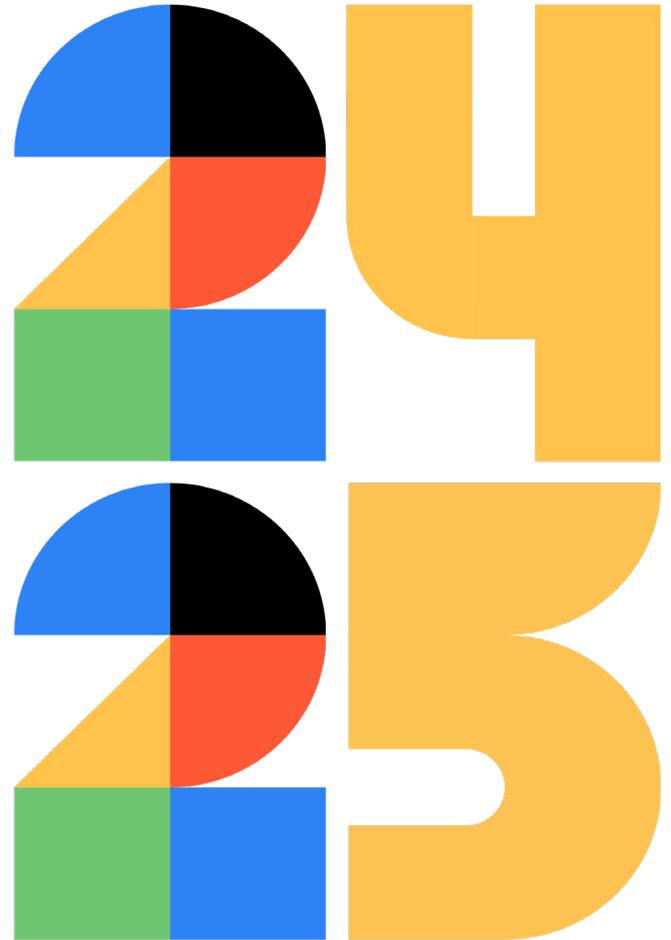


A quick guide to

AHEAD Africa



AHEAD
Africa



Co-funded by
the European Union

The Glossary

ACDEG African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
ACHPR African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AfEONet African Election Observers Network
AHEAD Action for a Holistic Electoral Approach for Democracy
AU African Union
BDP Botswana Democratic Party
CCJP Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CODEO Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
COMESA Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CFO Country Forum
CDD-Ghana Ghana Center for Democratic Development
CSO Civil Society Organisation
DRI Democracy Reporting International
EAC East African Community
EACSO East African Civil Society Organisation Forum
EALA East African Legislative Assembly

ECOSOCC Economic, Social and Cultural Council
E-HORN East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network
EMB Election Management Body
EPD European Partnership for Democracy
ESN-SA Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa
EVM Electronic Voting Machines
KZNCC KwaZulu Natal Christian Council
NANGOF Namibian NGO Forum Trust
ROEF Réseau des Observateurs Électoraux Nationaux Francophones
SADC Southern African Development Community
SSuNDE South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections
SWAPO South West Africa People's Organisation
WAEON West Africa Election Observers Network
ZESN Zimbabwe Election Support Network

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1. About

African civil society plays an important role in observing local elections and following up on electoral recommendations. However, their ability to do so has been hindered by numerous political, systemic, and structural factors.

AHEAD Africa is a pan-African project co-funded by the European Union (EU) focusing on multiple facets of the electoral cycle, aiming to:

- Strengthen **African civil society** capacity, including citizen observers, to monitor election-related issues and to strengthen electoral systems and processes.
- Contribute to higher levels of **electoral integrity** in African Union (AU) member states.



The project follows the **AHEAD approach** – Action for a Holistic Electoral Approach for Democracy – highlighting election recommendations follow-up as a key driver for inclusive electoral systems, public trust, and conflict prevention. By prioritising ‘electoral follow-up,’ civil society can better advocate for democratic accountability and promote more transparent elections.



