

DEMOCRACY LEARNING PUBLIC UNION
REPORT
ON PARTICIPATION STATE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN
ELECTIONS

BAKU, 2018

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The report was prepared within the framework of the project "Civic Participation for Free and Fair Elections in Azerbaijan" implemented by the Democracy Learning Public Union with the financial support of the European Union. The information included in the report may not coincide with the position of the European Union.

FOREWORD

Involvement of society in governance and improvement of political representation are the main challenges of the democratization process. For this reason, promoting public participation in the election process distinguishes among citizens' awareness raising programs. The role of both international and local non-governmental organizations in the implementation of such programs is indispensable. They can be useful in areas that require professional approach such as increasing voter engagement, monitoring elections, protection of election rights, and improvement of election legislation. These organizations make substantial contribution with their impartiality and professionalism to the enhancing trust in election institutions, especially in transition societies. At the same time, as positive international practice affirms, organizations that capable to act independently of the governmental and business interests, which prioritize the protection of public interests for themselves, can contribute to the honesty, impartiality, fairness and credibility of the process that demand mass participation and public control by active engagement.

Despite some restrictive cases, the relevant legislative framework of the country generally allows non-governmental organizations to take part in election processes. Although, when we look at experience it is hard to say positive opinion about participation level and contributions to the election process of such organization. Unfortunately, even with superficial assessments, decline in number of civil society organizations involved in the election process, as well as in number and scale of programs implemented in this area is observed. The election-related activities of local NGOs, especially in recent years, have been almost episodic and limited. Another observation is that official authorities do not approve of independent social initiatives in the field of elections. For example, the State Registration of one of the specialized organizations in the field of election observation the Election Monitoring Center was abolished in 2008 and despite all the efforts of the organization's founders, it was impossible to restore the registration and to register the organization with a new name. Moreover, the leaders of the organization were arrested after the 2013 presidential elections. The head of the Law Enlightenment Society, another organization working in the field of election rights, was also jailed.

Such cases, especially the criminal prosecutions and arrests of NGOs working in the field of human rights, has acted as a primary means of deterrence from activities that can carry political tinge. Such approaches toward NGOs reduce participation of local civil society organization in such nation-wide process as elections and decline the possible contributions.

As public initiatives in the election process have not been studied yet separately it is difficult to get information on state of NGO participation in election process. It is possible to find information on this only in reports of election observation missions. For example, reports from the 2013 presidential elections clearly indicate that only a few organizations have been involved in educating voters, observing elections and protecting electoral rights. However, according to the statements of Council of State Support to NGOs, there are about 800 organizations, which are relatively active in the country. In general, according to figures released by the Ministry of Justice, the number of registered public unions and foundations is over 4,000.

The "Democracy Learning" Public Union conducted a research aimed to learn the current situation of NGOs practice on participation in elections in Azerbaijan based on legal framework analysis, opinion polls among NGO leaders and expert inquiries on the eve of the presidential election in 2018. This Report reflects the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the same research.

We believe that, despite limitations of opportunities to carry out comprehensive study, this research allows us to learn the thoughts and attitudes of relatively active part of Azerbaijani NGOs related to the awareness of election processes, experience of participation, necessary skills and their future plans in this field.

We must note that when survey was held the early presidential elections dated 11 April 2018 have not been appointed yet and the elections were scheduled to take place in October 2018, according to the legal deadlines. Therefore, it should be noted that the information and comments reflected in the report reflect the situation regarding the readiness level and plans of NGOs for the period up to 10 months before the elections.

CHAPTER 1. SUMMARY

1.1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of the research is to evaluate election awareness and skills of national NGOs, identify the participation possibilities, intentions, and the essence of the problems faced by while implementation election enlightenment and observation activities.

Also in accordance with general results, presentation of recommendations to improve the electoral practices of NGOs is inline of the purposes of the study.

This report, which reflects the legal framework analysis and data collected through the survey, recommendation will be shared with stakeholders. We hope that the conclusions and prepared recommendation that come out of the research will increase the public's focus on improving the participation of NGOs in the electoral process and will stimulate new initiative in this direction.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

Several evaluation methods were used to study the participation state of NGOs in the election process.

