Introduction

Background and rationale
Every year, several countries in Africa have national presidential and/or parliamentary elections. Unfortunately, some of them generate tensions and violence during the campaign period, voting days and/or after the elections.

As part of their mandate, National Societies (NSs) are frequently in the forefront in the preparation and delivery of humanitarian assistance such as First Aid during electoral-related violence. Their election preparedness and response plans have often been developed with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and partner NSs (pNSs) support to increase readiness and capacity. As a result, there is a wealth of experiences available to share with other NSs to support in addressing new similar situations of electoral violence.

Objective and expected output
Promoting well-coordinated efforts in terms of election-preparedness and contingency planning is a priority for IFRC and ICRC in Africa. In September 2018, the Africa Disaster Management Advisory Group (ADMAG)’s Plan of Action identified the following key action: to produce a guiding document on election preparedness and response to be used by African NSs and other Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) partners. Consequently, a combined endeavor by the ICRC, IFRC and the Swedish Red Cross (SRC) in close collaboration with experienced African NSs has been done to capture the learning in preparedness, response and post response. This so called guidance note is the result of a research study effort. This best practice highlighting different NSs experiences is the result of a research study effort. This process is also to be understood as part of the Plan of Action of the Strengthening Movement Cooperation and Coordination (SMCC).

Method
Semi-structured interviews were carried out by two SRC staff and an intern. Fourteen interviews were conducted with Movement representatives covering the following countries: Cameroon, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe. Interviews with IFRC and ICRC representatives at country, cluster and regional level were also conducted. Of the respondents, four were female and ten male. The guide has also been informed by inputs and experience received at a Movement workshop on electoral violence held with NSs in West and Central Africa at the end of 2018 in which eight African NS and other Movement partners contributed with their input.

1 WikiDiff: Guidance is the act or process of guiding, an advice or counselling on some topic or any process or system to control the path of a vehicle, missile etc. Guideline: A non-specific rule or principle that provides direction to action or behavior or A plan or explanation to guide one in setting standards or determining a course of action.
Results/Findings

Preparedness phase
Respondents shared their experience in preparing for electoral violence and effective response, with below a summary of the findings.

1. Analysis and planning:
The most common preparedness measure is the preparation of contingency planning:

"We started by sending out monitoring forms to each branch. The input from the branches was then used for contingency planning. A physical contingency planning meeting was held around six months before the elections. ICRC, IFRC, Nigeria RC NHQs and branches from the 12 high-risk branches participated."

The context analysis usually maps out hot-spots within the country based on past experiences or conditions. The Kenya RC has identified political and non-political triggers for possible tensions, such as injustice/inequality, ethnic problems and potential clashes over natural resources such as water and land. They work closely with branches and the communities to identify possible issues to contribute to a thorough analysis. However, there are also cases where a contingency plan has been developed by NS without sufficient analysis of the context and its capacities.

NSs produce different levels of scenario planning where they are take into account aspects such as context analysis, past incidents and their capacity and resources. Malagasy RC, based on their experience and context analysis, chose to select a minor violence scenario for preparedness. Kenya RC on the other hand has prepared for different scenarios for each hot-spot and took into account a possible worst case scenario with very detailed planning including training in WASH and relief. This was a beneficial exercise for the NS but in hindsight was seen to take a lot of their resources.

Taking a multi-hazards approach in planning and preparedness is a key point for Zimbabwe RC to ensure a link between preparedness and response, recovery and resilience activities, highlighting the importance of risk analysis in planning.

2. Operational capacities
Most NSs strengthen their capacities by providing trainings/refreshers training to their volunteers. Common topics are the Fundamental Principles, Safer Access Framework and provision of First Aid. In some cases, refreshers in thematic areas such as WASH, logistics, relief, psychosocial support (PSS) and communication are also considered. For example, Cameroon RC conducted a Safer Access workshop during the preparedness phase and a refresher just before the election.

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2 According to the IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response tool, the following steps are key points in the preparedness stage of analysis and planning: contingency planning with in turn consists of context analysis and scenario planning.

3 Example of political triggers mentioned: presence of opposing political parties in an area, non-political triggers: injustice/inequality, ethnic problems and tensions related to resources.

