RUNNING EFFECTIVE, COVID-SAFE ELECTIONS IN THE PACIFIC:
A checklist approach

A PIANZEA Discussion Paper

Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand
Electoral Administrators Network

Table of Contents

Acronyms and definitions

EMB	Electoral management body
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
PIANZEA Network	Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network
PPE	Personal protective equipment
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Introduction

This paper aims to provide a practical guide for conducting safe elections in the context of COVID-19 in the Pacific. It does this by drawing on the experiences of PIANZEA Network members, along with existing literature. It breaks down the process of preparing a COVID-safe election into four parts: a review of previous elections; liaison with health and other government departments; election operations; and election rules and regulations. For each topic, the paper identifies key challenges and ways that electoral management bodies (EMBs) can minimize COVID-related risks. A comprehensive checklist for EMBs to use is provided in the Appendix.

Context

Since COVID-19 emerged in late 2019, the pandemic has impacted every country in the world. Even Pacific countries that have had few COVID-19 cases have experienced impacts on tourism, supply chains, trade and overall economic outcomes due to travel restrictions and lockdowns.

Electoral processes are not immune to the effects of COVID-19. Between 21 February 2020 and 21 February 2022, at least 42 countries postponed national elections or referendums. Many of these elections were eventually held as vaccinations rates increased and countries began to learn to live with the virus. Overall, 130 countries have held national elections since February 2020.[1]

Holding COVID-safe elections requires careful planning, which puts significant pressure on EMBs. Many EMBs have produced guides for managing elections in the context of COVID-19 (see box right), and this paper builds on these by providing a practical checklist that PIANZEA Network members can use to assess their own COVID-readiness.[2] As all countries have experienced COVID-19 differently, electoral management requirements will vary for different EMBs.

> **Health and Safety Guidelines**
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> For a list of election-related health and safety guidelines (current to 5th February 2021), see this *this article* from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

Structure

The paper is organised into four sections.

- Section 1 provides an overview of some of the key challenges that EMBs face when running effective elections during the pandemic.
- Section 2 introduces the checklist. It includes a summary of why each section is important, and some suggestions on how to approach the questions.
- Section 3 includes a summary and links to further resources.
- The checklist itself is provided in the Appendix.

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[1] International IDEA, *Global overview of COVID-19: Impact on elections*, 2022, accessed 13 April 2022.

[2] International IDEA, *Elections and Covid-19: Health and safety in polling stations*, 2021, accessed 13 April 2022.

1. Key challenges for EMBs

EMBs seeking to run effective, COVID-safe elections face a range of interlinked challenges. These can be loosely grouped into three categories:

- Ensuring health and safety,
- Maintaining electoral integrity, and
- Operating within financial constraints.

This section provides an overview of these challenges.

Ensuring health and safety

The leading challenge for EMBs is reducing the likelihood that members of the public and EMB staff will catch COVID-19 during election-related activities (including polling, registration and vote counting). EMBs have typically collaborated closely with government health departments to ensure that mitigation measures are appropriate, and to produce guidance for holding elections safely.[3] Since 2020, EMBs have taken a range of measures to mitigate the risks associated with undertaking election-related activities in-person, including:[4]

- Physical distancing
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) for EMB staff
- Mandatory masks for voters and/or staff
- Mandatory use of hand sanitiser
- Sanitation of electoral materials
- Regular cleaning of polling stations
- Temperature checks for voters/staff
- Capacity limits for polling stations
- Requesting voters to bring their own pens
- Mandatory disposable gloves for voters/staff
- Extra polling station staff to ensure compliance with health measures
- Increased number of polling stations or extended polling station hours
- Floor markings and barriers to enforce physical distancing
- Restriction on commercial activities close to polling stations
- Allowing voting over multiple days
- Mandatory contact tracing app check-ins
- Limitations on celebratory gatherings during result announcements
- Posters at polling stations warning voter to take precautions against COVID-19
- Size of polling stations increased
- Allocating voters a specific voting time
- Dedicated polling booths for persons with respiratory symptoms
- Vaccination of staff

The logistical burden of implementing health and safety measures can place a significant strain on EMB human and financial resources. This is exacerbated by the constantly evolving operational environment, which can mean rapid changes to election-related health and safety measures. The best way to combat this is through careful and comprehensive planning.