First of all research team carried out a brief analysis of the legal situation based on the legal framework of the country and the commitments undertaken by Azerbaijan to international initiatives. Then a questionnaire consisting of 18 questions was developed with the participation of field experts to study the awareness level and the attitude on the subject. Questionnaire was discussed with independent experts qualified in election activities and representatives of different level election commission.

Questionnaire was sent to the e-mail groups of “EITI - Azerbaijan - Extension of Extractive Industries Transparency (EITI) Coalition of Public Unions” and “OGP – Open Government Partnership” Platform, as well as individually, to more than 200 NGOs. However, most of the organizations that applied for their feedback did not cooperate with the research team. About 80 percent of organizations covering different spectrum of civil society have not responded to the survey.

Only 45 organizations participated in the survey, which is less than a quarter of the total number of organizations that was appealed. When we look at the list of the organizations that answered the question, we see that they are mainly active representatives of the Azerbaijani civil society. So, let's state in advance that the statistical picture that arises as a result of the research reflects is not the position of the NGO sector in Azerbaijan, but the views and attitudes of its most active members. This also means that the findings of the research reflect the views of NGOs that are more sensitive to election issues.

The authors of research tried to evaluate main issues by considering aspects such as region where NGOs operate, their activity spheres, target group and other essential aspects.

Evaluation indicators were determination of election awareness level of NGOs and forms of their participation in election process. The organization has been trying to determine the types of activities they are currently pursuing in this direction and the challenges faced by their target groups while participating in the elections.

Moreover, research learned which activities they are planning to eliminate these difficulties, to increase participation in election, and what kind of activities they think should be done to carry out such activities.

The research team also addressed a number of different sources in order to learn more about NGOs' involvement in the elections. Information disseminated in internet resources and social networks, open official documents of CEC also reviewed and used in analysis.

CHAPTER 2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legal framework of participation of NGOs in election primarily constituted by commitments to the international legal norms and obligations to the international organization in which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party

Copenhagen document dated 1990 year that set out key election commitments and principles for OSCE member states defines creating conditions for participation of NGOs in election as one of the main commitments.

The document emphasizes the role of non-governmental organizations in assisting in the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country. The document emphasizes the role of non-governmental organizations in assisting in the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country. The document also states that, member state obliged to assist and encourage such organization to carry out election monitoring activity, to build and maintain relations with similar groups from abroad, as well as provide them with opportunity to receive support.

This organization's Istanbul Summit Declaration dated 1999 year recognizes the decisive role of non-governmental organizations in enhancing the role of civil society as a one of the key elements of democratic development and elections observation: "Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) can play very essential role to empower human rights, democracy and rule of law. They are an integral part of a strong civil society. We undertake to expand capacity of NGOs for the future development of civil society, for their making contributions to human rights and freedoms".

"Recommendations on legal state of non-governmental organizations in Europe" of Cabinet of Ministers of European Council dated 10 October, 2007 is approaching to the NGO involvement in election more clearly and broader context: "NGOs should be independent to support specific candidate or party in elections and referendum after declaring their intentions transparently. Any such support should be within the framework of legislation on financing elections or parties".

NGOs are regarded as one of the key subjects of civic engagement in the "Guiding Principles on civil participation in Political Decision-Making" of this institution dated 27 September 2017,.

As Election right has political content it is possible to say that Guiding Principles also involves the participation of NGOs in the election process.

In national level, participation of NGOs in election process is regulated by Law "On non-governmental organizations (public unions and foundations)" of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Election Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other normative acts.

Article 2.4 of the Law prohibits non-governmental organizations from providing financial or other material assistance to political parties and only recognizes the opportunity of conducting an election observation and exit-poll for these organizations. According to the law foreign legal entities can participate in exit-poll activities together with non-governmental organizations from the Republic of Azerbaijan.

“The Rules of Accreditation of organizations conducting "exit-poll" in the Elections of the Republic of Azerbaijan” approved by the Central Election Commission on 5 June 2013, under the number 5/32 require such organizations to be accredited by the CEC.

