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TRAINING WORKSHOP

PREPARING POLITICAL PARTIES FOR STRATEGIC ELECTION MONITORING AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

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SOUTHERN AFRICAN
POLITICAL PARTIES AND
DIALOGUE PROGRAMME.





CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

Elections are a very important feature in any democracy. Elections give voice to the political will of the people. The right to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives is also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 21.1) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 25).

While elections are central to any democracy, they also need to be meaningful and credible and they must represent the free will of the people. Thus, the electoral processes, especially those processes related to the polling, counting, transmission and determination of results need to comprehensively protect and safeguard interests of both the voters and candidates. This is what makes monitoring of elections an important, if not strategic undertaking especially for political parties and candidates.

Election monitoring is about information gathering, examination and evaluation of the electoral process. It is the process of observing the conduct of an election and the behaviour of different stakeholders during an election (including political parties, the electoral commission officials, government, NGO's and the voters) in order to determine the compliance with relevant laws, regulations and international standards. Electoral monitoring therefore serves to ensure that the integrity of an election is upheld through shaping perceptions about the quality and legitimacy of electoral processes.

Under Section 52 of the Lesotho National Assembly Elections Act, 2011, a candidate or political party registered with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for purposes of contesting in elections is entitled to appoint agents to represent them in those elections. In order to prepare these agents for their tasks, the IEC organizes tailor made capacity building training workshops targeting these agents. These training workshops take place close to the date of the actual elections.

While the importance of election monitoring in contributing to the credibility and integrity of an electoral process may be self-evident, experience shows that for any political party and/or candidate to undertake an effective, comprehensive and successful election monitoring, advance and strategic planning is necessary. Thus, if the envisaged IEC party agents training workshops are to be meaningful, participating political parties need to be oriented on what it takes for such poll agents to effectively execute their mandate.

It is against this background and within the framework of the Southern Africa Political Parties and Dialogue Programme (SAPP&D Programme), and in partnership with the Lesotho IEC, that a workshop has been organized with the view to provide political parties that are taking part in the upcoming elections in Lesotho with a comprehensive package of skills and tools for them to successfully make use of the capacity building workshop that will be undertaken by the IEC. It is expected that by providing such a strategic preparatory workshop, the envisaged IEC training workshops that will target the actual party agents will not only be effective but the agents themselves will also constructively contribute to a successful poll watching undertaking within the context of October 2022 general elections. In addition, given the timing of this workshop (that will take place a month away from the actual elections), the IEC will also use this workshop to engage political parties and update them on other important electoral matters in order to ensure the effective participation of political parties in these elections.

OVERALL GOAL

The overall goal of this workshop is to assist political parties in better preparing for the Poll Agents Training workshop that the IEC will be organising ahead of the elections as well as engage and update the parties in other important electoral matters.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Specifically, the workshop aims at realising the following objectives:

- a) Equip political parties with knowledge on voting and counting procedures
- b) Expose political parties on poll watching and its dynamics
- c) Enable political parties to handle poll watching properly
- d) Enhance understanding of poll watching so as to promote transparency in the conduct of polls
- e) Informed by regional experiences as well as insights drawn from the foregoing objectives, facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons on how to undertake an effective election monitoring
- f) Engage and update political parties in other important electoral matters to enhance effective electoral participation of political parties.

TARGET GROUP

This is a cross-party strategic engagement on enhancing political parties' effective electoral participation and assisting political parties to strategically prepare for election monitoring. The workshop targets all the political parties that are registered with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Each registered political party is expected to nominate one senior party representative who is responsible for the coordination of the party's election monitoring activities to participate in this workshop. In this regard, we will be aiming at a total of 65 party participants.

DURATION AND TIMING

This will be a 1.5 days long workshop that will take place in Maseru on 31st August and 1st September 2022 (finishing at mid-day)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The workshop will be held on a non-residential basis in Maseru at a venue yet to be identified. Participants will be reimbursed their daily transport expenses as per DWF regulations.