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[3] The Commonwealth, *Managing Elections in the Context of COVID-19: Perspectives from the Commonwealth*, 2020, p 8.

[4] International IDEA, *Elections and Covid-19: Health and safety in polling stations*, 2021, accessed 13 April 2022.

Maintaining electoral integrity

COVID-19 has posed significant challenges to electoral integrity. Many elections were postponed due to COVID-19. Although most of these delayed elections have now been held, there is a risk that future postponements on health grounds could undermine public confidence in democratic processes.[5] This is particularly the case if the public suspects that the incumbent regime is delaying elections to gain political advantage.[6]

The shift from traditional, in-person voting to existing alternatives (including postal voting and early voting) or newer methods (such as online or telephone voting) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 can be controversial. The challenges involved with ensuring that the public has confidence in altered voting processes were evident during the 2020 United States election, where mal-information and disinformation caused large numbers of voters and elected representatives to buy in to conspiracy theories about lost postal votes.[7]

Voter turnout may be negatively impacted by health and safety concerns. Of 108 countries that held elections in 2020 and 2021, 66 per cent experienced reduced turnout compared to elections held between 2008 and 2019 (see Figure 1).[8] The average decline in turnout was just over 10 per cent. Low turnout has implications for electoral integrity because it can be seen as undermining the legitimacy of the resulting government.

The key to maintaining electoral integrity in the context of COVID-19 is transparency.[9] EMBs should undertake public consultation before making changes so that they can understand people's views and plan for how to mitigate any concerns. When changes to the electoral process are necessary due to COVID-19, EMBs should try to keep the public informed about the changes and why they are necessary. This can involve combatting mal-information, misinformation and disinformation across traditional and social media.

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[5] James and Sead, 'When Is It Democratic to Postpone an Election? Elections During Natural Disasters, COVID-19, and Emergency Situations', 2020.

[6] The Economist, *The pandemic is affecting elections around the world*, 2020, accessed 14 April 2022.

[7] Cohen, *6 conspiracy theories about the 2020 election – debunked*, 2021, accessed 14 April 2022.

[8] International IDEA, *Global overview of COVID-19: Impact on elections*, 2022, accessed 13 April 2022.

