



AHEAD
Africa

REPORT ON THE E-HORN LEARNING MISSION TO ETHIOPIA

*Peer Learning and Electoral Exchange Mission to
Ethiopia's 7th General Elections*





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN) conducted a Peer Learning and Electoral Exchange Mission to Ethiopia from 30 May to 3 June 2026 to learn from the country's 7th General Elections held on 1 June 2026. The mission was hosted by its members, the Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE), Ethiopia's largest citizen election observation coalition, and the Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organisations (CEHRO).

The Learning Mission brought together 12 participants from E-HORN member organizations across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Ghana. The mission was designed as a peer-learning exercise rather than a formal election observation mission and sought to strengthen regional cooperation, facilitate knowledge exchange, and document innovations and lessons that could inform election observation practices throughout the region.

The mission took place against a regional backdrop where E-HORN had faced significant restrictions in accessing electoral processes. The Network had been unable to deploy observer or learning missions to the Rwanda Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (July 2024), the parliamentary elections in Burundi (June 2025), the general elections in Tanzania (October 2025), and the general elections in Uganda (January 2026) due to accreditation and access challenges. Additionally, elections in South Sudan originally scheduled for 2024 remained postponed. These experiences reinforced the importance of peer-learning opportunities whenever access becomes available and highlighted the growing role of Election Situation Rooms as alternative monitoring mechanisms.

The mission observed an electoral process characterized by substantial citizen participation, extensive deployment of domestic observers, sophisticated election monitoring infrastructure, and strong collaboration among civil society organizations. Voting took place in 501 of Ethiopia's 547 constituencies, representing 91.6 percent national constituency coverage, while polling was deferred in 46 constituencies.

A major highlight of the mission was the opportunity to study CECOE's integrated election observation architecture, including its Situation Room, Election Information Centre, observer management systems, incident verification processes, media monitoring operations, and stakeholder coordination mechanisms. The mission also examined innovative approaches to monitoring violence against women in elections, information integrity, and the use of technology in election observation.

The mission concluded that Ethiopia's experience offered valuable lessons for election observation organizations across the region, particularly in relation to collaborative observation models, integrated situation rooms, observer deployment strategies, digital data management systems, and stakeholder engagement.



1. INTRODUCTION

The East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN) promotes democratic governance, electoral integrity, and citizen participation through election observation, research, advocacy, and regional collaboration. As part of its commitment to strengthening regional learning and knowledge exchange, E-HORN deployed a Learning Mission to Ethiopia during the country's 7th General Elections.

The mission was hosted by E-HORN members in Ethiopia, CECOE, a coalition of civil society organizations engaged in election observation, voter education, democratic governance, and electoral reform initiatives, and the Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO).

The mission sought to provide participants with practical exposure to electoral processes, election observation methodologies, and innovations that could strengthen democratic governance initiatives throughout the East and Horn of Africa and across the continent.

2. BACKGROUND AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The 2025–2026 electoral cycle in the East and Horn of Africa presented both opportunities and challenges for regional election observation networks. Due to accreditation and access limitations, E-HORN was unable to physically deploy election observation or learning missions to:

- Rwanda Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (July 2024)
- Burundi Parliamentary Elections (June 2025)
- Tanzania General Elections (October 2025)
- Uganda General Elections (January 2026)

In South Sudan, elections scheduled for 2024 were postponed, further limiting opportunities for direct electoral engagement.

To maintain regional monitoring and learning despite these constraints, E-HORN increasingly relied on remote Election Situation Rooms and remote monitoring mechanisms that enabled information gathering, analysis, stakeholder engagement, and electoral learning.

The Ethiopia Learning Mission therefore represented a significant opportunity for direct engagement with electoral stakeholders and practical observation of election observation systems operating in a complex electoral environment.