4 Water, sanitation and hygiene.
Working on and sharing information regarding Fundamental Principles is seen as important at all stages, especially in the preparedness phase. As mentioned by one respondent:

“When the visibility and image of the NS is fragile, it is hard to conduct the effective response in election time. When the NS has a fragile image, a lot of efforts has to be put to adjust and retrieve its visibility and acceptance.”

As a result of context analysis, Nigeria RC has performed the following safety and security measures: recruiting a security manager, updating security rules, protocols and measures, sharing and disseminating the security rules and protocols with branches and including security as a topic in all planned thematic workshops.

Kenya RC has developed specific protocols and manuals for preparedness and response to electoral violence. In order to enhance volunteer capacity, they provide trainings in negotiation with key actors and sensitization on crowd management to improve access. Other NSs mentioned the need to strengthen and develop strong security plan.

Around 50 per cent of the respondents mentioned that trainings ideally include a Simulation Exercise, as it is seen to strengthen the contingency plan. In general, the IFRC and ICRC support such exercises. The Gabonese RC mentioned the practical simulation exercise involving all stakeholders as a key factor of well preparedness. Kenya RC with support of the ICRC has filmed its simulation exercises and shared the clips with branches, enabling them to prepare effectively as well.

3. Operational support

Checking warehouses is a common activity by the respondents. NSs generally do pre-stocking and ensure that enough First Aid kits are available before the event. Nigeria RC has also added personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, etc.) to their stocks. Based on their experience, Kenya RC has ensured to provide their volunteers with enough visibility clothing. Generally, the ICRC and IFRC and other Movement partners are providing operational support for NSs.

4. Coordination

Internal coordination is facilitated when the NS organization is decentralised (i.e. not command-based). For example, Kenya RC has developed a mass casualty incident protocol where different levels of command, roles and flow of information are well-explained. Nigeria RC also sees internal coordination, e.g. at local level, as key:

“A lesson learned for Nigeria RC is to be more locally driven – if you do your contingency plan and action plan with branch staff and Disaster Management officer, you are more prepared. External resources including RDRT1 may not always be adequate in terms of experience, knowledge of context, local language/dialect etc. Ultimately this translates also to security issues at all levels.”
Experience of the Movement level coordination varies:

“We have an emergency steering group consisting of Zimbabwe RC, pNSs, IFRC and ICRC. Within this group we discuss about the role and activities of NS before, during and after election. In this way all Movement members are aware of the activities in all three phases.”

Prior to the 2018 Zimbabwe election, the scenario planning indicated a probability of populations crossing borders to neighboring countries. At the same period, the IFRC conducted a cross-border preparedness and planning workshop for the neighboring countries. Similarly, prior to an election in Cameroon, the ICRC organized a First Aid training also for the neighboring NS in Gabon, as an influx of people from Cameroon to Gabon was a possible scenario.

Regarding external coordination, the main stakeholders are government authorities including Disaster Management authority and leaders in communities. Building and maintaining coordination with the police and hospitals is seen as priority in order to facilitate NS movement and work. NSs’ activities form part of national emergency plans in most cases, and this facilitates close coordination. Holding a face-to-face meeting with all actors as part of the contingency planning is seen as very helpful, as they provide a good platform to highlight the NS’s mandate and role as auxiliary to government and as a neutral humanitarian actor.

Community engagement supports analysis, planning and coordination. Kenya RC includes meetings with communities and working on acceptance of the NS in rural areas:

“Based on our identified triggers of tensions in communities we have tried with good results to promote dialogue between groups with opposite interests regarding resources (land, water, ethnic issues).”

Similar dialogue with communities practice is done in Gabon RC and Zimbabwe RC:

“Trying to work with communities as a partner, not receiver, is a point Zimbabwe RC considers in all ongoing community-based activities. The approach helps the NS in election time to get safer access to communities.”

Response phase

The main response activities are providing First Aid and evacuation to hospitals. Many NSs have experience in providing additional activities:

5  Regional disaster response teams
The first two weeks all you would see on the streets is Nigerian RC. We have done search and rescue, dead body management, management of camps for internally displaced, arrangement for temporary class rooms in camps, RFL\(^6\), provision of medical supplies, referral services and emergency shelter (tarpaulins and shelter kits) to IDPs who have stayed in forests. NRC have also advocated for the IDP resettlements and providing dignity kits.”