[9] The Commonwealth, *Managing Elections in the Context of COVID-19: Perspectives from the Commonwealth*, 2020, p 18.
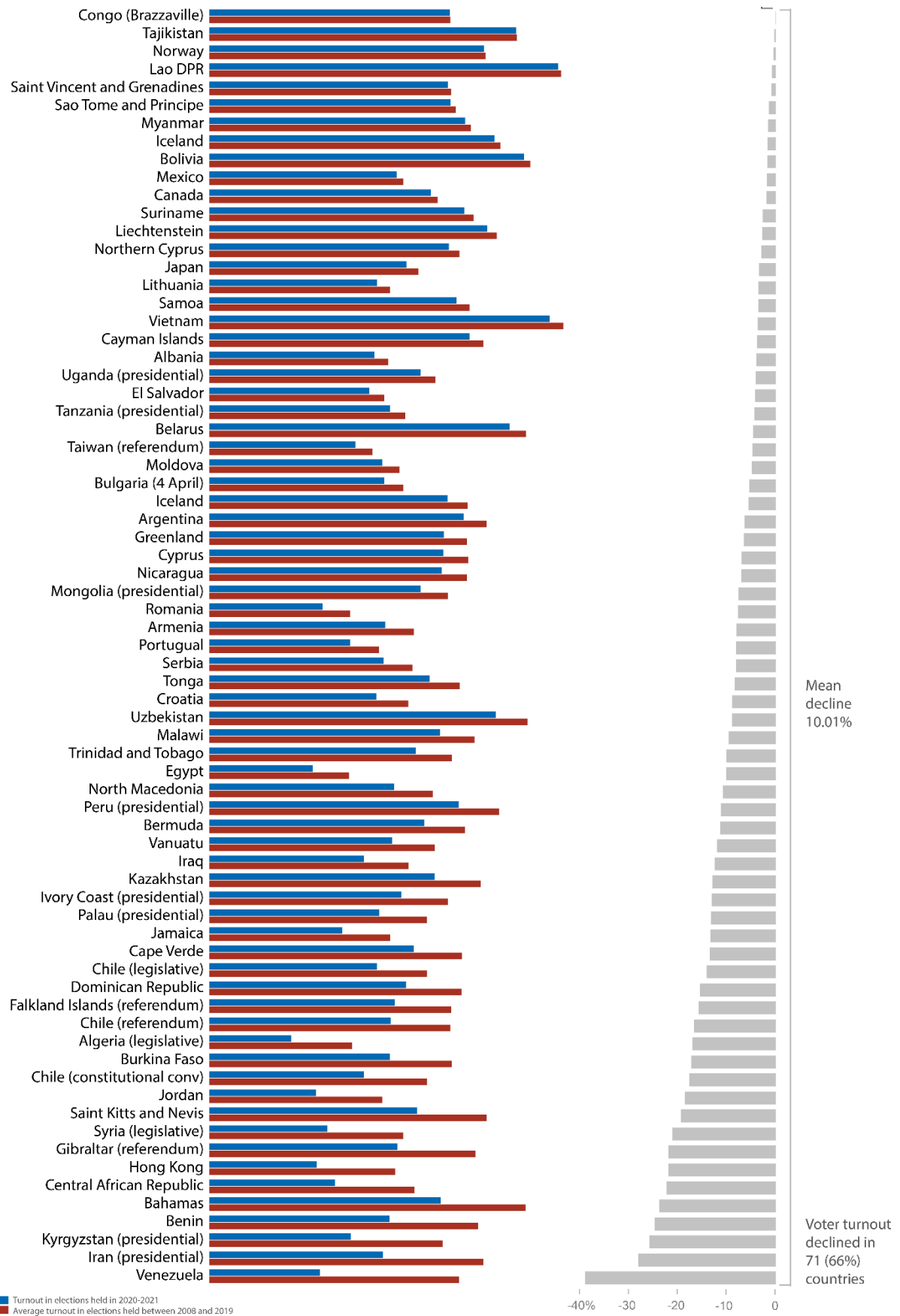
Legend:
- Turnout in elections held in 2020-2021 (blue)
- Average turnout in elections held between 2008 and 2019 (red)

Right panel annotations:
- Mean decline 10.01%
- Voter turnout declined in 71 (66%) countries

Countries (top to bottom):
Congo (Brazzaville), Tajikistan, Norway, Lao DPR, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Myanmar, Iceland, Bolivia, Mexico, Canada, Suriname, Liechtenstein, Northern Cyprus, Japan, Lithuania, Samoa, Vietnam, Cayman Islands, Albania, Uganda (presidential), El Salvador, Tanzania (presidential), Belarus, Taiwan (referendum), Moldova, Bulgaria (4 April), Iceland, Argentina, Greenland, Cyprus, Nicaragua, Mongolia (presidential), Romania, Armenia, Portugal, Serbia, Tonga, Croatia, Uzbekistan, Malawi, Trinidad and Tobago, Egypt, North Macedonia, Peru (presidential), Bermuda, Vanuatu, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Ivory Coast (presidential), Palau (presidential), Jamaica, Cape Verde, Chile (legislative), Dominican Republic, Falkland Islands (referendum), Chile (referendum), Algeria (legislative), Burkina Faso, Chile (constitutional conv), Jordan, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Syria (legislative), Gibraltar (referendum), Hong Kong, Central African Republic, Bahamas, Benin, Kyrgyzstan (presidential), Iran (presidential), Venezuela

X-axis (right panel): -40%, -30, -20, -10, 0

Figure 1: Post-COVID-19 elections with declining voter turnout (image from International IDEA)