3. Mission Objectives

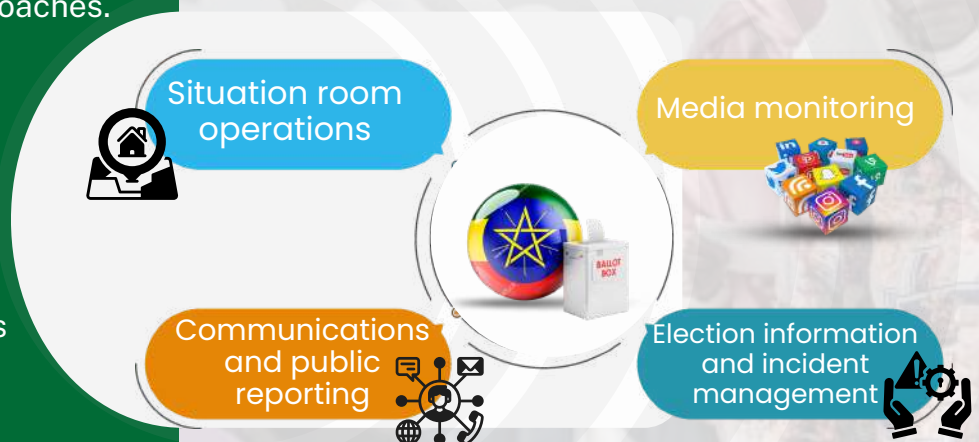
The mission sought to:

1. Enhance participants' technical knowledge and practical skills in election observation methodologies, deployment planning, and Election Day monitoring
- 2.) Facilitate peer learning and comparative analysis of electoral processes and citizen observation practices within the East and Horn of Africa region
- 3.) Promote exchange on electoral reform advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and conflict-sensitive observation approaches.
- 4.) Strengthen collaboration and networking among civil society organizations and election observation actors across the region
- 5.) Document and disseminate best practices and lessons learned from Ethiopia's experience



- Stakeholder consultations
- Demonstrations of election observation systems
- Situation room visits
- Media monitoring centre visits
- Reflection and comparative learning sessions

Learning activities covered four principal thematic areas:



Mission participants submitted learning observations through E-HORN's Experience and Exchange Data Unit (XDU), which documented innovations, lessons, challenges, and recommendations emerging from the mission.

4. Methodology

- The mission adopted a peer-learning approach that combined:

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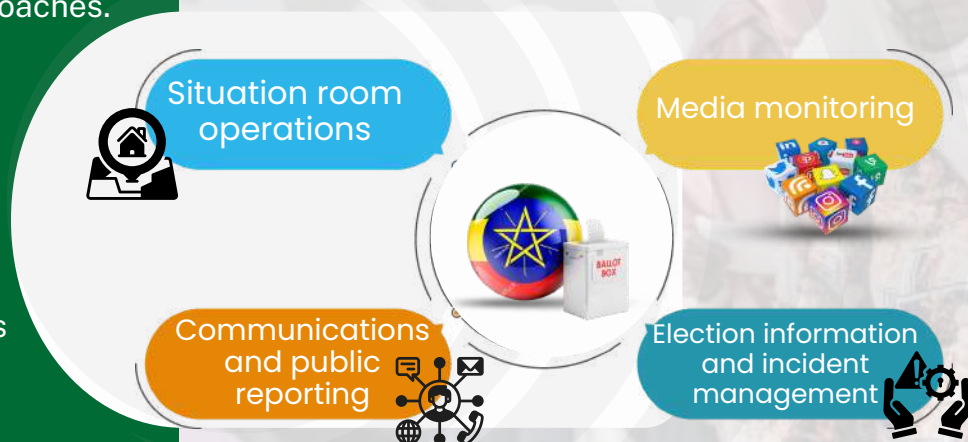
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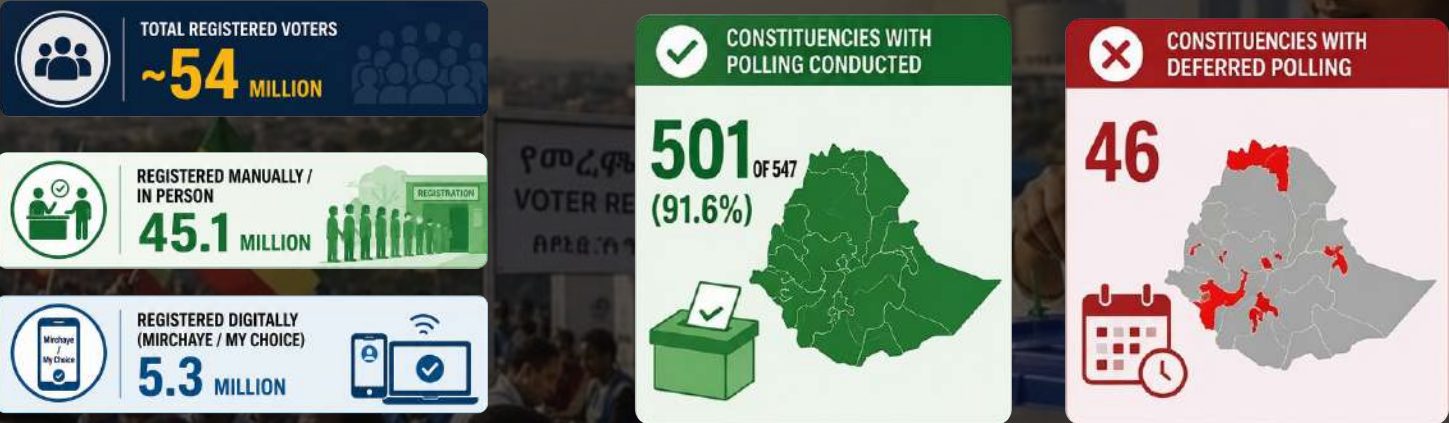
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5. Ethiopia's 7th General Elections

