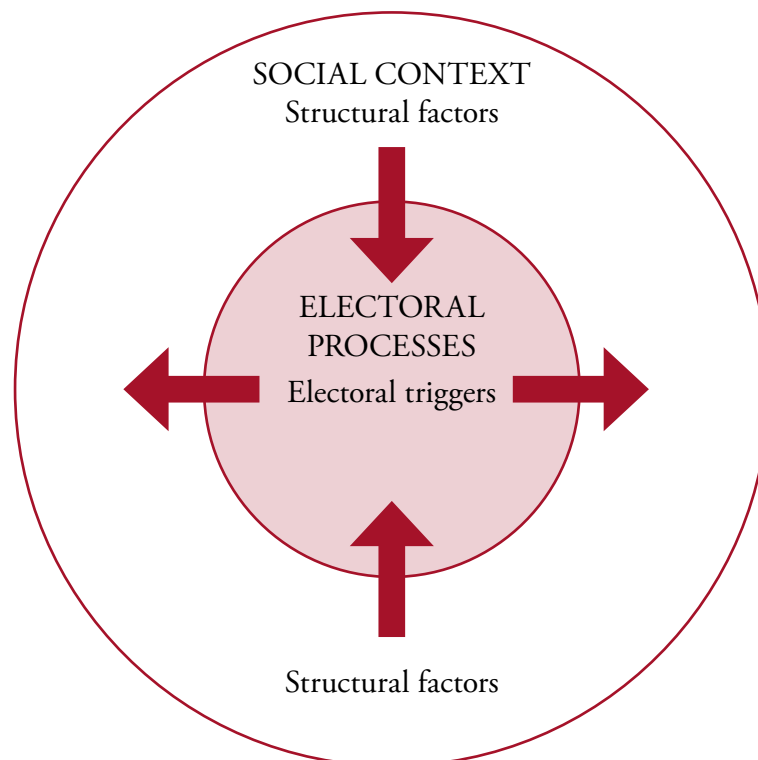
2. The ERM Tool's users

The ERM Tool is primarily intended for institutions that share responsibility for organizing credible and peaceful elections, namely electoral management bodies and security sector agencies. Intended users of the ERM Tool also include those with an interest in supporting the organization of credible and peaceful elections, such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks, academia and international organizations.

The ERM Tool is a multi-purpose instrument and will be an asset to users who wish to use it as a knowledge resource or conflict early-warning and response tool. The ERM Tool can systematize and display data in different formats. This makes it a convenient platform for organizations which operate with sensitive data, as well as for those who work on informing the general public about electoral risks and violent incidents.

Above all, the ERM Tool is designed as a platform which encourages collaboration between different communities of practice (including elections, security and peace-building practitioners) and encourages cooperation across institutional and social divides.

Figure 1: Factors internal and external to electoral processes



3. The structure of the ERM Tool

The ERM Tool consists of three modules:

- 1) Knowledge Resources;
- 2) Analytical Instruments; and
- 3) Prevention and Mitigation.