Financial constraints

Effectively addressing the challenges above can be costly, and this financial burden is amplified by the budget cuts that many EMBs have experienced because of COVID-driven economic decline. A survey conducted by the Commonwealth's Political Team found that 94 per cent of EMBs expected COVID-19 to have budgetary implications for their next election due to "increased staffing costs, the need to procure PPE and the cost of voter information and education regarding any new measures".[10] For example, South Korea's elections in April 2021 cost an estimated US$16 million more than usual.[11] These competing budgetary pressures mean that EMBs need to carefully assess COVID-related initiatives and prioritise those that most efficiently support safe and effective election delivery.

2. The checklist

This section provides an overview of the checklist. The checklist was developed to assist PIANZEA Network Members to address the challenges identified above. The checklist aims to assist with the delivery of safe and effective elections in the context of COVID-19.

The aim of the checklist is to help EMBs quickly assess their readiness for electoral events and develop a plan of action. The checklist does not prescribe how to run an election during COVID-19, as the electoral context in every country is different. Instead, it poses key questions to consider in preparing for the election. By answering these questions, you will be able to determine the necessary course of action. You can use the 'actions required' section of the checklist to list the things that you need to do to develop a comprehensive plan for running a safe and effective election.

When completing the checklist and developing a plan, consultation and flexibility are crucial. Ensure all staff are involved in creating the plan, and that it is communicated clearly to all stakeholders – including the public. Sharing lessons with other EMBs can also be helpful. Be prepared to continually revisit the plan as the situation evolves.

Finally, it is important to recognise that COVID-19 is likely to effect EMB activities at all stages of the electoral cycle. This is reflected in Part 3 of the checklist, which covers all the activities that are conducted as part of an election's lead up and aftermath. It is vital that EMBs develop contingency plans for each component of the electoral cycle.

Overview: Assess COVID-19 risk

The checklist begins with two questions that aim to get EMBs thinking about the level of COVID-19 risk they face. The severity of this risk will help to determine the extent of measures required.

Part 1: Review of previous elections

The first section of the checklist is designed to help EMBs evaluate their last election if it was held in the context of COVID-19. If the previous election was held during the pandemic, all procedures and processes should be evaluated to ascertain their effectiveness. This

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[10] The Commonwealth, *Managing Elections in the Context of COVID-19: Perspectives from the Commonwealth*, 2020, p 10.

[11] Maizland, *How Countries Are Holding Elections During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020, accessed 14 April 2022.

includes staffing, funding, health and safety measures, training, community awareness, liaison with other government departments, and key areas for improvement. This will support the development of a comprehensive plan for the forthcoming election. As part of this process, it is important that EMBs engage in effective scenario planning to ensure that contingencies are in place for a range of potential disruptive events, including those related to COVID-19.

Part 2: Liaison with health and other government departments

Collaboration with other government actors is crucial to running a safe and effective election during the pandemic. This is because the challenges that the pandemic has created for smooth election management cut across EMBs and government departments and agencies. Collaboration with the health department is most crucial: electoral staff are not health experts and must rely on the medical advice of relevant health authorities. It is also important that EMBs help health authorities to understand the electoral consequences of any decisions they make. Cooperation with other departments and agencies such as the police, home affairs, the attorney-general and finance are also important.

The process of establishing cooperation needs to begin well before the election date, and should cover topics including:

- Alignment of polling day health and safety measures with national health regulations
- Provision of health and hygiene products
- The roles and responsibilities of various departments and agencies in the lead up to the election and on polling day
- Security arrangements and how these might be impacted by COVID-19
- How health, safety and security measures will be enforced
- Legislative changes to support new voting procedures
- The budgetary implications of putting in place COVID-19 safety measures.

It is important to clearly delineate the responsibilities of health authorities, security agencies, and the EMB.

Part 3: Election operations

As noted above, the entire electoral cycle faces potential disruption due to a pandemic. Therefore, this section of the checklist covers all aspects of the electoral cycle: the EMB budget; staffing; voter registration; voter awareness; candidate nomination and awareness; the various types of voting; training for polling day staff; the preparation of polling venues; polling day procedures; electoral observation; and vote counting. Coordinated planning across these areas is vitally important and must be undertaken well before the actual election.

While the checklist itself provides detailed questions for each of these areas, this section gives an overview of some key themes to bear in mind when working through the checklist.

Innovation

The pandemic has forced us to rethink electoral administration. Creative thinking is needed to solve new, rapidly evolving challenges across all elements of the electoral cycle: the attitude that 'we've always done it this way' must be replaced by openness to new voting methods and procedures. For example, EMBs may need to rethink how they educate voters and candidates when face-to-face interaction becomes impossible, while venue capacity constraints may require new approaches to vote counting and scrutiny. However, it is important that any changes to voting procedures maintain voter secrecy and are not in conflict with current electoral laws – any changes will need to be discussed with the relevant authorities well ahead of polling day to allow for legislative changes if required.

> **Innovation snapshots**
>
> For the 2020 US presidential election, some states ran **'drive-in' training** for polling day staff.
>
> In Germany, the state of Bavaria moved to **100 per cent postal voting** for local elections in March 2020.
>
> The Australian Electoral Commission implemented **telephone voting** for people with COVID-19.
>
> Sources: Drive-in training; postal voting; telephone voting

Voter health and safety concerns

It is likely that there will be heightened tensions among voters concerned about their health and safety when they attend a polling station. There are several strategies that EMBs can take to allay these concerns. EMBs should involve the public in the consultation process regarding any changes to election procedures. Ahead of the election the EMB should conduct comprehensive community awareness programs that explain health and safety measures (see Figure 2) and clarify any changes to the voting process. EMBs could seek to reduce crowding by running extended early polling or providing extra polling stations on election day. EMBs could consider implementing forms of voting that lessen voter exposure to COVID-19. These include:

- Mobile polling
- Telephone voting (under strict protocols)
- Internet voting (under strict protocols)
- Postal Voting
- Proxy Voting (under strict protocols)

As noted above, any new methods of voting must be thoroughly assessed to ensure that they are legal, that voter secrecy is maintained and that there are adequate security measures in place. These measures can also be costly and needed to be well funded.
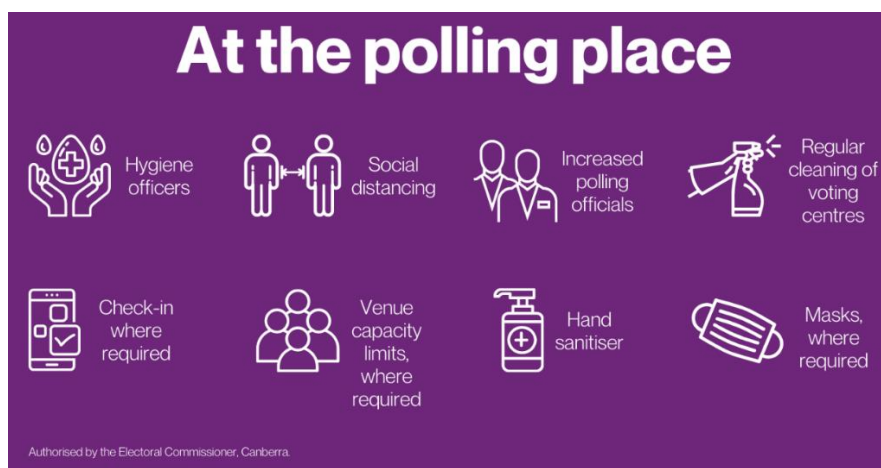
Figure 2: Example of public collateral detailing health and safety measures (Australian Electoral Commission)

It is vital that EMBs avoid the perception that any COVID-induced changes to election procedures are political in nature. There is a strong risk that some actors will seek to frame electoral changes – such as new voting methods or the postponement of polling days – as advantaging specific parties or candidates. Attempted politicisation may be driven by legitimate concerns regarding the electoral process or by a desire to undermine the integrity of the election outcome for political gain. It is important for the EMB to proactively mitigate any attempted politicisation to prevent the narrative from taking hold. As noted above in the section on electoral integrity, public consultation, transparency and voter education are the best methods for avoiding accusations of political bias.

Part 4: Election rules and evaluation

The final section of the checklist deals with the rules that govern elections and the post-election review process. Conducting a safe and effective election during the pandemic may require changes to election regulations or legislation. This has two dimensions. First, as noted above, if the EMB is seeking to implement new voting procedures it may need to work with the government to enact associated legislative changes. Second, in many countries, governments have put in place new laws and regulations to control the spread of COVID-19. These have included border closures, lockdowns, mandatory mask wearing, vaccination requirements, compulsory check ins at venues, building capacity limits and physical distancing rules. Any of these restrictions could impact the way that the EMB conducts an electoral event and could therefore necessitate changes to EMB regulations. In both cases, close liaison with the relevant government departments is key.

In the aftermath of an election, it is important that the EMB conducts a comprehensive evaluation of its approach across the electoral cycle and identifies proposed improvements to ensure that the next electoral event runs smoothly. In the current context, EMBs should consider including COVID-19 safety as a cross-cutting theme in all post-election evaluations. This facilitates the 'mainstreaming' of COVID-19 planning and the identification of potential future improvements. Where appropriate, the evaluation should involve inputs from other government departments and international election observers.

3.   Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a complex set of new and rapidly evolving challenges for EMBs to negotiate as they seek to fulfil their mandate of delivering safe and effective elections. Health and safety risks, electoral integrity and financial constraints are serious issues that have the potential to undermine the foundations of a democratic system. Through a combination of innovation, dedication and careful planning EMBs can overcome these obstacles.

This paper is intended to provide EMBs with a simple but useful resource that supports effective election planning. The checklist can be used to ensure that all aspects of the electoral cycle have been considered when planning an electoral event. Because PIANZEA Network members have diverse electoral systems and have been affected by COVID-19 in different ways, it is vital that EMBs adapt the checklist to their local context. There is now a wide range of additional resources available to support this process (see below).

There is also great scope for sharing learnings and supporting each other through the PIANZEA Network. We strongly encourage members to reach out through the Network to their peers so that we can work together to overcome these challenges.

Useful resources and further reading

- **IFES –** COVID-19 Briefing Series

- **International IDEA –** Global Overview of COVID-19 Impact on Elections

- **International IDEA –** Elections and COVID-19: Health and safety in polling stations

- **International IDEA –** Running Local Elections During the COVID-19 Crisis: Queensland, Australia

- **ACE Electoral Knowledge Network –** COVID-19 resource page

- **Electoral Integrity Project –** Elections and COVID-19

- **The British Academy –** How to hold elections safely and democratically during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Council on Foreign Relations –** How Countries are Holding Elections During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- **Toby James –** New Development: Running elections during a pandemic

- **The Commonwealth –** Managing Elections in the Context of COVID-19

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pandemic

Appendix: COVID-safe elections checklist

PART 1 – REVIEW OF PREVIOUS ELECTION

A. Assess risk of next election being impacted by COVID-19

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Is there a current COVID-19 outbreak in your country?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Is it likely that COVID-19 will impact on your next election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Was your previous election during the COVID-19 pandemic?	If **YES**, proceed to B. If **NO**, proceed to PART 2.				

B. Review COVID-19 measures used for previous election

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Were previous COVID-19 measures adequate?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Did you have enough staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Did you have enough funding?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Was polling official training effective?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Were community awareness programs effective?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. Did you liaise effectively with the health department and other government departments/agencies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Were there any unexpected challenges? *If yes, what were they?*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8. Could anything have been done better or differently?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

PART 2 – LIAISON WITH HEALTH AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you identified which government departments/agencies you will need to engage with to deliver the election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you identified who from your EMB will liaise with health officials regarding electoral processes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Has your EMB agreed on the roles and responsibilities of each government department/agency before and during the election period?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Have security issues been negotiated with the police?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Has responsibility for enforcing noncompliance with COVID-19 regulations during electoral processes been allocated?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