The General Elections were conducted on 1 June 2026. According to electoral coverage data reviewed during the mission, over 54 million Ethiopians had registered as voters, with 45.1 million registered manually/in person while 5.3 million had registered digitally through the Mirchaye/My Choice platform. The elections were conducted in 501 of Ethiopia's 547 constituencies, representing 91.6% coverage. Polling was deferred in 46 constituencies, with disruptions concentrated in specific areas rather than nationwide.

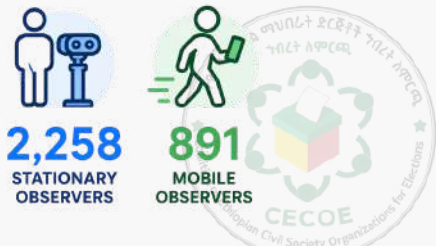
Voter Registration and Constituency Coverage



The elections covered most regions including Addis Ababa, Oromia, Somali, Sidama, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Gambella, Dire Dawa, Harari, South Ethiopia Region and parts of Amhara. Voting did not take place in Tigray and was partially deferred in parts of Amhara.

6.CEEOE Election Observation Operations

A major component of the mission focused on understanding CEEOE's election observation infrastructure. CEEOE deployed 3,149 observers consisting of:



The deployment model combined fixed and mobile observation, enabling extensive coverage while maintaining flexibility to respond to incidents and emerging issues.

The mission learned that observer reports were transmitted to centralized monitoring structures where they were verified, analyzed, mapped, and integrated into public reporting and stakeholder engagement processes.

Participants identified this deployment model as a strong example of balancing broad electoral coverage with targeted incident monitoring.

7. Election Situation Rooms and Data Centres

The most significant learning component of the mission was the examination of multiple election situation rooms and data centres.

Mission participants visited:

- CECOE Situation Room
- Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organisations (CEHRO) Situation Room
- Women's Situation Room
- Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) monitoring centre
- Election information centre
- Media Monitoring Centre
- Incident verification units

The mission observed that situation rooms served as centralized hubs for:



Observer coordination



Incident management



Election information verification



Data visualization



Media monitoring



Stakeholder engagement



Public communication

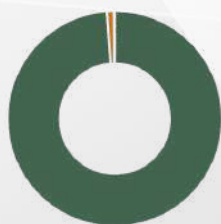
Several participants identified integrated incident verification processes and dashboard-based reporting as among the most valuable innovations observed during the mission.

The experience reinforced E-HORN's growing recognition that Election Situation Rooms provide an effective mechanism for election monitoring, especially in contexts where physical deployment may be restricted.

8. Key Findings from the Elections

CECOE's observation findings indicated generally positive electoral administration outcomes.

