

Strengthening Electoral Democracy

Presented by Terry Tselane

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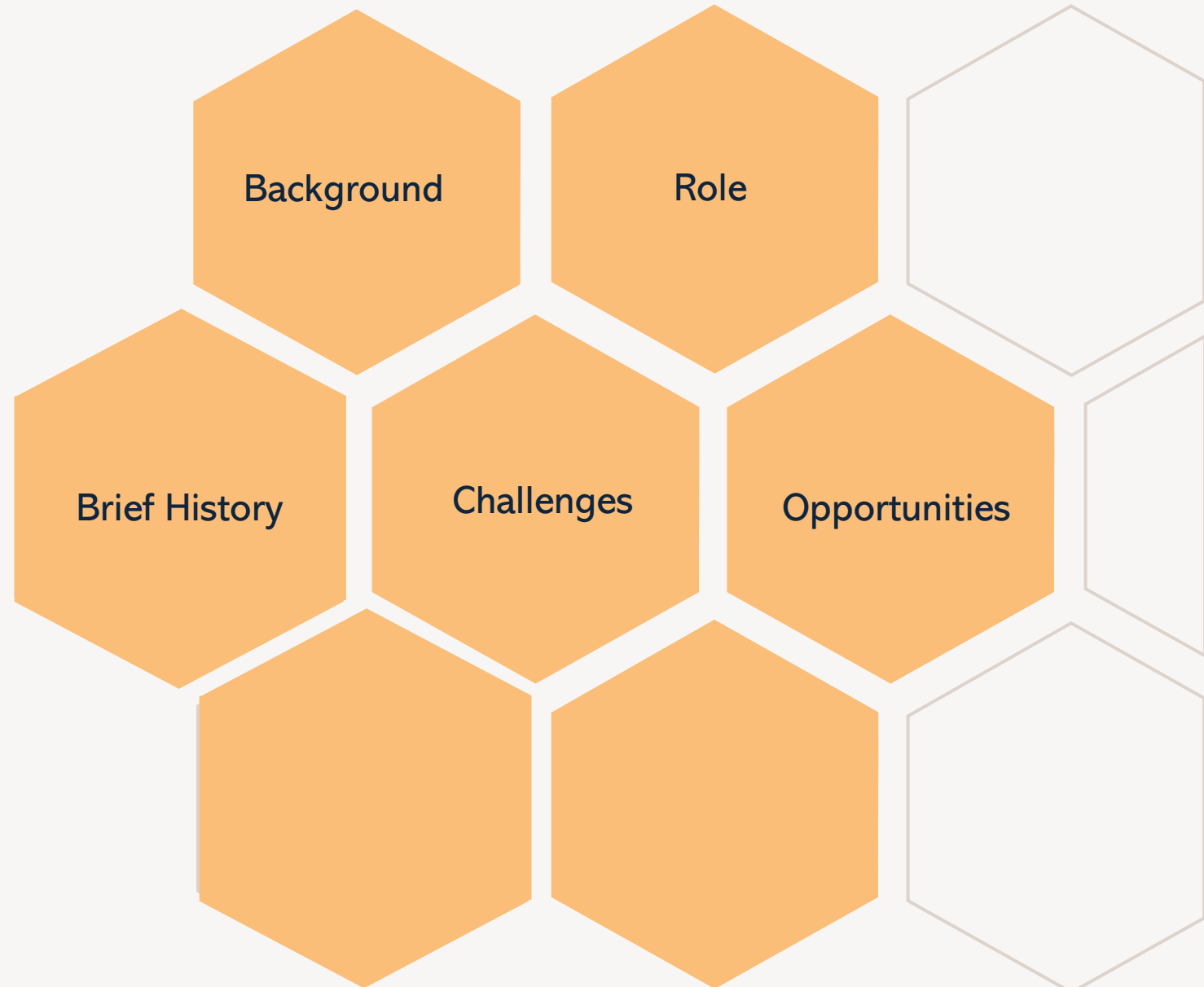
Institute of Election Management
Services in Africa (IEMSA)

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Agenda



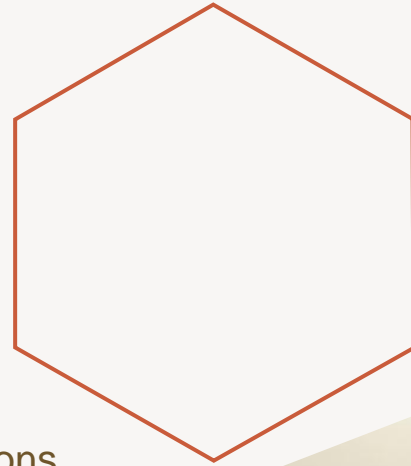
About IEMSA

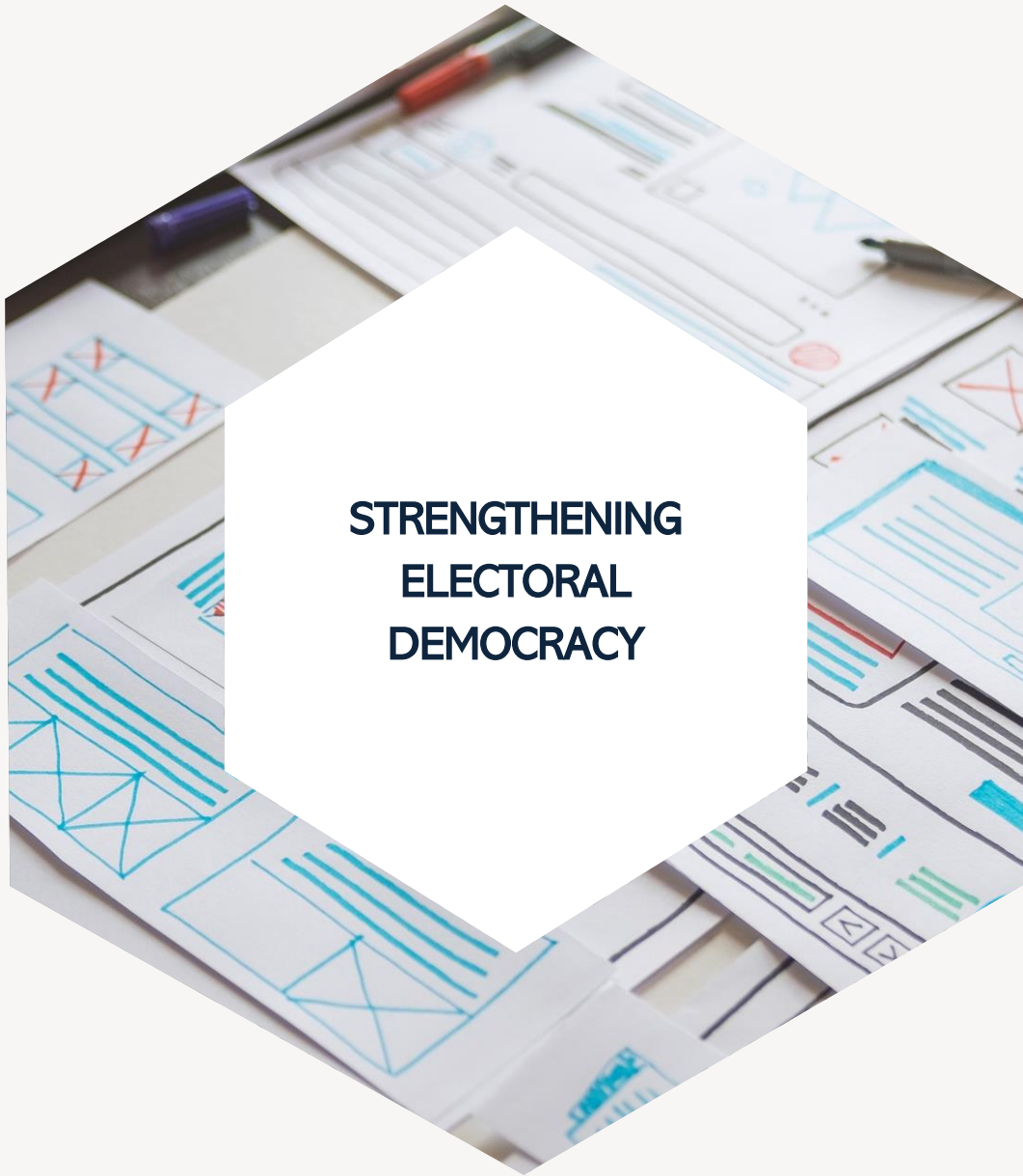
The Institute of Election Management Services in Africa (IEMSA) is a one-stop-shop rendering election management services and providing capacity to individuals and institutions that are in the election space. IEMSA was established in 2018 by Mr. Terry Tselane who has extensive experience and a proven track record in election management.



Role of IEMSA

- Organization, Management and delivery of elections for private, nongovernmental and public institutions.
- Facilitating Forums and platforms for political dialogue and conflict resolution.
- Capacity building to empower Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and election practitioners to manage and deliver elections.
- Providing ongoing support and solutions for challenges facing Commissioners especially those that are new in the game.
- Creating platforms where Commissioners can interact to share experiences and problem solve.
- Providing election support to enhance the delivery of elections.





BACKGROUND

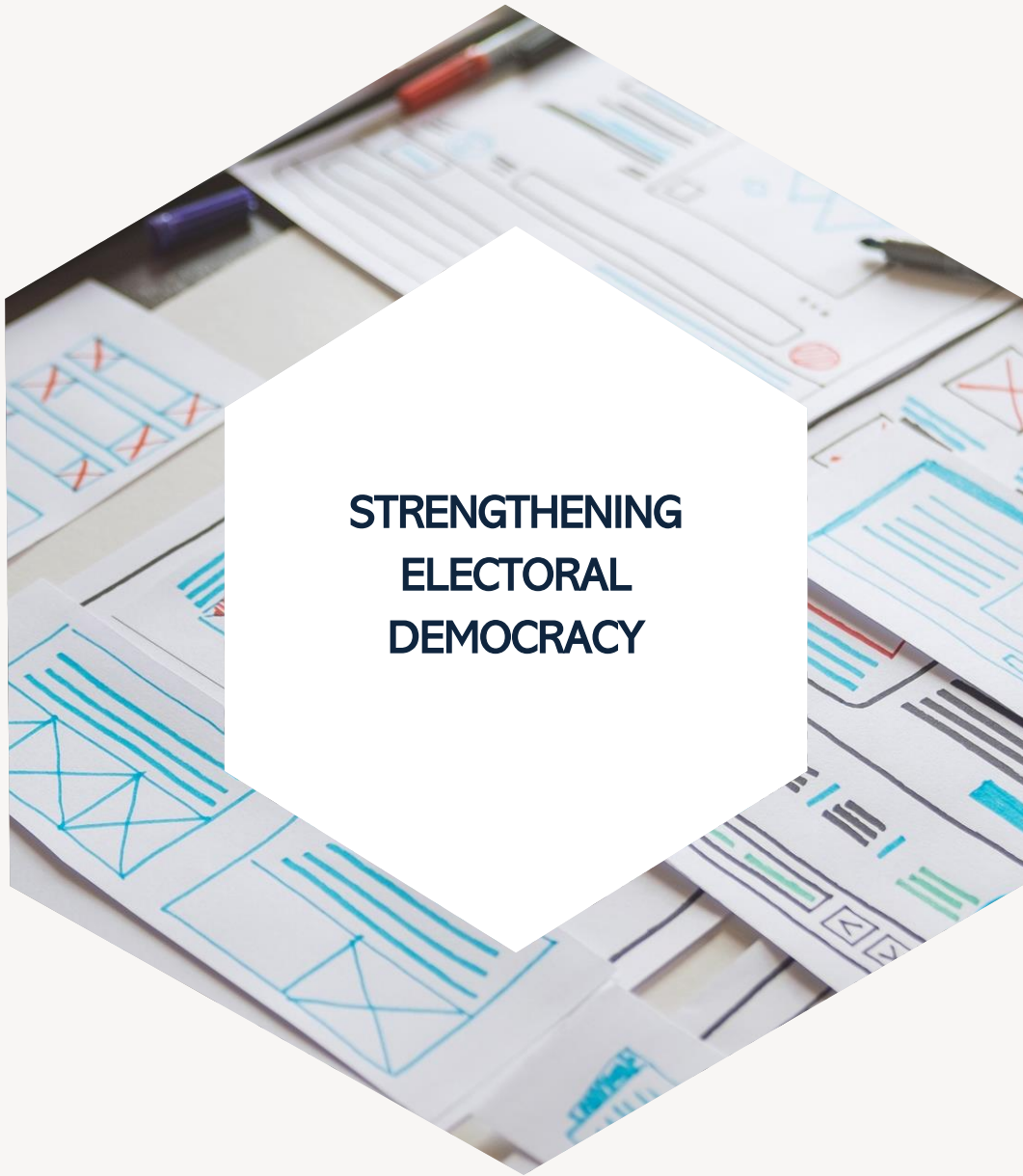
Background and History

Historical Evolution: The concept of civil society has its roots in the Enlightenment era, with thinkers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau exploring the idea of a space beyond the state where individuals could exercise their rights and participate in public life. However, it gained prominence as a critical component of modern democracy in the 20th century.

Protecting Electoral Democracy: Civil society organizations have played a pivotal role in protecting and promoting electoral democracy for several reasons:

- **Check and Balance:** Civil society acts as a check on state power. It monitors the actions of government officials, particularly during electoral processes, to ensure they adhere to democratic principles and respect citizens' rights.

- **Election Monitoring:** Many civil society organizations deploy election observers to polling stations to ensure that the voting and vote counting processes are free, fair, peaceful, and transparent. This is crucial for establishing the credibility of elections.
- **Voter Education:** NGOs and other civil society groups engage in voter education initiatives. They inform the public about their rights and responsibilities as voters, thereby increasing civic participation.
- **Advocating for Fairness:** Civil society groups often advocate for electoral fairness. They expose corrupt practices, electoral fraud, and irregularities that threaten the integrity of elections.



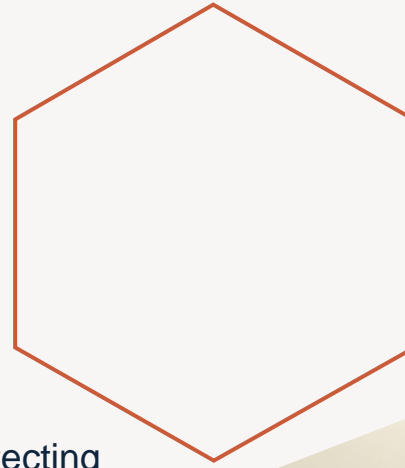
Role of Civil Society

WHO IS CIVIL SOCIETY?

Civil society plays a crucial role in safeguarding and protecting electoral democracy. To understand the significance of civil society in this context, it's important to delve into the background of civil society and its evolution in relation to the protection of electoral democracy. The entire range of organized groups and institutions that are independent of the state, voluntary, and at least to some extent self-generating and self-reliant.

This includes:

1. Non-governmental Organizations
2. Independent Mass Media
3. Think Tanks
4. Universities
5. Social And Religious Groups.



Role of Civil Society in Elections

In the context of elections and election-based conflict, civil society has been recognised as having a significant role to play in promoting peace as it is less constrained by mandates, able to talk to several parties without losing credibility, and able to deal directly with the grassroots population

Civil society groups may establish ties to political parties and the state, but they must retain their independence, and they do not seek political power for themselves.



Role of Civil Society in Elections

Civil Society plays the following role in strengthening and protecting electoral democracy:

1. Limit and control the power of the state.
2. Expose the corrupt conduct of public officials and lobby for good governance reforms.
3. Promote political participation
4. Develop the other values of democratic life: tolerance, moderation, compromise, and respect for opposing points of view



Role of Civil Society in Elections

Civil Society plays the following role in strengthening and protecting electoral democracy:

5. Develop programs for democratic civic education in the schools
6. Lobby for the needs and concerns of their members, as women, students, farmers, environmentalists, trade unionists, lawyers, doctors etc
7. Provide new forms of interest and solidarity that cut across old forms of tribal, linguistic, religious, and other identity ties

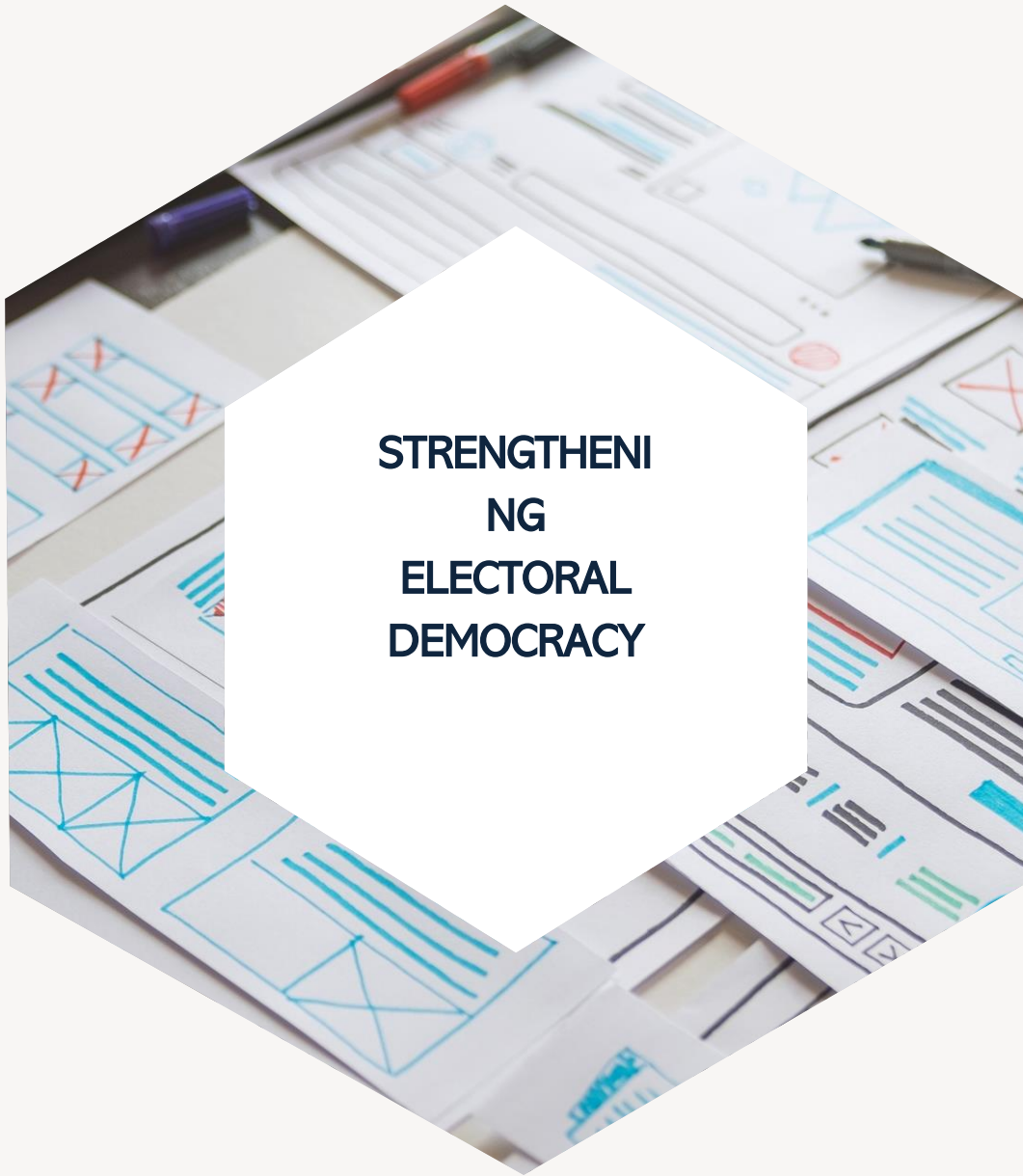


Role of Civil Society in Elections

Civil Society plays the following role in strengthening and protecting electoral democracy:

8. Provide a training ground for future political leaders
9. Help to inform the public about important public issues.
10. Mediation and conflict resolution
11. Monitoring the conduct of elections





**STRENGTHENING
ELECTORAL
DEMOCRACY**

**CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES**

Challenges in Civil Society's Role in Protecting Electoral Democracy



1.Restrictions on Civil Society: Some governments impose legal and regulatory restrictions on civil society organizations, making it difficult for them to operate freely and effectively. These restrictions can include limitations on funding sources, registration requirements, and restrictions on advocacy activities.

2.Security Risks: Activists and members of civil society may face security risks, including harassment, threats, and violence, especially in regions with political instability. Protecting the safety of those involved can be a significant challenge.

3.Resource Limitations: Many civil society organizations face resource constraints, which can hinder their ability to carry out their mission effectively. Funding, skilled personnel, and technology are essential for their work.

4.Political Polarization: In polarized political environments, civil society organizations may find it challenging to maintain their impartiality and credibility. Their advocacy efforts may be perceived as biased, undermining their impact.

5.Digital Disinformation: The spread of digital disinformation and misinformation can complicate the efforts of civil society organizations to ensure accurate and informed public discourse during elections.

Opportunities in Civil Society's Role in Protecting Electoral Democracy



1. Technological Advancements: Advancements in technology, including social media and digital tools, offer new avenues for civil society organizations to engage with the public, mobilize support, and monitor electoral processes.

2. Global Collaboration: Civil society can benefit from global networks and collaboration with international organizations, allowing for the sharing of best practices, knowledge, and resources.

3. Youth Engagement: Young people are increasingly engaged in civil society and have the potential to drive positive change. They bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to protecting electoral democracy.

4. Legal and Policy Reforms: Advocacy by civil society organizations can lead to legal and policy reforms that enhance electoral integrity, transparency, and the protection of democratic rights.

5. Civic Education: The demand for civic education and awareness is growing, and civil society can capitalize on this by providing programs that inform citizens about the electoral process and their role in democracy.

6. Public Support: Many citizens recognize the importance of civil society in safeguarding electoral democracy and are willing to support and collaborate with these organizations.

Thank you

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