2. Members

Activists' network



Democracy support networks



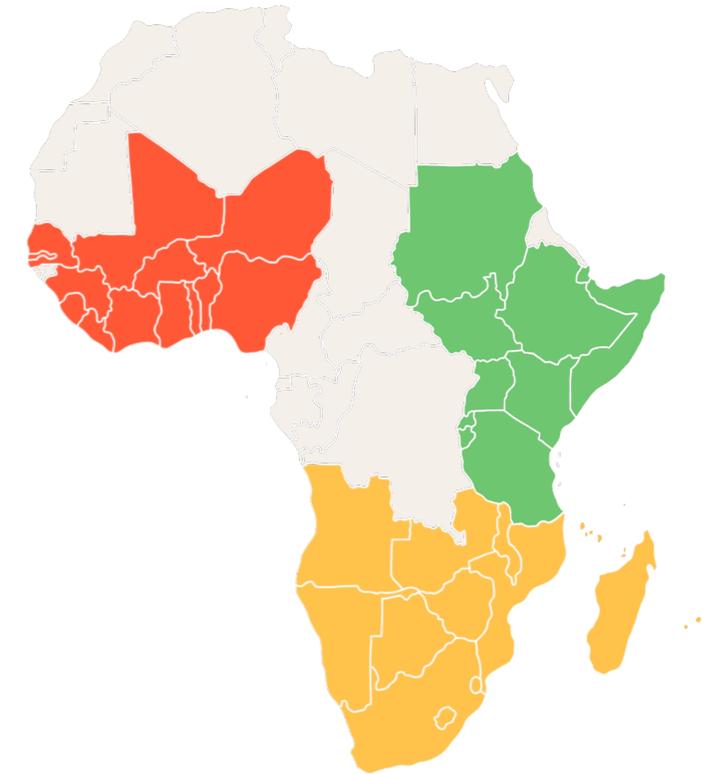
Citizen observer networks



African domestic election observers are united across Africa under AfEONet, a continental network which gathers 3 regional networks:

- **E-HORN**, with 18 national members across East Africa.
- **ESN-SA**, with 17 national members across Southern Africa.
- **WAEON**, with 13 national members across West Africa.

In 2024 and 2025, these networks strengthened their structures, operations, coordination, and member recruitment, expanding into not yet covered regions: **North and Central Africa**.



3. Local partners



Tanzania Bora Initiative (Tanzania)

A study on political awareness was conducted to shape civic campaigns, guide voter education, and inform post-election legal priorities.



Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Malawi)

Women and youth were trained on how to safely participate in the September 2025 elections.



Centre Régional d'Appui à la Société Civile – Centre & Est (Ivory Coast)

315 observers were trained and deployed to monitor the presidential and legislative elections.



Penplusbytes (Ghana)

An AI tool was developed and deployed to monitor disinformation during the December 2024 elections.



South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections (South Sudan)

Citizens, including underrepresented groups, are being educated on electoral participation and observers trained ahead of the potential 2026 elections.



Standard Action Liaison Office (South Sudan)

A study, 'Assessing Electoral Readiness in South Sudan,' is being developed to guide electoral advocacy reform efforts.



South African Council of Churches Gauteng (South Africa)

Electoral reforms are being called for as a follow-up to KZNCC observation reports of the May 2024 elections.



KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (South Africa)

Mobile observers were deployed in collaboration with local partners during the May 2024 elections.



4. Learning

Election Academies

South Africa

26 participants from 23 ESN-SA member organisations across 12 countries were trained on election topics from 10–12 April 2024 in Johannesburg (South Africa).

7 civil society organisations from the academy later joined ESN-SA observation missions to South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana in 2024, contributing to reports and recommendations.

See the **overall capacity of ESN-SA observers** before and after the training.



Ghana

10 participants from 9 WAEON member organisations, equally split between men and women, were trained on election observation from 28–30 August 2024 in Accra (Ghana).

Young observers from WAEON member organisations who participated in the academy were recruited for the first time ever to join an EOM for the Ghana 2024 elections.

See the **overall capacity of WAEON observers** before and after the training.



Uganda

10 participants from E-HORN member organisations in Uganda received training to strengthen their online and offline election observation skills.

While participants had basic knowledge of electoral laws, they had limited technical skills. Post-training exercises showed improved ability to detect political advertising “red flags,” identify AI-generated content and coded hate speech, and track in-kind campaign contributions, including the use of state resources and private company donations.

See the **overall capacity of E-HORN observers** before and after the training.



Tanzania

20 participants from E-HORN member organisations in Tanzania, received training to strengthen their online and offline election observation skills.

After the training, participants enhanced their ability to detect AI-driven disinformation, monitor extralegal campaign contributions, and combine social media monitoring with field observation. They also gained hands-on skills in using new tools for data analysis, reporting, and visualisation.

See the **overall capacity of E-HORN observers** before and after the training.



South Africa

Five Southern African countries—Mozambique, Namibia, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Botswana—held elections in 2024. Building on the lessons and challenges from these, ESN-SA hosted a second election academy in South Africa from 24–25 April 2025, to help shape practical recommendations ahead of the 2025 elections in Malawi, Seychelles, and Tanzania.

During the academy, ESN-SA also presented its **Election Observation Manual**, designed to support observers in monitoring electoral integrity, ensuring safety and ethical conduct, and improving reporting and documentation. Learn more about the Manual on page 18.



Training of Trainers Malawi

33 election observation trainers, 14 female and 19 male, from 11 CSOs were trained by ESN-SA and its member, CCJP Malawi, from 8–11 July 2025 in Lilongwe (Malawi).

Over four days, participants explored Malawi's electoral history, learned about international election standards, applied negotiation and mediation skills to real-life scenarios, and developed effective peace messaging as well as civic, voter, and information outreach strategies for diverse audiences.

Experiential Learning Seminar

Under the umbrella of AfEONet, 50 election observers from across Africa met in Nairobi (Kenya) from 24–25 March 2025 to exchange best practices on electoral integrity, drawing on lessons from the 2024 elections. The outcome document of the seminar includes 7 recommendations and 5 agreed joint efforts.