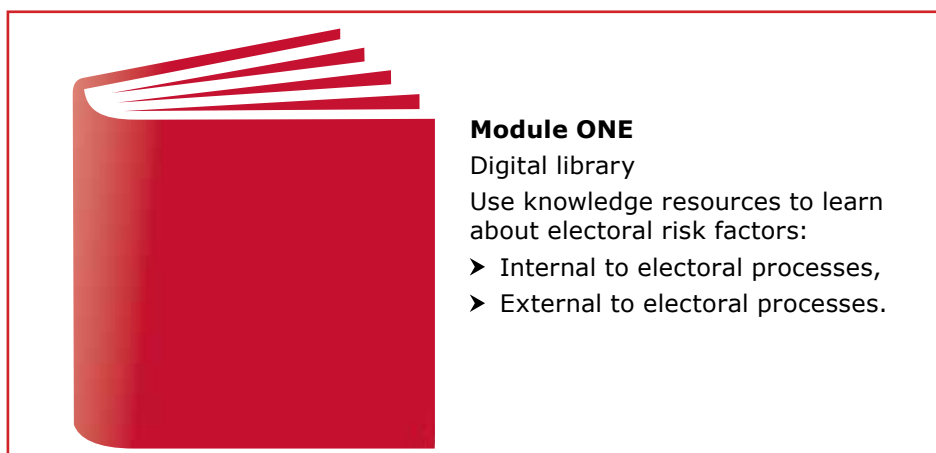
3.1 Module one—Knowledge Resources

The Knowledge Resources module consists of an electronic library that includes a wide-ranging list of factors that can trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence. The concept distinguishes between two groups of factors: those which are *internal* and *external* to electoral processes. Factors presented in the Knowledge Resources module are compiled from different research papers, election reports and other relevant publications. Each source details the link between a particular factor and increased election-related tensions and/or outbreak of election-related violence.

Internal (endogenous or process) factors include 26 election-specific factors divided into seven electoral phases.¹ These are exclusive to the electoral context.

External (exogenous or structural) factors include structural factors that relate to the context in which elections take place. These include existing violence, latent conflicts and other structural factors (e.g. unemployment, corruption, poverty etc). These risk factors originate and exist outside of electoral context, but intensify during elections.

Figure 2: Knowledge resources



¹ The eighth phase of the electoral cycle, post-election, is not included. Although there is a possibility that violence occurring after the implementation of election results is linked to the elections, the risk factors underlying such violence may not be process-related. Instead, the incident should be examined in the context of the structural risk factors. These are defined in the *Guide on Factors of Election-related Violence External to Electoral Processes*.

Figure 3: List of factors internal and external to electoral processes

Internal factors	External factors
<p>The electoral legal framework</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contested electoral law 2. Unfit electoral system 3. Inadequate electoral administrative rules <p>Planning and preparation for the implementation of electoral activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Poor performance of the electoral management bodies 5. An inadequate system for the resolution of electoral conflicts 6. Inadequate operational planning 7. Inadequate funding, financing and budgeting 8. Inadequate electoral security arrangements <p>Training and information</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Poor training for electoral officials 10. Lack of training for political parties and media 11. Lack of training of security sector agencies 12. A poor voter information campaign <p>Registration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Problematic voter registration 14. Problematic registration of political parties and candidates 15. Problematic accreditation of domestic and international observers <p>Electoral campaigning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Unequal media access and favouritism 17. Provocative use of media by political parties 18. Provocative party rallying 19. Provocative and violent actions by political parties <p>Voting operations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Insufficiency, destruction and loss of sensitive and non-sensitive materials 21. Lack of transparency of special and external voting 22. Problematic election-day operations 23. Problematic ballot counting and result tallying <p>Verification of election results</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 24. Poor management of election results 25. Poor management of the final round of electoral appeals 26. Rejection of election results 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor socio-economic conditions 2. Political and social exclusion 3. Conflict relating to changing power dynamics 4. Gender-based discrimination and violence 5. The presence of non-state armed actors 6. The presence of organized crime groups 7. Genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes 8. Human rights violations 9. Environmental hazards 10. Unethical media reporting

The Knowledge Resources module is organized as an electronic library. Each factor is defined in four sections:

- 1) *The introduction* section provides a general definition and explanation of the context in which a given factor can trigger or contribute to triggering election-related violence.