- Observers were allowed access in 99% of stations



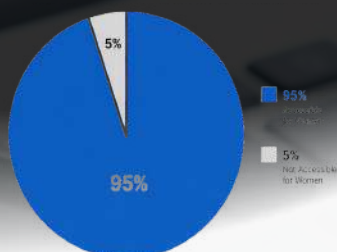
● Access Allowed (99%) ● Access Denied (1%)

- Voting began before 7:00 a.m. in 99% of polling stations

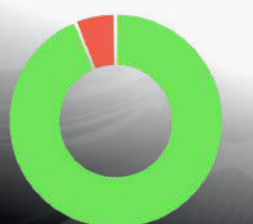


● After 7.00 am (1%) ● Before 7.00 am (99%)

- Campaign activities were absent in virtually all polling stations
- 95% of polling stations were accessible for women

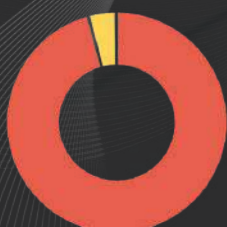


- 94% were accessible for persons with disabilities



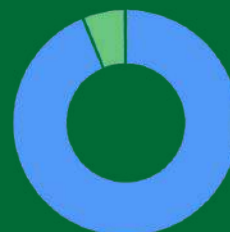
● Accessible ● Not Accessible

- 96% were accessible for elderly persons and voters with mobility challenges



● Accessible ● Not Accessible

- 94% prioritized vulnerable voters



● Did Not Prioritize ● Prioritized Vulnerable Voters

- Stations with no security incidents reported



● 1% Security Incidents Reported ● 99% No Security Incidents

The mission noted that these findings pointed to a generally peaceful voting process characterized by substantial public participation and broad compliance with electoral procedures.



9. Inclusion, Gender and Participation

The mission paid particular attention to gender inclusion and participation.

Indicator	Result
Stations with more than one female election official	60%

Stations where women served as polling station heads	26%
Polling station heads who were women with disabilities	Reported in some locations

The mission also observed innovative initiatives aimed at monitoring Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E), particularly through collaboration between TIMRAN, EWLA and CEHRO. Participants highlighted this partnership as a strong model for documenting, monitoring, and responding to gender-related electoral concerns.

10. Comparative Learning and Regional Lessons

Participants documented numerous lessons that could be adapted within E-HORN member countries.

Key lessons included:

1. Collaboration Among Civil Society Organizations

One of the strongest observations was the high degree of coordination among election observation organizations. Participants noted that collaboration improved information sharing, incident verification, and public confidence in observation findings.

2. Integrated Data Systems

The use of dashboards, mapping tools, and real-time reporting systems significantly enhanced monitoring and analysis capabilities. Participants recommended exploring similar systems within E-HORN member organizations.

3. Civic Education at Polling Stations

Participants observed that election officials often provided voter guidance and civic information before voting, particularly in rural areas. This was viewed as a useful practice that may help reduce invalid ballots and voter confusion.

4. Incident Verification

Combined teams responsible for incident verification strengthened the credibility of election reporting and improved stakeholder confidence in observation findings.



Regional Relevance

The mission generated important lessons for election observation networks throughout the East and Horn of Africa. Participants identified priority areas for future regional cooperation:

- Election technology
- Artificial Intelligence applications in election observation
- Electoral violence monitoring
- Information integrity
- Media monitoring
- Data visualization systems
- Leadership and organizational development
- Civic space protection for citizen observers

The mission further reinforced the value of learning missions as mechanisms for understanding electoral environments, exchanging experiences, and adapting successful practices across countries.

11.1 Implications for ELOG and Kenya's 2027 Elections

ELOG could possibly consider the following key lessons for its preparatory activities for Kenya's 2027 general election:

1.) The integrated Situation Room at CECOE that incorporates all operations: observer coordination, incident verification, media monitoring and public communications in one entity. A structured, hands-on tour of CECOE's facility to include room, and shift design and staffing ratios will have immediate applicability in guiding ELOG's planning. CECOE's dashboard systems used for real-time collection and verification of reports from the election observers are directly transferable to the Parallel Election Results Tracking and Tallying (PERTT) Lab and in developing the real-time digital incident reporting system, particularly relating to data verification mechanisms and the process for prioritizing raw incident reports before public distribution.

2.) The TIMRAN/EWLA/CEHRO structure for monitoring Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E) would be an excellent example for ELOG through its SIG members, to establish with Kenyan women's rights and disability-rights organisations as a specific component activity in its planning for the 2027 election rather than including gender-based violence as a subject of broad incident reporting.



12. Recommendations



To **E-HORN** 

Recommendation	Responsible	Suggested Timeframe	Progress Indicator
Institutionalize regular peer-learning missions across member states	E-HORN Executive Council	Ongoing / annual cycle	No. of learning missions deployed per year
Establish a Regional Election Situation Room Framework	E-HORN Secretariat & Council	By Q1 2027	Framework document adopted by Council
Facilitate technical exchanges on integrated data management systems	E-HORN Secretariat	H2 2026	No. of member orgs participating in exchange

Promote collaborative incident verification methodologies	E-HORN Secretariat	H2 2026 – 2027	Shared verification protocol drafted
Strengthen regional advocacy for observer accreditation and civic space	E-HORN Executive Council	Ongoing	No. of advocacy statements / engagements
Develop communities of practice on technology, media monitoring, and information integrity	E-HORN Secretariat	By Q2 2027	Communities of practice established
Expand partnerships with women's organizations working on electoral participation and protection	E-HORN Executive Council	2026–2027	No. of new partnerships formalized



To Member Organizations

Recommendation	Responsible	Suggested Timeframe	Progress Indicator
Explore adoption of integrated dashboard and mapping systems	Member org program teams	2026–2027	Dashboard pilot launched
Strengthen observer training on digital reporting tools	Member org training leads	Ahead of next deployment	No. of observers trained
Enhance collaboration among domestic observer organizations	Member org leadership	Ongoing	No. of joint observation MOUs

Document and share innovations and lessons learned	Member org programme teams	After each mission	Lessons-learned briefs submitted to XDU
Promote inclusive election observation approaches	Member org leadership	Ongoing	Share of women / PWD observers deployed

To Regional and International Partners

Recommendation	Responsible	Suggested Timeframe	Progress Indicator
Support sustainable peer-learning and exchange initiatives	Donor / partner liaison	2026–2027 funding cycle	No. of missions funded
Invest in election situation room infrastructure	Donor / partner liaison	Ahead of 2027	Situation room infrastructure funded
Support information integrity and media monitoring initiatives	Donor / partner liaison	2026–2027	No. of initiatives supported
Promote transparency in observer accreditation processes	Regional / international partners	Ongoing	Accreditation policy advocacy tracked
Strengthen support for citizen election observation networks	Regional / international partners	Ongoing	Funding / technical support secured

13. Conclusion

The E-HORN Learning Mission to Ethiopia provided an important opportunity for practical learning, regional exchange, and institutional reflection. Hosted by its members CECOE and CEHRO, the mission enabled participants to engage directly with one of the most extensive citizen election observation initiatives in Africa and to observe innovative approaches to election monitoring, information management, incident verification, and stakeholder coordination.

The mission demonstrated that collaboration among civil society organizations, integrated situation rooms, real-time data systems, and inclusive observation methodologies can significantly strengthen electoral accountability and public confidence.

At a time when regional observer access remains constrained in several countries, the Ethiopia experience also highlighted the importance of alternative monitoring mechanisms, particularly Election Situation Rooms, in sustaining democratic accountability and regional learning.

The lessons generated through this mission will contribute to strengthening election observation practice, democratic governance, and regional cooperation across the East and Horn of Africa.



Annexes

Organization	Country
Elections Observation Group (ELOG)	Kenya
Center for Strategic Litigation (CSL)	Tanzania
South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections (SSUNDE)	South Sudan
Alliance for Finance Monitoring (ACFIM)	Uganda
Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD Ghana)	Ghana

Annex B: Reusable Learning Mission Itinerary Template

Mission Day	Suggested Focus	Suggested Site Visits / Activities
Day 1 (pre-election)	Orientation & stakeholder consultations	Host coalition briefing; situation room walk-through
Day 2 (pre-election)	Systems & deployment planning	Observer management systems; media monitoring centre
Election Day	Live observation	Polling station visits; live situation room operations
Day 4 (post-election)	Verification & reporting	Incident verification unit; election information centre
Day 5 (post-election)	Reflection & comparative learning	Joint debrief; XDU submission of lessons learned

PHOTO GALLERY





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