Resources



Election Observation Manual

A guide for domestic election observers with dos and don'ts by ESN-SA.



SOOBU

An online platform with 50+ top African citizen-led electoral initiatives since 2010 developed by Africtivites. Submit yours!



Farafina

A one-stop-shop digital platform on elections, dedicated to electoral integrity and developed by Africtivites.



5. Elections



South Africa



Mozambique



Botswana



Namibia



Ghana



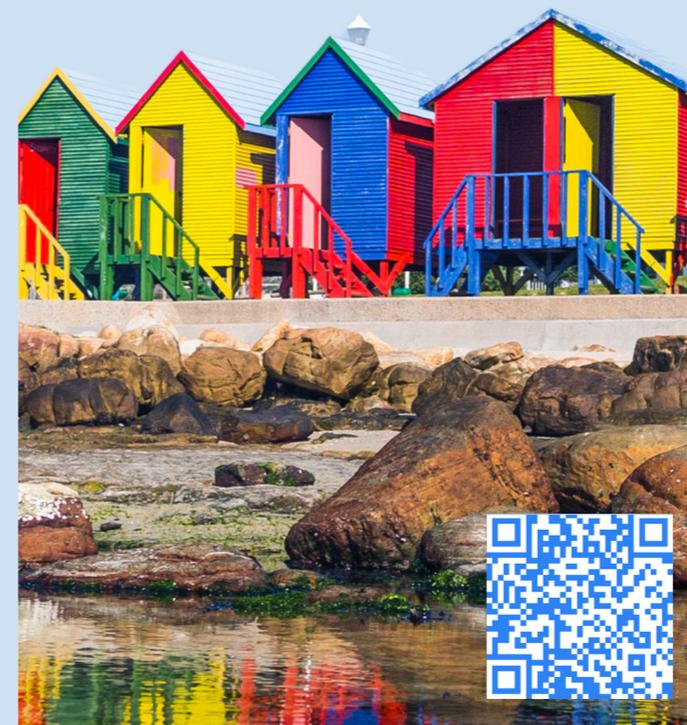
Malawi



Ivory Coast

South Africa

May 2024



Why **South Africa**?

South Africa's 2024 elections tested political shift, the Electoral Commission's capacity amid rising tensions, the introduction of diaspora voting and CSO-led observation, providing key insights into democracy in SADC.

About the **mission**

ESN-SA deployed 10 observers from 26 to 31 May across Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Western Cape, applying lessons from the Election Observation Academy. The mission engaged international observers and former Kenyan and Nigerian presidents on electoral reforms. E-HORN joined at the University of Pretoria's invitation. KZNCC, an ESN-SA member, received a grant to monitor high-risk polling stations.

Mozambique

October 2024



Why Mozambique?

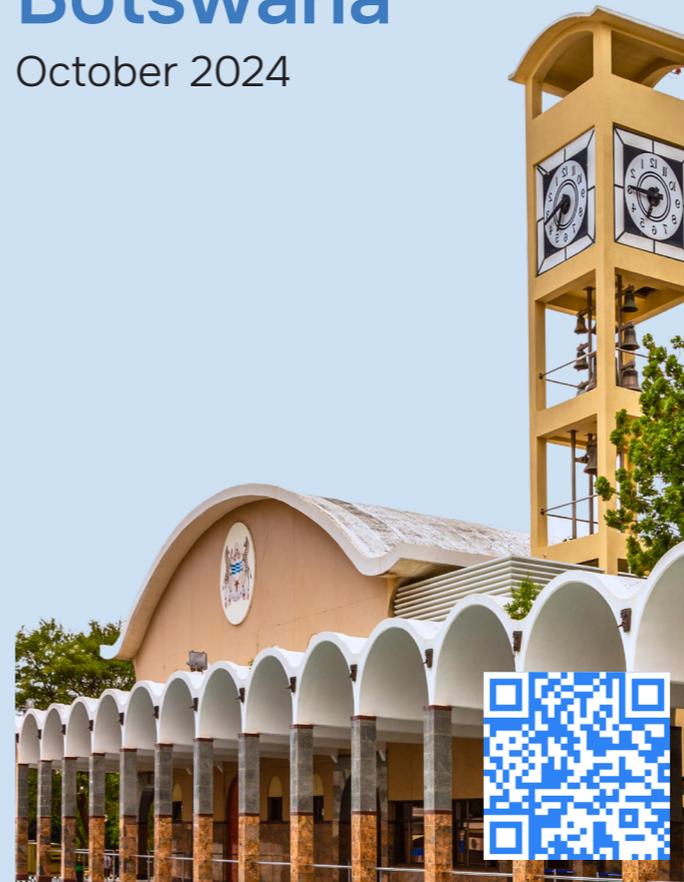
Mozambique's 2024 elections were crucial due to the deteriorating democratic environment, the history of electoral violence and the shrinking of civic space and declining press freedom. Supporting local CSOs was key for ensuring monitoring, preventing disputes, and assessing electoral integrity.