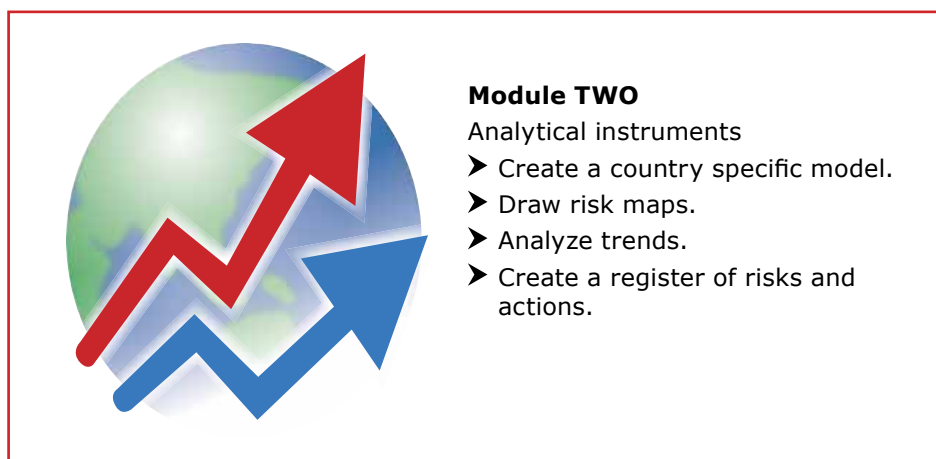
- 2) *The empirical cases and interrelated factors* section illustrates particular countries and electoral contexts in which a particular factor was identified as a trigger or a factor which contributed to triggering election-related violence. Interrelated factors point to the context in which violence took place.
- 3) *The observable indicators* section points to the observable properties of the different factors.
- 4) *The data collection and analysis* section suggests data sources, collection techniques and analysis methods. The software will include pre-packed but editable survey questionnaires which will further assist the user(s) with the data collection.

The users of the ERM Tool can modify and add new factors and factor descriptions. Factors included in the Knowledge Resources library are considered when analytical models, country- and elections-specific, are created.

3.2 Module two—Analytical Instruments

The Analytical Instruments module allows users to upload and analyse data by drawing risk maps or charting risk trends. Furthermore, users can generate and maintain a risk and action register that details risk alerts issued and actions taken.

Figure 4: Analytical instruments



Customization features include:

- 1) *the mapping manager* which allows the user to upload or draw geographical maps (SHP and DB files); and
- 2) *model customization* which makes it possible to create country- and election-specific analytical models.

The analytical component includes:

- 1) *data entry interfaces* which make it possible to put in entries for selected factors, regions and dates;
- 2) *data presentation interfaces which* make it possible to display data in the form of (a) colour-coded geographical areas, (b) numerical values, (c) static markers, and (d) trend charts. Data can be viewed for selected regions, dates and factors; and
- 3) *the risk and action register* which allows the user to generate alerts and recommend prevention and mitigation actions. Individual alerts form the database.

The ERM Tool allows the user to export, import or delete analytical models. Maps can be saved within the model and exported as high-resolution pictures or KML files that are Google Earth-compatible.

Outputs generated by analytical instruments can present complex and multi-layered risk data in a simple and user-friendly format.

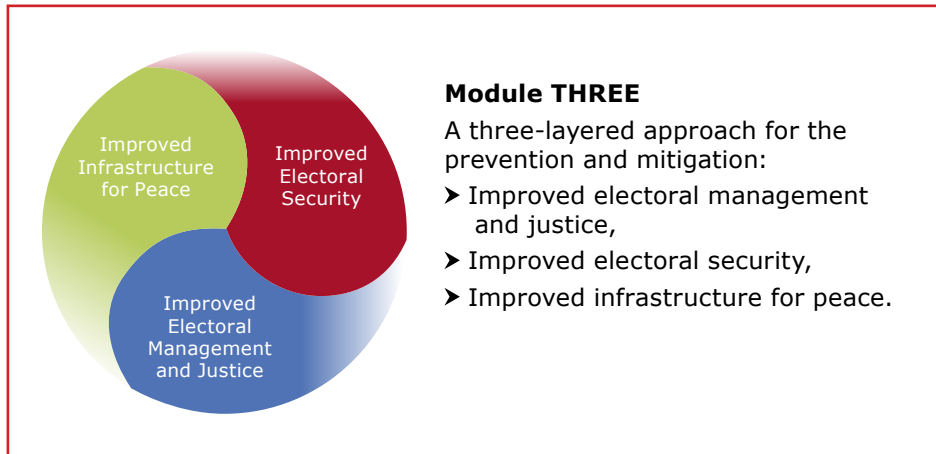
3.3 Module three—Prevention and Mitigation

The Prevention and Mitigation module includes about 100 comparative *action points for the prevention and mitigation of election-related violence*.