PART 3 – ELECTION OPERATIONS

A. Budgets

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you budgeted for extra staff costs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you budgeted for extra polling venues?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Have you budgeted for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for election staff? *E.g., masks, gloves, gowns*	☐	☐	☐	☐	

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
4. Have you budgeted for hygiene products? *E.g., hand sanitiser, disinfectant wipes, surface sprays*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Have you budgeted for extra training sessions? *May be required due to physical distancing and venue capacity requirements*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. Have you budgeted for extra voter information sessions? *May be required due to physical distancing and venue capacity requirements*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Have you budgeted for additional shipping and logistics costs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8. Have you allowed for delays in shipping and transportation of election-related materials?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9. Have you addressed difficulties in shipping sanitiser as it is classed as a dangerous good?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10. Have you budgeted for extra media advertising? *May be required to replace face-to-face information sessions. E.g., TV, newspaper, radio and social media ads*	☐	☐	☐	☐	

B. Staffing

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Will staff training sessions need to be modified to include COVID-19 polling place procedures?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
2. Will there be a requirement for your staff to be vaccinated?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Do you have contingency plans in case staff contract COVID-19 or must isolate during the election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Will extra staff positions need to be created to support COVID-19 procedures? *E.g., extra cleaning staff, extra queue controllers*	☐	☐	☐	☐	

C. Voter Registration

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you identified COVID-safe voter registration centres?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you considered extra registration centres to allow for physical distancing and capacity constraints?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Have you developed a COVID-safe process for handling registration papers?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Have you put in place physical distancing measures for registration centres to ensure the risk of infection is minimized?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Have you designed and procured extra signage to help people who are registering to understand current procedures?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. Have you procured adequate hygiene products and supplied these to registration centres?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Have you procured PPE for voter registration staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

| 8. Will you need to facilitate extra training sessions for registration staff to explain COVID-19 regulations? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |

D. Voter Awareness

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you considered whether you will be able to conduct face-to-face voter awareness sessions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you considered running online voter awareness sessions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Have you considered what physical distancing restrictions you will need to implement for voter awareness sessions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Do you have plan to run voter awareness campaigns through other channels? *E.g., social media, TV, radio, newspapers*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Have you developed key COVID-19 messages to convey any changes to the voting process?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. Do you have a plan to address disinformation about COVID-19 and the election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

E. Candidates Nominations and Information Sessions

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Do you have a plan to ensure that any face-to-face nomination/information sessions are COVID-safe?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you considered running online nomination/information sessions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:

7. Do you have plan to run candidate information sessions through other channels?
   E.g., social media, TV, radio, newspapers

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

F. Early Voting

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:

1. Have you considered implementing longer periods of early voting?
   May be required to reduce congestion on polling day

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Will you need more early voting centres to cope with higher demand?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. Will early voting centres need to stay open for longer to cope with higher demand?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4. Have all early voting centres been provided with adequate PPE for staff and hygiene products?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5. Have you considered allocating early voters a specific time and day to cast their ballot?
   May be required to reduce congestion and facilitate physical distancing

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

G. Postal voting

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:

1. Are you prepared to run largescale postal voting if there is a national/regional lock down during the election period?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Is there a security plan in place for protecting ballots if largescale postal voting is required?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
3. Do you have a COVID-safe process for handling returned postal votes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

H. Telephone voting

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you considered running telephone voting for some electors? *E.g., vulnerable people, those in quarantine*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. If telephone voting is an option, have you developed a call centre, procedures, a staffing plan, a plan to maintain voter secrecy, a security plan and a risk management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

I. Internet voting

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you considered online voting?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. If online voting is an option, have you developed procedures, a security plan and a risk management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

J. Training polling staff

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you considered whether you will be able to conduct face-to-face training for polling staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you considered running online training for polling staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Will you need to conduct extra training sessions to allow for physical distancing?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
4.	Have you organized the supply of PPE and hygiene materials for your training sessions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.	Have you developed training content to cover COVID-19 procedures?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