About the mission

AHEAD Africa supported an organisation that set up a Women's Situation Room (WSR) during the elections, deploying 150 women and youth as special observers in 4 provinces. They reported violations, irregularities, and gender-related issues to experts, who relayed findings to authorities and the public. After reports of police vehicles hitting young women protesters, the organisation led women's marches and will track protest-related hospitalisations.

Botswana

October 2024



Why Botswana?

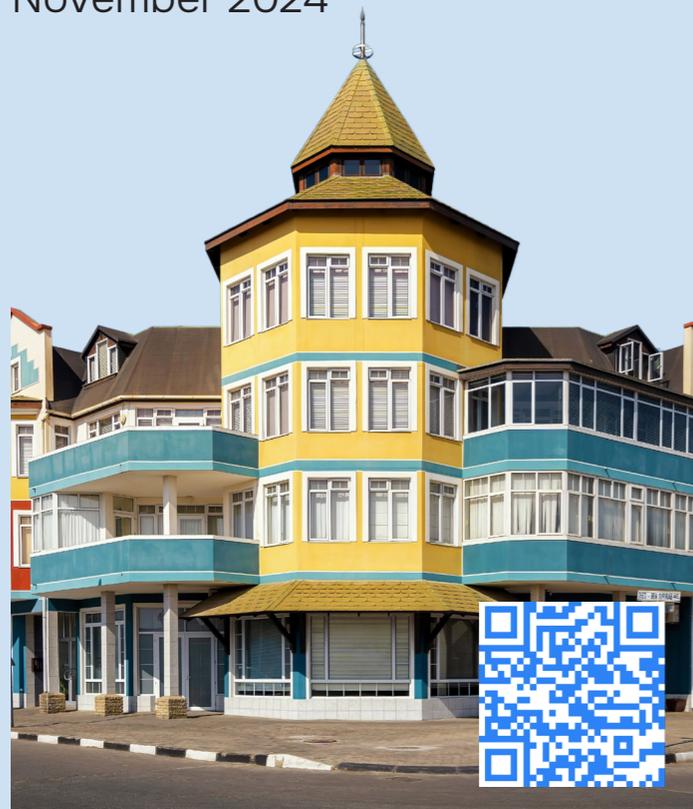
Botswana's 2024 elections tested democratic resilience as a stronger opposition challenged the ruling BDP, making the outcome less predictable. Key factors included voter registration, transparency, and media freedom, shaping public trust.

About the mission

In response to an invitation from the Government of the Republic of Botswana, ESN-SA deployed a five-member team to observe the 2024 elections on 30 October, covering urban, peri-urban, and rural areas around Gaborone. Prior to the Election Day observation, the team met with various electoral stakeholders.

Namibia

November 2024



Why Namibia?

Namibia's 2024 elections tested SWAPO's declining dominance and the transparency of EVMs without a paper trail, offering key lessons for electoral integrity in the SADC.

About the mission

ESN-SA deployed a small delegation to observe Namibia's 2024 elections, aiming to assess compliance with national laws and international standards. The mission also aimed to identify local CSOs, but few polling stations had domestic observers, as many faced funding challenges. The Mission met with various stakeholders, including international observers, legal experts, media, and CSOs like NANGOF, ACG, the AU, and SADC.

Ghana

December 2024



Why Ghana?

Ghana's 2024 elections were a key test for democratic governance in West Africa, with potential transitions and policy shifts. The country's history of peaceful, rules-based transitions emphasised its commitment to electoral integrity, making the elections crucial for regional stability.

About the mission

Penplusbytes deployed a real-time AI monitoring tool that flagged over 10,000 suspicious election-related posts. Leveraging CODEO's 4,000 on-ground observers for verification, the tool cut response time to high-risk narratives from over 4 hours to just 47 minutes. In partnership with the Electoral Commission, the National Elections Security Task Force swiftly addressed 138 verified incidents. E-HORN sent observers from 6 EAC countries to share and learn best practices.

Malawi

September 2025



Why Malawi?

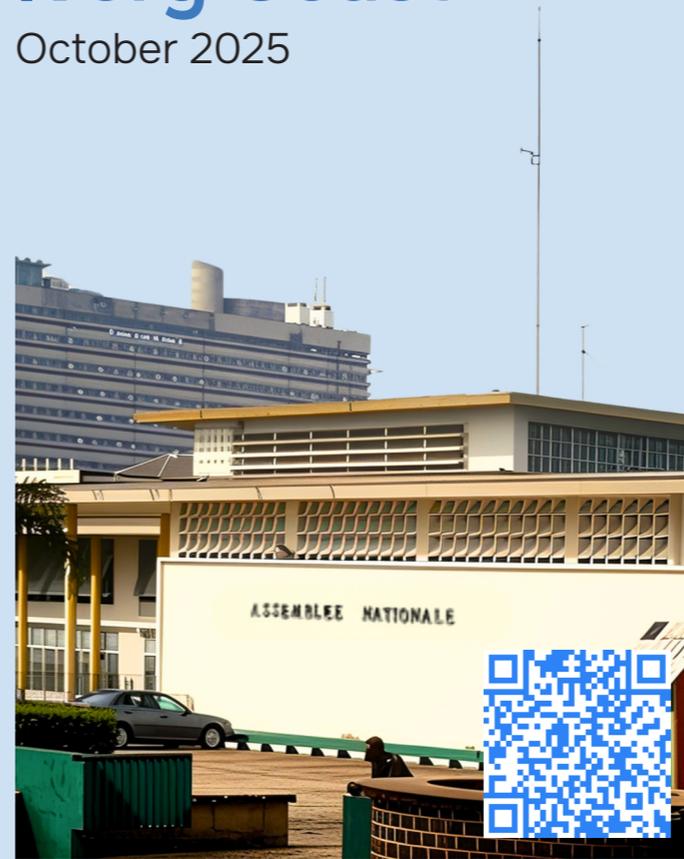
Malawi's democratic institutions gained international attention in 2020 when the Constitutional Court annulled the flawed 2019 presidential election. The 2025 elections will test institutional resilience, particularly for the courts, the Malawi Electoral Commission, and civic institutions, amid ongoing reforms such as constituency boundary redrawing completed in 2022.

About the mission

ESN-SA deployed 12 observers across Lilongwe Central, Salima, Dowa, and Dedza. The mission conducted a comprehensive review of Malawi's political, administrative, and legal frameworks for elections and held consultations with key stakeholders, including citizen observer groups, women's organisations, and other international missions.

Ivory Coast

October 2025



Why Ivory Coast?

Ivory Coast's 2025 elections took place amid shifting regional security dynamics, declining French military presence, and rising geopolitical influence. After past electoral crises, recent stability made this vote crucial for peaceful political competition and democratic consolidation.

About the mission

The CRASC Centre, in collaboration with CRASC East, deployed 315 trained election observers across 1,200 polling stations in 24 departments spanning six regions. Observers, trained by WAEON, followed a deployment plan covering an average of eight polling stations per observer. A data center was also set up, allowing four zonal data collectors, with support from WAEON, to check and follow data in real time from polling stations.

6. Research



25.01.2025

ESN-SA

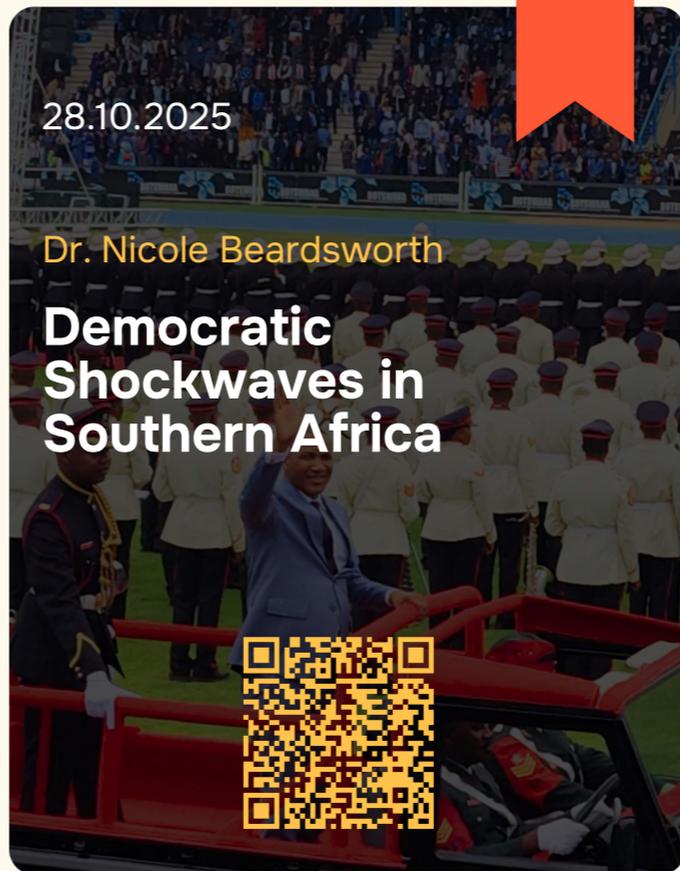
2024 National Elections in SADC



13.02.2025

Andrew Songa and Makda Tessema

Strengthening Democratic Governance in Africa through ACDEG Reporting



28.10.2025

Dr. Nicole Beardsworth

Democratic Shockwaves in Southern Africa



06.11.2025

ESN-SA

Gender Checklist for Free and Credible Elections in SADC



7. Advocacy



In August 2024, E-HORN hosted a webinar on **South Sudan's** electoral readiness ahead of elections initially scheduled in December 2024, echoing AHEAD Africa's call to postpone due to gaps in the legal framework, bylaws, and civic education, among others.

