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 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



## INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

Building Institutions, Escaping Development Traps

### Electoral Conflict Mediation in Zambia

In 2001, the Electoral Commission of Zambia faced a tense presidential and parliamentary election. A new [ISS case study](#) describes how commission leaders created a mechanism to stave off conflict, clarify responsibilities for dispute resolution, and provide complainants with effective and timely means for voicing their concerns.

Inspired by the use of a similar system in South Africa, the commission leaders developed conflict management committees at the national level and in Zambia's 74 electoral districts. The committees---comprising representatives from political parties, law enforcement, civil society, and faith-based organizations---mediated conflicts related to violations of the electoral code of conduct. The electoral commission piloted the committees in the 2001 elections before fully implementing and strengthening them shortly before the 2006 elections. The mediation system helped Zambia navigate an unexpected by-election following the death of President Levy Mwanawasa in 2008 and an opposition victory over the ruling party in 2011. Though some challenges remained, the electoral commission staff and committee members credited the committees with helping the country navigate competitive elections and reduce tensions between competing parties.

### Dampening Election Violence in Other Countries

This Zambia example is one of several ISS case studies that explore how elections commissions have reduced violence and increased public trust in electoral results in other countries. In the 1990s and 2000s, commissions in [South Africa](#), [Mozambique](#), [Guyana](#), [Ghana](#), and [Somaliland](#) helped those countries maneuver difficult transitions to more democratic systems. Whether emerging from apartheid, civil war, a history of ethnic division, or non-democratic systems, these countries faced the prospect of widespread political violence. The ISS cases describe how elections commissions enabled leaders to strengthen institutions, overcome administrative hurdles, mediate conflicts, improve security and transparency, and leverage the work of civil society organizations. Although problems persist, the commissions raised public trust in their countries' new or strengthened democratic

#### Featured Interviews

The ISS website features interviews with several leaders who implemented successful election reforms. [Vincent Crabbe](#), co-chair of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers, explains how Ghana improved transparency in elections.

[Steve Surujbally](#), chair of Guyana's election commission, discusses issues relating to the 2006 election, including voter registration, campaign conduct, and the tensions leading up to the election.

#### Election Resources

[BRIDGE](#) (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) is an international partnership seeking to build the capacity of electoral administrators in countries around the world. The BRIDGE curriculum and workshop promote the principles of democracy and good electoral practice, enhance the skills of electoral stakeholders, publicize resources to support the building and maintaining of a sustainable electoral culture, and encourage the sharing of election-related information among stakeholders.

#### Share Your Feedback

processes.

## Improving Government Accountability and Leading Reform

Innovations for Successful Societies (ISS) helps public servants, policy makers, and scholars share institution-building strategies that work in especially challenging contexts. Interview-based case studies facilitate these exchanges and provide a basis for scholarly research. To date, ISS has published 104 reformer-focused case studies and 357 interviews, all of which are available for free on a web repository. Thousands of people around the globe access these web resources each month. Governments use the materials to learn from each other, inspire discussion in their ranks, and recall the steps they took to implement a reform. Universities and training programs use the cases in the classroom to engage students in the operational and strategic aspects of public sector reform.

### ISS Readers Respond

"Reading that text has been a wonderful gift. The interview took place just a couple of weeks after the provincial election was completed. We were so tired and happy and there was a real sense of a job well done.

I didn't write a diary and it is something I really regret, but that interview just brings back the memories so vividly of what was an extraordinary time and an extraordinary experience. I will treasure that manuscript."

- ISS interviewee

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Bobst Center for Peace & Justice.

The ISS web repository is an idea bank that enables practitioners and scholars to evaluate the pros and cons of different reform strategies and weigh the effects of context. ISS welcomes feedback on its cases, including suggestions of additional topics and questions to be considered, corrections, and how case studies are being used: [iss@princeton.edu](mailto:iss@princeton.edu).

#### Where ISS Has Worked

**Africa:** Botswana, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

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