Action points present possible approaches, based on empirical cases, that can be taken to prevent and mitigate election-related violence throughout the eight phases of the electoral cycle. The phases are:

- 1) the legal and institutional electoral framework;
- 2) planning and preparation for the implementation of electoral activities;
- 3) training and education;
- 4) registration of voters, political parties and election observers;
- 5) electoral campaigning;
- 6) voting operations;
- 7) election results announcement; and
- 8) the post-electoral phase.

Figure 5: A three-layered approach to the prevention and mitigation of election-related violence



Within each of these sections, three different clusters of prevention and mitigation actions are explored:

- *improved electoral management and justice*—specific measures which relate to electoral planning, implementation, coordination and dispute resolution that can be undertaken to avoid controversies and technical flaws in order to minimize the potential for outbreaks of violence;
- *improved electoral security*—specific electoral security measures that can be undertaken by SSAs throughout the electoral cycle to protect electoral actors, events, facilities and materials from violence; and
- *improved infrastructure for peace*—different activities that can be implemented by various state and non-state actors to mobilize and coordinate government agencies, CSOs, traditional and religious leaders, reputable individuals and other organizations and individuals with capacity to contribute in defusing and mitigating election-related tensions and violence.

4. How to use the ERM Tool

The way in which the ERM Tool is used will be contingent on the user's mandate, capacity and needs. However, proper use will always entail a *preparatory* phase, an *implementation* phase and a *post-election analysis* phase.

Figure 6: ERM Tool Overview flow chart

HOW TO USE THE TOOL





4.1 The preparatory phase

The preparatory phase includes activities relating to (a) context overview, (b) ERM Tool customization and (c) operational design.

4.1.1 Context overview²

A proper context overview is critical to ensuring that the ERM Tool is customized to allow the user to focus on the most important risks during the implementation phase. This process entails an analysis of the history and dynamics of conflict and, in this respect, an assessment of the potential risks to the forthcoming elections. The context overview will identify (a) geographical regions that face increased risks, (b) relevant risk factors, (c) those phases of the electoral cycle that face increased risk, (d) possible perpetrators and victims of election-related violence, and (e) possible strategies to prevent and mitigate violence.

This exercise should be designed to include and capture the views of different stakeholders including, but not limited to:

- communities of practice (elections, security, peace building);
- institutions and organizations (government, academia, CSOs);
- geographical regions (national/sub-national/local); and
- social groups (sex, age, ethnic, religious).

Useful methodologies to facilitate the inclusion of different perspectives may include expert workshops, focus group discussions, public opinion surveys, consultations, written contributions and so on. The factors elaborated in the Knowledge Resources module should be used as reference materials when conducting the risk assessment.

4.1.2 Customization of the ERM Tool³

The user should summarize the results of the context overview exercise in a *baseline* assessment document. This document should describe each factor through three focused sections: (a) introduction, (b) observable indicators, and (c) data collection and analysis methodologies. The content and format of the ERM Tool's Knowledge Resources module should be used as a guidance and inspiration. This document will be used to customize the ERM Tool's knowledge resources, but also to inform operational planning.

The customization is completed with the creation of an analytical model. This is a technical exercise whereby the software-based analytical model is generated by setting four parameters:

² Figure 6, step 1.

³ Figure 6, step 2.

- 1) the name of the model;
- 2) the geographical scope of the analysis (regions, countries or different administrative levels);
- 3) risk factors included in the model (a default tick-box list reflects the factors defined in the Knowledge Resources module); and
- 4) factors' properties (values of interval scale, weight, display options, etc.).

4.1.3 Operational design⁴

Operational design will draw on the baseline assessment document and will further operationalize details relating to (a) data collection and (b) building human and technical resources.

4.1.3.1 Data collection

For each factor, the user will first identify whether data exist (e.g. already collected internally or by external organization such as security agencies, CSOs etc.) or do not exist. Accordingly, the *data collection methodology* will define:

- *how* to obtain data (e.g. access official records, conduct interviews or surveys, engage in fact finding, monitor the media, establish lines for citizens' reporting, etc.);
- *who* is collecting/providing data (internal staff, external partner agencies, contracted agencies, etc.); and
- *how* often data are collected (daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, one time only, etc.). The data collection methodology and the amount of data that needs to be collected and analysed will be indicative of the resources needed. If the user does not have the capacity to collect all the data that are needed, prioritization will be necessary.