In September 2024, in collaboration with the South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections (SSuNDE), E-HORN hosted a Country Forum, bringing together 32 civil society organisations to discuss a roadmap for credible elections.

E-HORN's press conference on electoral preparedness contributed to postponing the elections from 2024 to 2026.



In December 2025, the **National Elections Commission (NEC) in South Sudan and three political parties endorsed an action plan drafted by SSuNDE**, outlining recommendations to guide electoral preparations and civic engagement activities.

South Sudan's repeated election delays, now extended to December 2026, highlight a deeper crisis of leadership, legitimacy, and public trust—not just logistical challenges. Urgent action is needed, as the cost of further delay is too high.

We propose recommendations to ensure that the upcoming elections are held with integrity.



The **Kenya** Uchaguzi Platform, brings together civil society organisations working on governance, elections, transparency, and human rights. Led by ELOG, it now drives electoral reform under the AHEAD Africa project.

In 2024, the Kenyan Uchaguzi Platform proposed amendments to key bills to strengthen electoral integrity.

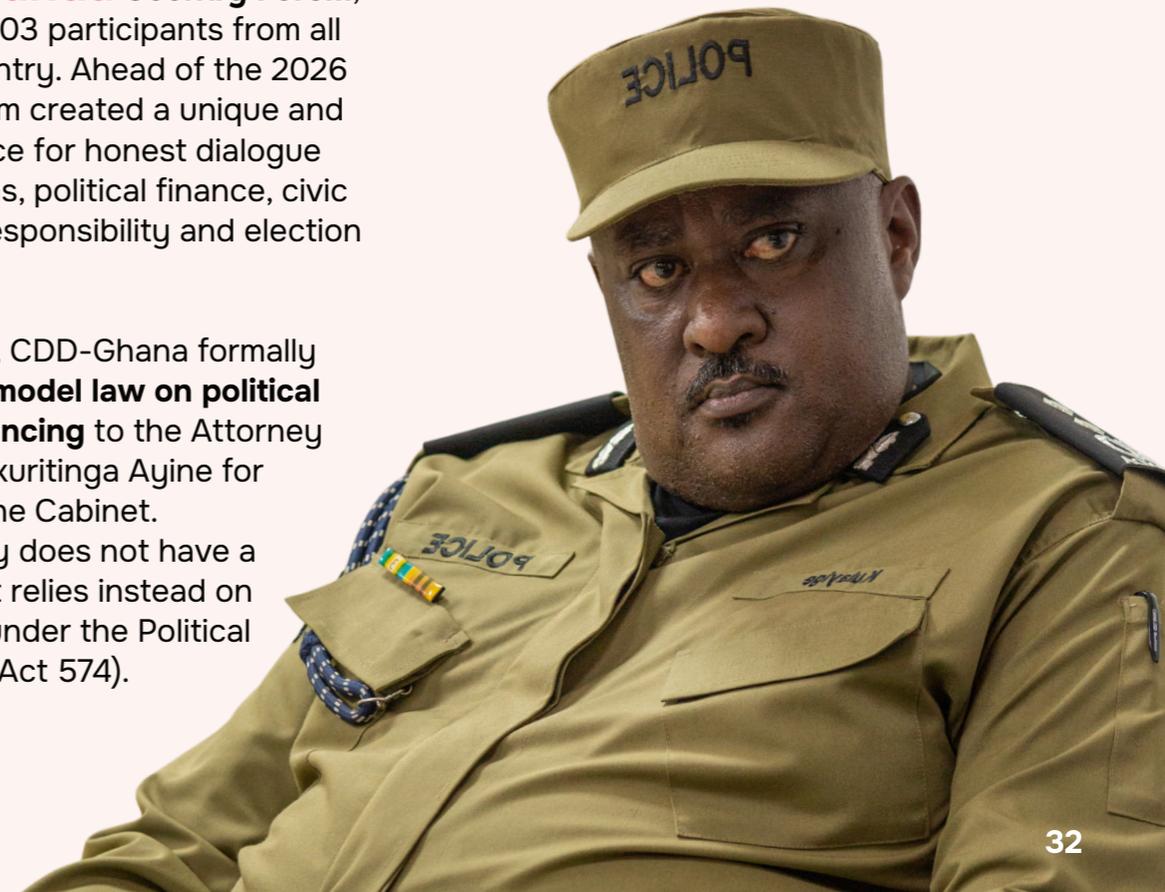
In November 2024, the Kenyan Parliament withdrew Constitution Amendment Bill No.2, which sought to extend elected officials' terms from 5 to 7 years.

In August 2025, the Senate passed the Elections Act (Amendment) and Election Offences (Amendment) Bills, including 12 ELOG-recommended provisions, and sent them to the National Assembly for final approval.



In July 2025, the Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG), the Uganda National NGO Forum and ACFIM convened the **Uganda Country Forum**, bringing together 103 participants from all corners of the country. Ahead of the 2026 elections, the Forum created a unique and much-needed space for honest dialogue on electoral reforms, political finance, civic freedoms, media responsibility and election security.