Article 40.5 of the Election Code also establishes the right of NGOs to observe the election, as well as defines the circle of NGOs that can carry out observation: “an observer may conduct observation on his own initiative or on the initiative of a registered candidate, political party, bloc of political parties, referendum campaign group, non-governmental organization operating in the field of elections” – by noting this the Code has recognized this opportunity only for a limited number of NGOs.

CHAPTER 3. RESULT OF SURVEY

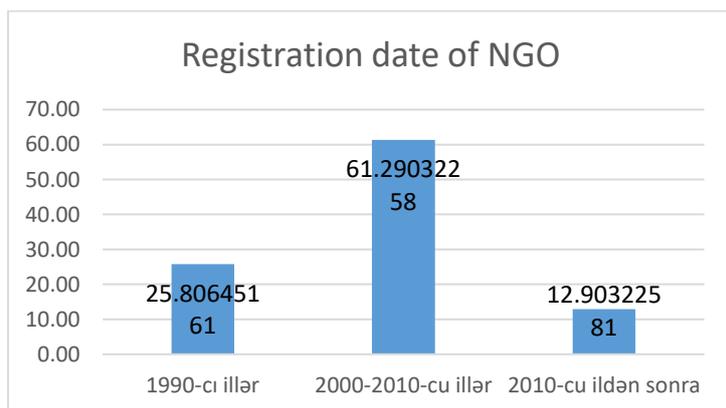
3.1. PROFILE OF ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATED IN SURVEY

As mentioned in previous chapter only 45 NGOs have replied to the survey. The survey questionnaire included questions on the date of their establishment, the area they operate, their objectives, as well as the target groups to determine the profiles of the respondent organizations

Profiles of respondent NGOs on the mentioned profiles were as given below:

a. The date of their establishment

61.29 percent of respondent organizations were established in 2000-2010 years. 25.81% of those surveyed were registered in 1990s, 12.90% after 2010.

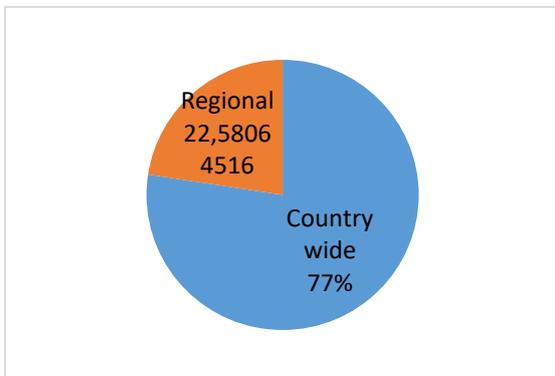


The overall analysis of the obtained results creates an interesting picture of the real situation in the country in this direction. When we look at the years in which the surveyed organizations are established, the results we encounter are not only reflecting the participation of NGOs in the electoral process, but also the situation in society as a whole. The most active organizations from respondents were established in 2000-2010s. The interesting point is that, despite organizations established in the 1990s fall behind organizations that were established in 2000-2010 in terms of activity, they surpass the organizations that founded after 2010s.

Although these findings do not constitute the direct subject of survey, therefore they are linked to NGOs' involvement in the election process

a. Activity area

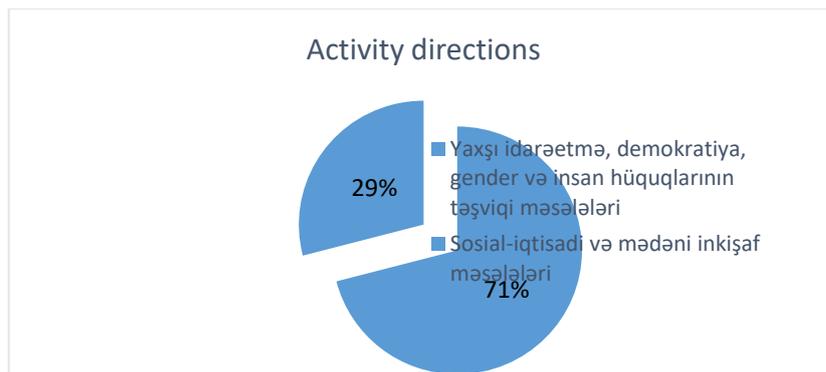
Similar problem should be noted with regard to the activity area of NGOs. Thus, NGOs with activity throughout the country are in general 77%, only 23% of them operate in regions.



At the first sight the low activity of NGOs working in the regions may imply that there is no serious problem here and the organization operating countrywide have the authority to operate in regions too. Despite, even though this is a legitimate opportunity, practically, participation of local organizations in local issues could be more favorable. Taking into consideration that more than 51% of country population live in regions, real situation is not compatible in this direction.

b. Activity directions

According to the analysis of activity direction of responding organizations 71% of them specialized in good governance, democracy, gender and human rights sphere. 29% of respondents were organization dealing with social-economic and cultural development issues, as well as organizations engaged in economic development, education, science, culture, health, ecology and other spheres.



Apparently organizations specialized in good governance, democracy, promotion of gender equality and human rights issues responded survey inquires more actively. Accordingly, the organizations engaged in socioeconomic and cultural development issues, including economic development, science, education, culture, health, ecology, etc., have shown little interest in responding to the query.

The conclusion from the analysis of these results is that in term of activity and interest the results can be considered legitimate. Election is a political as well as social process and it is interest area of organization that specialized in good governance, democracy, human rights directions. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the fact that among the NGOs working in other spheres

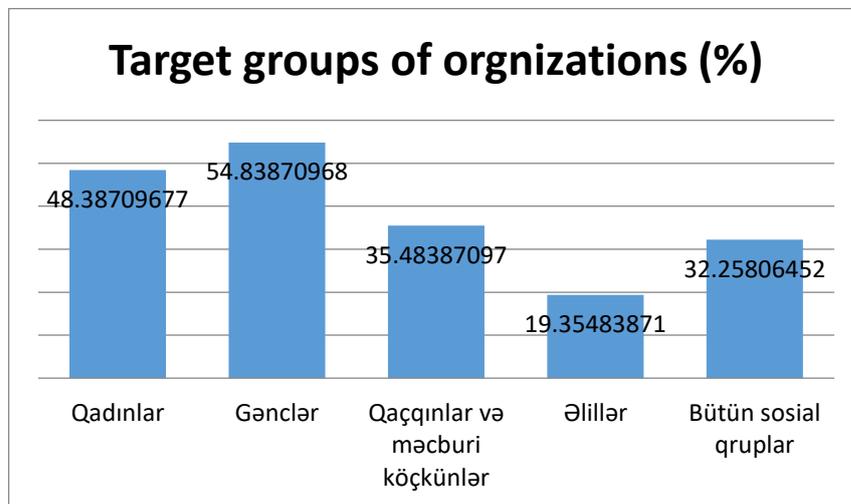
there are organizations sensitive approaching to the participation of their target groups in the electoral process.

c. Target Groups

The situation with the social groups included in the target groups of NGOs was studied during the survey either. Target groups include members of organizations, as well as social groups which rights and interests they protect or represent.

According to the results, youth are leading the list with 54.84%. They are followed by women with 48.39 percent, refugees and internally displaced persons with 35.48% and PWDs with 19.35%. 32.26 % represented all social groups.

As it is seen from the diagram below, it is noteworthy that most of the target groups of organizations that show interest in the election process are young people. While refugees and internally displaced persons make up 13% of the total population, the interest in this target group is three times greater.



