



## Promoting democracy and political participation

### Advisory Service

#### The challenge

Democracy is a key condition for living in dignity and freedom. Hallmarks of a democratic political system include separation of powers, checks and balances, the rule of law, respecting human rights as well as freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Further characteristics are free and fair elections as well as the opportunity for people to actively engage in political and societal decision-making processes.

#### Our approach

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH promotes democracy as a value and as a political system.

In accordance with international conventions and agendas, we promote political participation with the aim of improving the quality and sustainability of decision-making processes. To that end, we accompany negotiation processes that contribute to more constructive state-society relations. Taking account of the interests of the population, and particularly of disadvantaged groups, makes the provision of state services more citizen-oriented, more effective and more efficient, thereby improving confidence in the state. This approach also contributes to prevention and mitigation of conflict, especially in fragile contexts.

We support free, fair, universal and secret elections. Such elections are the most important expression of the political will of citizens, they legitimise elected representatives and political decisions, and they represent the strongest mechanism open to citizens to sanction actions taken by the state.

#### Our services

In promoting political participation, we work at three levels: directly promoting civil society organisations, improving the statutory and institutional framework within which civil society operates, and promoting constructive action by civil society along with measures to promote constructive relations between state and society. Our services include:

- » **capacity development for civil society organisations** in the areas of advocacy, monitoring, dialogue skills, organisational development and empowerment of disadvantaged groups in the population;
- » **developing and strengthening civil society networks**, umbrella associations and alliances;
- » **using funds to finance civil society activities**, particularly in fragile contexts, around human rights, awareness raising among the population and advocacy;
- » advising state actors on **establishing mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation** (e.g. conversations with citizens and online platforms);
- » improving the **framework and foundations of participation for civil society** (for example, simplifying registration and amending the law on freedom of association);
- » **supporting cooperation arrangements between civil society and the state** to improve the quality of, and ensure equal access by the population to services, as well as to strengthen political participation;
- » **promoting the use of information and communication technologies** as an opportunity for direct dialogue between the state and civil society, and of influencing decision-making by the state.



GIZ is helping to improve the capacity of **parliaments and municipal councils** so that they can carry out their original roles responsibly, transparently and effectively. This includes services such as:

- » **strengthening capacities in parliamentary or municipal council administration** (including of committee secretariats) as well as **parliaments' and municipal councils' role in controlling the executive**;
- » **improving management of the interface** between state authorities and between different administrative levels (national, subnational and local);
- » **supporting legislative processes**, for example through providing cross-party specialist advice for parliamentary committees.

Our services in the area of free, fair, universal and secret **elections** include all phases in the electoral process, with a focus on the role of civil society and of the media.

- » **Preparing for elections**: e.g. voter education through democratic awareness raising and information cam-paigns, including through the media.
- » **Conduct of elections**: e.g. further training for (civil society) election observers, organisation of election observer missions, and development of standards for election reporting by state and private media.
- » **Election evaluation**: e.g. promoting the analysis, evaluation and discussion of electoral processes and election outcomes, as well as capacity development for specific elected representatives with regard to their role and performance.

## The benefits

Promoting democracy and political participation improves the legitimacy of state structures and increases the democratic accountability and transparency of actions taken by governments and administrative agencies. As a result, this approach helps to promote peaceful and integrative societies and to build effective, responsible and inclusive institutions at all levels.

GIZ has extensive specialist expertise and a wide range of instruments and methods at its disposal that can be adapted to specific contexts, including in fragile states. Our experience in cooperating with state and civil society actors is being continually evaluated and feeds into the design and implementation of new measures.

## An example from the field

Working on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ is supporting dialogue between state and civil society actors and the responsible involvement of civil society in policy-making processes in Zambia. Specifically, the state and civil society are working together on reforming legislation regarding non-governmental organisations. By means of strengthening a national foundation, smaller civil society organisations have further gained access to financial resources and a forum for mutual learning – a key contribution to achieving a vibrant and diverse civil society in Zambia.

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