In terms of how response interventions were carried out and whether there were any related constraints, a few aspects are mentioned.

In terms of selection of volunteers, two selection criteria are mainly used: training received in (i) First Aid and (ii) Safer Access. Some NSs also consider factors such as ethnic or religious background and training in PSS. Gender is also a factor as it has implications on the opportunity to reach all.

“In some countries, volunteers need to be from the region (in which) they have registered to vote and using local volunteers facilitates access to community members. Key for Liberia RC is to ensure volunteers’ understanding of their neutral role, regardless of their own interest in one political party, in order to develop the neutral image of (the) NS towards the public.”

Nigeria RC works with already-registered volunteers and provides ongoing refreshers in the response phase in Code of Conduct, Safer Access, basic relief duties, security principles and SPHERE\(^7\) standards.

“Fortunately, Nigeria RC has had focal points for psychosocial support to host communities, camps and hospitals. People in hospitals are really appraising RC support in this regard, as they are often afraid when taken out of rural areas and some are afraid of hospital attacks. Those who remain in very rural areas despite crisis are also very appreciative when RC reach their communities.”

Regarding volunteers’ well-being, some of the interviewees highlighted insurance for volunteers. Examples of how volunteers are prioritised include; the IFRC requesting NSs to include volunteer insurance in all DREF\(^8\) requests; Kenya RC’s system of insurance for 100 volunteers in any response activity; and Senegalese RC’s organizing briefings and debriefings before and after volunteers being deployed as a measure to support wellbeing. The main Movement surge capacities/resources which respondents used were: DREFs, ICRC support and RDRTs\(^9\) deployed.

\(^{7}\) https://www.spherestandards.org/
\(^{8}\) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund. IFRC https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/dref/
Communication and visibility are essential at all stages to support access, resource mobilization and security:

“During the elections, Senegalese RC also communicated a lot with the public; many press releases went out.”

In Gabon, security was challenging during one election as some people confused ambulances for police. There was a need for greater visibility for the Red Cross, such as with a bigger flag with the emblem.

The Movement is able at times to engage with communities that others cannot access. For instance, Kenya RC could access hard to reach communities in an urban context during the response phase of most recent election.

“In Nairobi, community engagement was addressed in areas which were closed. The Kenya RC went there and asked the communities about the situation and identified the vulnerable people, and then we supported them with food items and First Aid.”

Approaching urban communities may require different approaches than in rural areas. In urban contexts, social networks and social media may provide a good way to involve the community in preparedness and response activities.

“In the recent election there was a difference in terms of violence comparing to 2008 where people were on the street. This time, most of the communication activities went on in social media apps including Twitter, Facebook. It was easier for Kenya RC to respond as we passed humanitarian messages in social media.”

**Post-Response or recovery phase**

The general recommendation is to ensure provision of PSS for affected community members as well as NS volunteers, and to support Restoring Family Links (RFL) activities. Nigeria RC has provided cash support for resettlement as people lost livelihood, homes and capital assets funds, which the community members usually used for agro inputs, and school uniforms.

For Zimbabwe RC the response operation in 2018 became a window of opportunity to highlight its role and activities:

“Zimbabwe Red Cross had lost a lot of support in previous years, but has been able to use activities linked to successful election operation to regain support, review activities reengineering themselves and, review its relevance in country.”

In terms of community engagement, Nigeria RC supported establishment of community resilience committees, based on selection criteria. These committees can be beneficial for future operations, as they can provide an entry point for distributions.
Gabon RC has ensured community involvement in the sharing of lessons learned after the response.

Interviewees highlighted the importance of a lessons learned exercise as a tool to adjust and review the preparedness plan, response operation and post-response activities. They find it important to give enough space to all involved staff and volunteers in the documentation of lessons and using their inputs to review the process.

"Prior to the 2017 elections, Kenya NHQs started to prepare the list of volunteers with details who would be deployed where, based on ethnic consideration. This was a lesson learned from the election in 2008, where there were some blockage and issues coming from the selection of volunteers and their origin."