K. Polling venues

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
6.	Will you need to organise extra polling venues? *May be required to prevent congestion and facilitate physical distancing*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7.	Have you considered allocating voters a specific polling place? *If this is not already standard procedure*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8.	Have you considered allocating voters a specific time and day to cast their ballot? *May be required to reduce congestion and facilitate physical distancing*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9.	Do all polling venues meet COVID-19 requirements? *E.g., good ventilation, space for physical distancing*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10.	Have you developed a comprehensive COVID-19 plan for all polling venues? *This should cover topics such as placement of voting screens to allow physical distancing, regular cleaning of screens and tables, provision/cleaning of pens/pencils*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
11.	Do you have a plan in place to provide adequate PPE and hygiene materials to all polling venues?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

| 12. Do you have a plan for what happens if there is a positive COVID-19 cases at a polling venue? *E.g., switching venues, bringing in backup staff* | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |

L. Voters

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Will voters need to be vaccinated?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. How will voters' vaccination status be checked?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Will voters have to return a negative COVID-19 test before attending a polling venue?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Will voters be required to wear masks in polling venues?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Will masks be provided to voters at polling venues?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. Are there measures in place to allow voters overseas to cast their ballots?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Are there measures in place to allow COVID-vulnerable people to cast their ballot safely?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8. Are there measures in place to allow COVID-positive people to cast their ballot from isolation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

M. Queuing

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you planned for extra staff at polling venues to manage COVID-related congestion?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. How will you ensure that physical distancing is	☐	☐	☐	☐	

maintained while voters are queueing?

N. Party workers

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. If party workers are permitted to distribute material to voters outside polling places, is there a plan to ensure that this activity is COVID-safe? *E.g., materials on a table for voters to take, materials displayed for voters to look at*	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Will party workers be permitted to attend counting centres in-person?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Will party workers have to return a negative COVID-19 test before participating in the electoral process?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Will party workers need to be vaccinated?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. How will party workers' vaccination status be checked?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

O. Hygiene

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Have you organised for all polling venues to have hand sanitiser and/or hand washing facilities available for voters and staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Do you have procedures in place for handling sick people at polling venues?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

P. Vote counting

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Do you have a plan to ensure physical distancing at counting centres?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Have you arranged adequate PPE for counting centre staff for the entire counting period?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Will scrutineers/party workers be provided with PPE?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Do you have a security plan to ensure that all COVID-19 regulations are followed at counting centres?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Have you allocated responsibility for enforcing the security plan?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. What rules are in place for the safe handling of ballot papers?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Will scrutineers need to be vaccinated?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8. How will scrutineer' vaccination status be checked?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9. Will scrutineers have to return a negative COVID-19 test before participating in the electoral process?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Q. Electoral observers

	Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1. Will you have independent observers attending the election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	
2.	Will independent observers have to return a negative COVID-19 test before observing the electoral process?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3.	Will you provide PPE and hygiene products for observers?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4.	Will independent observers need to be vaccinated?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.	How will independent observers' vaccination status be checked?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6.	Will independent observers be required to wear masks?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

PART 4 – ELECTION RULES AND LEGISLATION

A. Law changes

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1.	Based on your responses to the other sections of the checklist, will changes to legislation be required for the next election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.	Do you have time to implement the required legislative changes ahead of the next election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3.	Do you have a plan for implementing the legislative changes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4.	Do you have a plan for running community consultation on any proposed legislative changes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.	Will amendments to Procedures Manuals will be needed if changes to legislation are made?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	
6.	Do you have a plan in place to train staff in the new procedures?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7.	Will community awareness programs be needed to inform stakeholders of the changes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

B. Evaluation

		Yes	No	Unsure	NA	Actions:
1.	Will you conduct an evaluation of the COVID-19 procedures used in the election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.	Will the evaluation of COVID-19 be incorporated into a broader post-election review?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3.	Will the evaluation be undertaken by an independent body?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4.	Will the evaluation cover the role of other government departments/agencies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.	Will the evaluation be publicly available?	☐	☐	☐	☐	