

The Digital Election Observation Workspace (DEOW) - A Game Changer for Election Observation in Ethiopia

The Challenge

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) coordinates the work of civil society organizations in election observation, voter education, and post-electoral conflict prevention in Ethiopia. During Ethiopia's sixth national and regional elections in 2021, CECOE deployed app. 3,500 long- and short-term observers across the country.

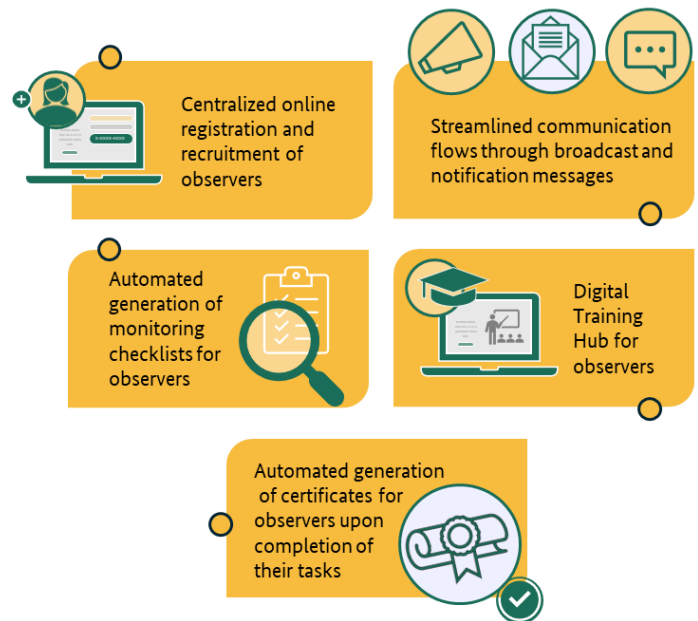
However, manual recruitment and management processes created significant operational challenges. Time-consuming workflows and a high risk of human errors not only limited the efficiency of the observation process, but also the number of observers that could potentially be deployed.

Streamlining and digitalizing these steps was therefore critical to ensure a timely and reliable deployment of observers – a key foundation for public trust and the legitimacy of elections.

The Programme and Partners

The Support to Good Governance Programme (S2GG) provided the technical and financial means to turn CECOE's vision of an integrated digital solution for observer management into reality. With the support of Technology Wisdom, a professional IT company commissioned by S2GG, key election observation processes were digitalized, streamlined and integrated into one user-friendly platform, the Digital Election Observation Workspace (DEOW).

Illustration: Key Features of the DEOW include:



By automatically extracting information from its database and formatting it into the required structure, the DEOW also optimizes the use of Apollo, a digital tool employed by CECOE to collect and analyze election data.

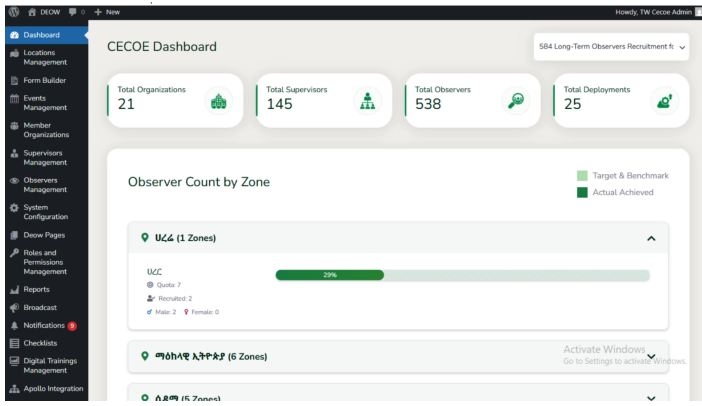
The DEOW has also been integrated with the digital accreditation system of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). Observers' data can now be directly transferred to NEBE for accreditation purposes, avoiding double entries and ensuring consistency of information, both on CECOE and NEBE sides.

About the Support to Good Governance (S2GG) in Ethiopia Programme

The S2GG programme is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme aims to gear the Ethiopian governance system towards the transformation into a democratic and inclusive state based on the rule of law.



Photo 1: Participants of the DEOW system training in April 2026. This group includes GIZ & CECOE staff who have shaped the digital platform's development since Day 1.



Top left corner:
Figure: Snapshot of the
CECOE Admin Dashboard.

Photo in text:
Abera Hailemariam, Executive
Director of CECOE, briefs the
E-Horn delegation on the
integrated digital platform,
DEOW, during their courtesy
visit in March 2026.

“The Digital Election Observation Workspace (DEOW) impacts the entire observer lifecycle – from recruitment and training to accreditation, deployment, and certification.”

**Abera Hailemariam,
Executive Director, CECOE**



The Impacts

The DEOW has transformed fragmented, manual workflows into a centralized and automated digital solution, significantly improving efficiency, data accuracy, and communication flows. This enables CECOE to manage election observation more effectively and reliably, and to scale up observer deployment – thus contributing to freer, fairer, and more credible elections in Ethiopia.

Amid rising financial constraints for CSOs, the system also allows CECOE to manage its operations more independently, reducing the need for extensive staffing and supporting the long-term viability of the organization.

The DEOW serves as a best-practice solution for other CSOs in the region and beyond. During a visit of the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN) at the CECOE Secretariat in March 2026, representatives referred to the DEOW as a “game changer” that has turned long-discussed ideas at E-HORN into practice. They commended CECOE and GIZ for developing a unique platform that has modernized election observation in Ethiopia and possibly, in the future, across the East and Horn of Africa

“The DEOW system is improved, structured, and encompasses the things we at E-HORN have been discussing. Thank you for demonstrating the tool. We would like to learn more about its application in Ethiopia’s election ahead of the elections in Kenya next year.”

**Mr. Mulle Musau,
Regional Coordinator, E-HORN**

The Reach

Besides facilitating the work of CECOE, the DEOW benefits CECOE’s member organizations who can now easily register their organization in order to add newly recruited observers. It also supports an estimated 3,200 short- and long-term observers who can access a personalized dashboard through a mobile application to view their profiles, assignments and other information, and to receive messages and notifications.



Published by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Support to Good Governance (S2GG) in Ethiopia
MH Building, 11th Floor, Kasanchis,
Kirkos Sub-City, Woreda 08,
P.O. Box 100 009,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
www.giz.de

As at: May 2026

Photo credits: © GIZ/Erna Mentenot Hintz

Text: Anke Rehfeld

Layout & graphics: Erna Mentenot Hintz

Die GIZ is responsible for this publication.

On behalf of German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

In cooperation with Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE)