

IMPROVING INSTITUTIONS FOR GROWTH (iiG)



There is no simple explanation for the disparities in poverty across the world. Differences between countries are not just the result of economic phenomena but also due to the interaction between a wide range of social and political processes. Sitting between these interactions are a variety of institutions that influence the pace and quality of progress in a country, the impact of which is inescapable. **Improving Institutions for Pro-poor Growth (iiG) is a DFID funded research programme designed to help governments, civil society and development agencies understand how institutions, formal and informal, matter for pro-poor growth.** iiG is organised as an international network of [applied research institutes](#) across Africa, Asia, the USA and Europe. It focuses not on *whether* institutions matter for growth but *how* they do. **This document highlights the impact of iiG research in Kenya on electoral violence.**

Introduction

Despite the prominence of institutions in society, we know little about how they influence economic and societal development. The iiG research programme has tackled this issue by producing empirical evidence on four key institutional dimensions of economic activity - Social Behaviour, Political Behaviour, Organizational Behavior and Legal Behaviour.

By adopting a micro-level approach to these four dimensions the programme has produced contextualised evidence on specific institutional constraints. There is also a focus on linking research to previous policy measures and interventions in order to identify better policy options that can lead to lasting change.

iiG research findings are helping to develop evidence informed policy that prevents ethnic polarization and post-electoral conflict.

This document specifically focuses on iiG research in Kenya, which analysed the violence surrounding the troubled 2007 elections, in order to generate evidence on how to strengthen electoral institutions to avoid reoccurrences of widespread violence.

iiG Background

The impacts on policy and practice that the iiG programme has achieved since its inception in 2007 are significant, especially given the programme's

relatively small life cycle budget of £4m. This can be demonstrated by focusing on a small part of the iiG programme that looked at the 2007 Kenyan general elections.

The elections experienced a number of irregularities and allegations of rigging, all of which culminated in unprecedented levels of electoral and ethnic violence, causing around **1,200 fatalities and forcing 500,000 people to flee their homes**.

Research Method

The Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) conducted two detailed **nationally representative surveys**, one two weeks before the troubled elections and the second in the summer of 2008, re-interviewing previous respondents. Surveys were complemented by external data on the death toll and the project also monitored independently the Kenyan media on a daily basis over the period December 2007 – March 2008. By cross-verifying all of this **data a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of the post-electoral violence was built, allowing iiG to assess the consequences of the violence at the personal and small-area (district) levels**.

It is worth highlighting the **collaborative approach that iiG took in Kenya**. The programme worked with locally based organisations and helped to build research skills and knowledge where there were gaps. iiG also held a series of workshops with the Kenyan government to stimulate a high level policy debate on the factors that influence voting divisions in society. The Kenyan press also reported on the workshops, for example in [The Standard](#) and [The Daily Nation](#).

Key Findings and Outputs

This iiG research project had two main objectives. Firstly, to identify whether the instigation of violence by political actors both before and after the elections was strategic. Secondly, to assess whether having experienced violence affected the stance of people on key issues such as the role of ethnic division in politics.

The project's ultimate goal is to assess how policy-makers and citizens can overcome ethnic differences to achieve peaceful and competitive elections.

The research produced by this programme offers several insights into when electoral violence is likely to be organized intentionally, what type of consequences it can have and how the electoral process in Africa could be improved. Three important implications were found for future policies looking to establish peaceful democratic processes:

1. **While some of the electoral violence occurred opportunistically, the research found that political actors choose to reinforce their chances of election with the instigation of violence.**

2. **Violence can produce unintended consequences for those who employ it, as victims become more willing to retaliate and use violence themselves.**
3. **Vote-buying can be a prisoners' dilemma.** No politician can commit to not buying votes, so the dominant strategy is to buy votes, despite the financial drain that this causes.

So what are the prospects for free and fair elections in low-income countries like Kenya?

- I. Small, low-income and resource-rich countries have less chance of holding free and fair elections. But, this can be mitigated by **a free press, strong institutional checks and balances and international pressure**.
- II. **Low quality elections increase the prospects for political unrest and ethnic violence**, while reducing incentives for governments to deliver good economic performance
- III. **A lack of credible institutions can lead to ethnic voting and violence among individuals who do not wish to act ethnically or irresponsibly.**
- IV. **Violence intensifies mistrust between rival communities and undermines domestic accountability, investment in the local economy and export performance.**

All this implies that a combination of voter education campaigns, voter access to policy information, adopting out of ethnic identification and a pledge to prevent vote buying and violence instigation would help to ensure that free and fair democratic elections are held.

Impacts

The iiG programme has recently conducted a second nationally representative survey in Kenya - with CSAE funding – to update the paper.

The incidence of the violence in 2013 elections was at lower levels than the previous troubled general elections. However, the death toll was still high and the electorate remained ethnically divided. According to Kenyan Human Rights Watch, there were approximately 500 casualties just before the 2013 elections and another 118,000 displaced people because of the elections.

References

Gutiérrez-Romero, Roxana. 2013a. "The Role of Ethnic Identity and Economic Issues in the 2007 Kenyan Elections." *Development Policy Review*, 31: 291-320.

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