



Prevention of Conflicts Including Hate Speech in the Pre-Electoral Period


October 2023



Duration

Start Date: 16/11/2022
End Date: 14/11/2022

Budget

 TOTAL: \$2,000,000
UNDP: \$1,100,000
OHCHR: \$900,000

Implementing Agencies



Partners

Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization
Ministry of Justice
National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI)
Ministry of Social Action (MASEF)
Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports
Ministry of Digital and Administration Modernization
National Youth Council
National Observatory for Women's and Girls' Rights (ONDFF)
High Authority for Press and Audiovisual (HAPA)
Advertising Regulation Authority (ARP)
ADICOR
Association of Women Journalists
Network of Women Journalists
Network of Women Parliamentarians

CONTEXT

Mauritania held local and regional elections in 2023 and is set for the presidential elections in 2024. Historically, elections in Mauritania have intensified tensions, particularly around social cohesion and questions related to the participation of vulnerable groups in political processes. In particular, the absence of dialogue frameworks to prevent conflicts affects stabilizing social cohesion and establishing trust between communities and the state. Limited political engagement of youth and women and the prevalent use of hate speech have been identified as obstacles to inclusive and meaningful participation for the 2023 and 2024 elections.

OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the project is to create conditions for enhanced social cohesion and citizen participation, especially in the context of local, regional, and presidential elections. It specifically aims to:

- ▶ Promote the establishment of inclusive dialogue and consultation frameworks for conflict prevention,
- ▶ Foster social cohesion and strengthen trust between communities and the State,
- ▶ Prevent hate speech on social media and other media,
- ▶ Encourage the participation of women and youth in the wilayas of Trarza, Gorgol, and Brakna.

KEY IMPACT AND RESULTS

Parliamentary elections were held in Mauritania on 13 and 27 May 2023, alongside regional and local elections. The elections were the first parliamentary elections held after the first peaceful transition of power in the country as a result of the 2019 Presidential elections¹. Despite women faring well in the parliament, only 2 women were elected as Mayors. Meanwhile, although the overall percentage of null votes have relatively declined up to 30% compared to the results in 2018, it remains high. This can be attributed to the complexity of the electoral process having 6 boxes and 6 ballots.

¹ 2019 Presidential elections were held in which Mr. Moahmed Ould Ghazouani was elected president after incumbent Mr. Mohamed Oud Abdel Aziz was not able to run due to the two-term constitutional limit.

The awareness of the role of the citizen in favor of peaceful elections allowing popular participation including women and young people was increased.

The overall participation to the elections reached 71.8 % for the first round and 64.5% for the second round. Though these figures are in line with previous elections, they are still over the average standards in the region. Besides, the number of young people and women registered on the electoral lists in 2023 have increased. To give an example, the percentage of young people on the municipal candidate lists for the 2023 local elections reached 42.63%, out of which 41.48% are women. This number was 44.45% for young people regarding regional elections, out of which 45.25% were women. For the legislative elections, young people represented 34.29% of all candidates, out of which 29.07% were women.

The prevention of pre-electoral conflicts, including hate speech, allowed women to have confidence in the process and the number of women candidates for municipal elections increased.

Participation and representation rates of women in the legislative elections have increased from 20.3% in 2018 to 23% in 2023. 31.58% women were represented in regional elections and 34.58% in municipal elections.

Increased number of women on candidates' lists as follows: 35.10% of women for regional elections, 36.73% for legislative elections and 32.57% for municipal elections.

■ KEY ACTIVITIES

- ▶ 20 awareness sessions on the participation of women and youth in the 2023 elections reached out over to 1,000 women and youth.
- ▶ An electoral monitoring cell was established by the Advertising Regulation Authority to assess inclusivity of participation, counteract hate speech, and disseminate accurate information reaching 6,000 individuals. As a result, various actors were able to run electoral campaigns in compliance with the rules and without violence.
- ▶ In Nouakchott and Nouadhibou activities regarding raising awareness for the participation of women took place reaching 5,000 individuals.
- ▶ 30 youth organizations trained on citizenship and youth participation. They have raised awareness among approximately 6,000 young people in the 3 targeted wilayas.
- ▶ 180 young people, of which 75% women, received training on the promotion of human rights, peace, and social cohesion. As a result, they have carried out awareness activities, reaching 2,800 individuals in the 3 intervention zones.
- ▶ Dedicated training with the network of journalists on deconstructing hate speech and fake news. A journalist watch-cell (15 members including 9 women) was also put in place and deconstructed hate speech and fake news in partnership with the High authority for the press and audiovisual.

■ CATALYTIC EFFECTS

Non-financial:

Increase in the number of people registered on the electoral list demonstrates the acceptance of differences.

The project's intervention had a direct influence on higher participation of all stakeholders in the electoral campaign and access to advertising spaces in an inclusive and equitable manner regardless of their financial capabilities.



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