While agreeing on the benefits, many NSs still do not include lessons learned as a formal part of the preparedness, response and recovery cycle. Nigeria RC mentioned that it had lessons learned events after the elections in 2011 and 2012, but due to internal reorganization in 2015, no lessons learned workshops were carried out after. NSs such as Gabon, Liberia and Senegal mentioned the importance of reviewing branches’ capacity. For instance, Senegal RC organized workshops and forums to better prepare branches for similar future events.

With regards to measuring intervention success, Senegal RC has compiled and analysed the number of injured people evacuated and/or provided with First Aid assistance. Qualitative data was also collected through personal accounts and anecdotes from people reached. The NS has also measured success based on how well the coordination worked with other actors in the field.

**Conclusion**

The work related to electoral violence is a demanding process during all phases of an operation. Many factors have to be considered, from contingency planning development, perception of the NS, Fundamental Principles, security management to lessons learned. During the interviews, responders mentioned existing tools and key recommendations, which have been compiled in a short check list, see next page.

In addition, the SMCC plan of action and its set of tools are a good source of inspiration to guide a sound and effective Movement preparedness and response actions. The project team would like to thank all interviewees for generously sharing their wealth of experience and advice, including both positive and negative examples. We hope and trust that this best practice will help other NSs facing similar situations in the future to perform operations in a way that will both provide efficient and effective humanitarian aid to people affected by such violence and at the same time contribute to enhancing the NS itself.
The purpose of this check list is to provide the most common and relevant learnings in an easy to use format. This check list is not exhaustive and does not cover all aspects linked to electoral violence. It should be updated and contextualized as new learnings are collected and analysed.

### 1. Check list for the preparedness phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential elements for an effective election preparedness</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructive relationship exits with the communities and they are aware of the NS mandates, principles and activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure visibility of the NS and its mandate</td>
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<td>Analyze lessons learned from earlier interventions, previous election response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an election contingency planning, involving branches, Movement and external partners according to context, scenarios and capacities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a security framework/plan including coordination with ICRC and IFRC on the basis of the Safer Access Framework</td>
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<td>Ensure that enough volunteers are identified, registered in a database, well trained in particular on safety and security</td>
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<td>Promote NS mandate and precise auxiliary role with the Government. Coordinate with external stakeholders’ including authorities in order to build trust between the NS and actors</td>
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<td>Develop a resource mobilisation strategy and share response plans with Movement partners. Initiate the development of MOUs with corporate bodies to support initial resource mobilisation. Strengthen capacity to mobilise financial support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider pre-stocking, for instance to ensure Non-Food Items, are in place in strategic warehouses</td>
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### 2. Check list for the response phase

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<th>Essential elements for an effective response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Implement and adapt the Contingency plan accordingly</td>
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<td>Engage with the communities to maintain and/or strengthen the community perception of the NS</td>
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<td>Maintain strict neutral role when working with communities with different political interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and maintain contacts with socially vulnerable groups, especially in urban contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involve and coordinate with Movement and external partners, according to Contingency plans and possible agreements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use the election as an opportunity to enhance the NS’s image. If it is well recognised and visible, this will facilitate a successful response</td>
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### 3. Check list for the post-response/recovery phase

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<tr>
<th>Essential elements for an effective post-response/recovery</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support communities’ recovery to bring back people’s lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use a community engagement approach when working with affected populations to collect feedback on services provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review the NS’s acceptance in-country. Take the election as a window of opportunity to demonstrate and practice and strengthen the Movement Principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish a platform for sharing lesson learned exercises. Draw the lessons, compare plan of action and what worked in reality, and identify the reasons for success or shortcomings</td>
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More information on Movement tools and guidelines

Useful RCRC guideline or tools in e.g. the preparedness phase as highlighted by the respondents are

- Code of Conduct including core principles. Downloads are available in French, Spanish, Arabic etc. [https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/who-we-are/the-movement/code-of-conduct/](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/who-we-are/the-movement/code-of-conduct/)


- Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) PDF summary [https://fednet.ifrc.org/PageFiles/227519/PER%202pg%20Summary.pdf](https://fednet.ifrc.org/PageFiles/227519/PER%202pg%20Summary.pdf)


- SMCC: [http://smcctoolkit.org/](http://smcctoolkit.org/)

- SPHERE standards: [https://spherestandards.org/](https://spherestandards.org/)