In November 2025, CDD-Ghana formally presented a **draft model law on political and campaign financing** to the Attorney General Dominic Akuritinga Ajine for consideration by the Cabinet. **Ghana** currently does not have a standalone law but relies instead on limited provisions under the Political Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574).



In June 2024, E-HORN and AfEONet joined the **East Africa** Civil Society Summit (EACSOF) in Arusha (Tanzania) **contributing to the final report with 9 recommendations**, including reviving the Annual Secretary General's Forum. As a result, **E-HORN is expanding engagement with the EAC and EALA for future collaboration.**

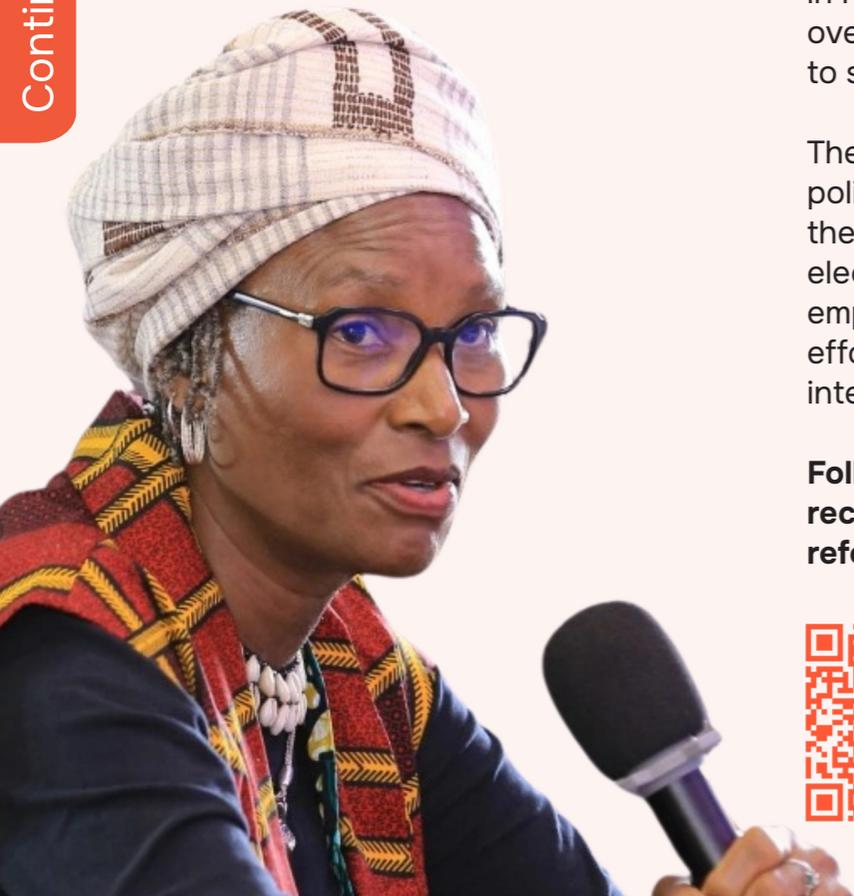
In September 2025, E-HORN and AfEONet participated in the EACSOF Summit again in Nairobi, Kenya, **contributing to key calls to action in the summit's final document**, including repealing restrictive civic and media laws, recognising citizen election observers as human rights defenders, ensuring transparent digital accreditation, and investing in innovations.



In November 2024, AfEONet and its regional networks (ESN-SA, E-HORN and WAEON) joined the **Southern Africa** Zambia Elections Stakeholders Conference to discuss election observation and campaign finance. Hosted by the Electoral Commission of Zambia, the event convened 150+ stakeholders to tackle electoral integrity challenges for 2026.

AfEONet and ACFIM highlighted the role of domestic observers and campaign finance reforms, paving the way for future collaborations, around the upcoming second edition of the Electoral Integrity Summit.





From 10 to 12 September 2024, AfEONet and ACFIM hosted the **first Electoral Integrity Summit** in Kampala (Uganda) bringing together over 150 participants from across Africa to strengthen electoral integrity.

The Summit included discussions on political financing, state capture, and the role and use of technology and AI in election observation. The Summit emphasised the importance of continuous efforts beyond election day to address integrity gaps.

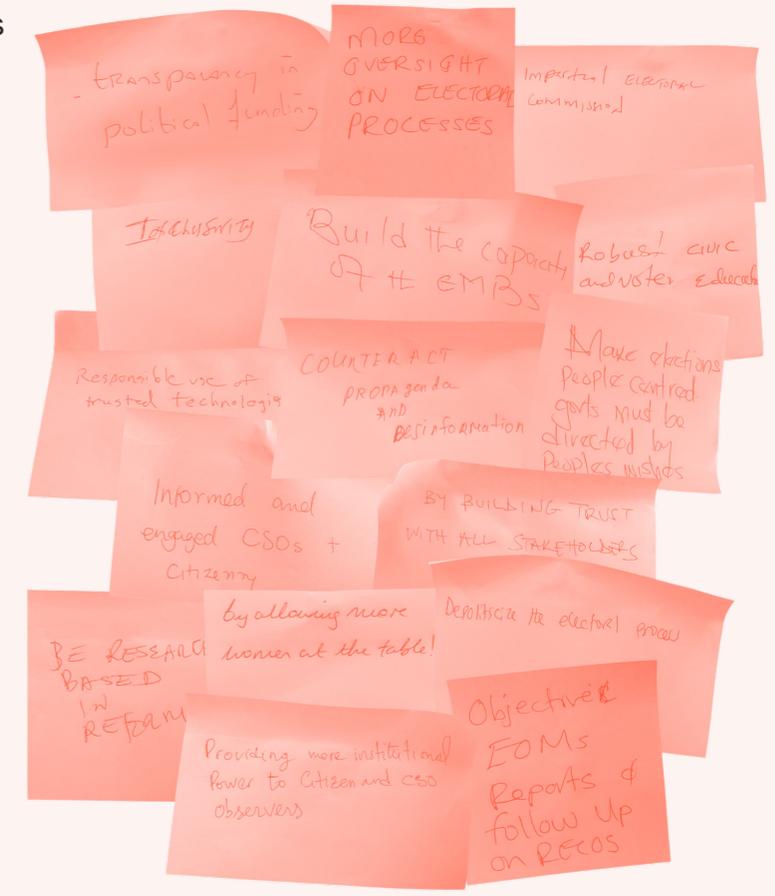
Following the Summit, a report with 21 recommendations for electoral integrity reforms was published.



From 11 to 12 November 2025, AfEONet, in partnership with the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG), hosted the **second Africa Electoral Integrity Summit** in Lusaka (Zambia) convening again over 150 election experts from across Africa.

The Summit fostered dialogue, collaboration, and coordinated action on electoral reforms, political accountability, and citizen observation threats—producing a **roadmap with 20 recommendations for stronger continental cooperation.**

We asked participants: “How can we improve electoral integrity in Africa?” See their answers.



For the third year in a row, EPD and AfEONET joined the **AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)** Citizen Forum in Malabo (Equatorial Guinea), from 8 to 9 July 2025.

EPD and the AU-ECOSOCC **signed a Memorandum of Understanding** laying the groundwork for broader institutional collaboration between African and European partners in support of AU priorities.



The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) adopted on 30 October 2025 a **Resolution on Strengthening Electoral Integrity in Africa**.

- **September 2024:** The First AHEAD Africa Electoral Integrity Summit results in 21 recommendations.
- **April 2025:** Inspired by these recommendations, a resolution is drafted during the ACHPR 83rd Ordinary Session NGO Forum.
- **October 2025:** The resolution is presented to commissioners at the ACHPR 85th Ordinary Session.
- **November 2025:** Resolution adopted.



8. What's next?

Farafina

The English version of Farafina (“Africa” in Mandinka) will soon be online, providing organised **data on African electoral systems and legal frameworks**.

Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC)

Modules on elections and the electoral cycle will be developed, launched, and made available on an online platform created by Africтивistes. The modules will focus on meeting international standards while remaining contextually grounded and tailored to the needs of civil society actors and electoral stakeholders.

Election observation

While 2024 and 2025 saw many elections across Africa, activity in 2026 is not falling behind. AHEAD Africa, in collaboration with regional networks (ESN-SA, WAEON, and E-HORN), will support local actors in election observation and follow-up in **Uganda, Benin, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ethiopia, and Zambia**.

The project also focuses on both **pre- and post-electoral periods**, providing follow-up support in countries that held elections in 2024–2025, as well as new initiatives on voter education and civic engagement for upcoming elections.

Recommendations Follow-up (RFU) study

The RFU study will review the types and frequency of **recommendations issued by 166 AU Election Observation Missions** (2012–2023), as well as their thematic variation.

Country briefs on civic space

Civic space for election observers will be assessed in 18 countries (2024–2025), covering rules, safety, data, funding, and perceptions. Findings will support advocacy for their rights.

Research publications

Short and long-form publications will be produced focusing on pressing topics related to elections in Africa.

Ethiopia Country Forum

Ahead of **Ethiopia’s 2026 elections**, E-HORN, CEHRO, and CECOIE are hosting a Country Forum to share strategies for protecting civic space, preventing violence, and ensuring credible, inclusive elections.

Electoral Integrity Summit 3

Hosted by AfEONet, the third edition will bring together election stakeholders from across the continent in **West Africa**.

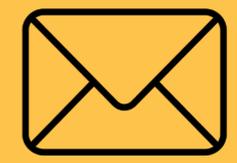
AU engagement

We will continue engaging with the **AU-ECOSOCC, ACHPR, the AU Commission, and the Pan-African Parliament** to strengthen protections for citizen electoral observation across the continent.

We are looking for over 100 of the best *citizen-led electoral practices* from 2010 onwards!



Stay ahead with **AHEAD** Africa



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AHEAD
Africa



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