4.1.3.2 Resources

The implementation of the ERM Tool will require the establishment of an analytical hub which will process the collected data in order to provide the situation analysis and risk alerts.

Basic *human and organizational* capacities include:

- *a hub manager* (coordinates internal and external data collection and exchange efforts, directs analysis, drafts and presents reports and risk alerts, shares alerts with relevant decision-making bodies and partners);

⁴ Figure 6, step 3.



- *data analyst(s)* (analyse data in order to generate risk maps and trend charts; generate alerts and draft reports); and
- *data entry clerk(s)* (compile and consolidate data and make data entries; provide analytical outputs for the given regions/factors/periods as requested).

The ERM Tool is developed as a desktop software application that can work without Internet access or computer networks. The *technical* demands for the application include a single PC station with a Windows XP or higher operating system. The ERM Tool can also be installed on a central server from which it can be accessed through a local computer network. For the presentation of results, the user may need a printer or projection capacities. Also, geospatial data can be exported in a format compatible with the Google Earth application.

Training could be implemented at several levels, including the following.

- *The leadership of the user organization* can benefit from an exchange with the leadership and technical personnel of the organization who are already experienced in using the tool.⁵
- *The technical staff* can learn about how to use the ERM Tool from the support materials and tutorials. In this respect, the ERM Tool is no different from other user-friendly software applications. However, it may be important to create teams that combine electoral/conflict and IT skills. Technical personnel would always benefit from the exchanges with, or receiving training from, their peers who are already experienced in using the ERM Tool.
- *Training for the data collection staff (surveyors)* should be organized by the technical staff to ensure that the ‘new data’ collection effort is consistent and standardized across the country.

Human and technical resources, training needs and costs of data collection will determine the financial resources needed. This project will ideally help the user organization to implement its mandate, and as such will not be considered an extra cost.

4.2 The implementation phase⁶

The implementation phase entails continuous:

- data collection (as per the data collection methodology);
- data entry;
- data analysis;

⁵ International IDEA may be able to assist in linking experienced and new user organizations for this purpose.

⁶ Figure 6, step 4.

- generating situation analysis and risk alerts with recommendations on possible prevention and mitigation actions;
- sharing risk alerts and maps internally and externally;
- generating a risk and action register; and
- monitoring the results of specific actions.

Outputs generated by the analytical instruments can present complex and multi-layered risk data in a simple and user-friendly format. This may enable the user to establish situational awareness, and take preventive and mitigation measures, more quickly. A risk and action register will allow the user to understand the effectiveness of actions undertaken.

It is recommended that the user facilitates periodical revisions of the model and ensures that the data collection and analysis are focused on the most prominent and emerging risks.

4.3 Post-election analysis⁷

The ERM Tool has the capacity to accumulate and store large amounts of qualitative, quantitative and geo-spatial data. If the ERM Tool is used for successive elections, the amount of data will increase over time. This will:

- 1) allow cross-election analysis;
- 2) inform and focus electoral reform processes; and
- 3) assist the planning and implementation of successive electoral processes.

In particular, review of the risk and action register will help understanding any gaps in data collection and analysis, and ensure effectiveness in issuing and acting upon risk alerts.

⁷ Figure 6, step 5.



5. Towards a global framework

The ERM Tool also allows users to provide ‘one click’ feedback to international IDEA. Feedback can relate to:

- proposals for the inclusion of new factors or a rearrangement of those that exist;
- suggestions for new ERM Tool functionalities;
- personal experiences relating to preventive actions and strategies;
- reporting of technical errors in the software; or
- general impressions and experiences.

Users’ feedback will assist in the further development of the ERM Tool and will ensure that it becomes a true global resource.

The Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERM Tool) is designed to empower those who have either the mandate or interest to ensure that elections are peaceful and credible. Intended users are electoral management bodies, security sector agencies, civil society and other state and non-state actors. The ERM Tool aims to build the user's capacity to understand, analyze, and mitigate electoral risks, in particular those that may turn violent.

The ERM Tool is integrated into a software application that provides three interactive modules (learn–analyse–act) which can be used in combination or as stand-alone resources.

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