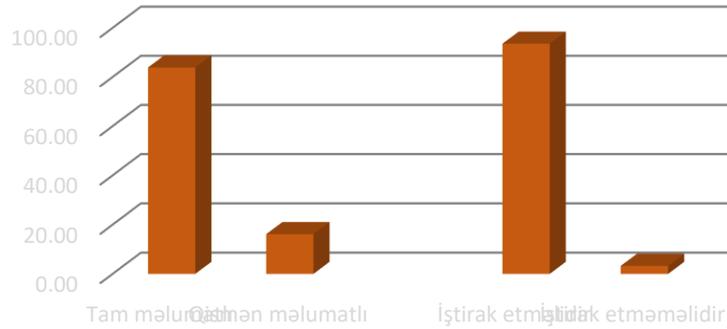
“Other” category is divided among children with 6.45%, low income families with 3.23%, parents with 3.23% and inmates with 3.23%

3.2. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2.1. AWARENESS LEVEL OF NGOS ABOUT ELECTIONS AND THEIR ATTITUDE TO THE PARTICIPATION IN ELECTION PROCESS

Research team tried to learn awareness level of NGOs about the election process of the country and their attitude to the participation in election process in any form. Results shows that the majority of NGO leaders participating in the survey find themselves aware of the election process. Thus, 83.87% of them stated themselves fully informed and 16.13% partly informed. Taking into account that the result achieved with self-assessment method, it can be considered subjective and does not allow us to put forward idea about all civil society organizations. Considering that surveyed organizations are active part of the civil society sector, there are grounds to think that this result is close to reality.

This conclusion is supported by the answers received to the following question - “Do NGOs shall participate in election process?” Answer of 94% of responded organizations was positive.



Proper proportion between awareness level on election process and understanding the necessity of participation of NGOs in the elections confirms the traditional approaches to the quality indicators in public participation conception. In other words, the quality and level of participation depends from the high level of awareness. From this point of view, it is clear that NGOs need to increase their awareness first in order to increase the sensitivity in the electoral process. Interestingly, this ratio remains unchanged on the parameters such as the activities of the organizations or the territory which they cover. However, as seen from the profile information of organizations answering the question, organizations specialized in good governance, democracy, and human rights are more interested in the election process.

The attitude of NGOs to the two other issues included in the study on the target groups also strengthens our conviction. They have confirmed the importance of the election process for them by their attitude to the increasing the participation of their target group in elections and assessing the place of this issue among their priorities.

NGOs assessed the importance of increasing the participation of their target groups in the elections in their priorities on the 5-point scale. About 87% of surveyed NGOs marked this value at average and high. 42 % of respondents gave the 5 points and mentioned this issue as one of their top priorities.

Assessment of priority level of target groups' participation in the elections				
1	2	3	4	5
6.45 %	6.45 %	25.81%	19.35 %	41.94%

The other outcome, more clearly demonstrating the sensitivity of NGOs to the electoral process, has emerged when responding to the question of the consistency of target groups' involvement in the elections to their goals. 90.32 percent of the respondents answered positively to the question "Do you think that encouraging your target groups to the participation in the elections is relevant to the overall goals of your organization?"

So the reached conclusion is that, at least active part of Azerbaijani NGOs has the correct approach to the elections as the most important social-political process, as well as potential of civil society organizations to contribute to these processes.

3.2.2. WHICH FORMS OF PARTICIPATION DO NGOS PREFER IN ELECTIONS?

One of the main objectives of the research was to bring clarity to the approaches of Azerbaijani NGOs to the participation forms in elections. A range of questions were included in the questionnaire to clarify this.

Respondents were asked which participation forms in election process they prefer. At that time, several options were proposed based on the experience used in international practice. Surveyed organizations had the option to highlight one or more suggested options such as educate voters, observe the elections and organize an exit poll, protect the electoral rights, and improve election legislation.

An overview of the results shows that the attitude of respondents towards the proposed methods of participation is positive. It is possible to get interesting results by evaluating the answers given on each variant in the context of the Azerbaijani election experience.

Despite election monitoring activity demand enough resources and skills, 77.42% of respondents preferred this election participation form. This result indicates that NGOs as an institutions implementing civil oversight well aware of their contributions to this sphere.

At the same time, negative cases in the election experience of the country, accompaniment of the election process with massive violations, and weakness of public trust on the official results of elections can encourage civil society to prefer this form of activity.

Four quarters of respondents prefer to encourage voters to actively participate in the voting. According to international and local observers, there has been a noticeable decline in voter turnout in recent elections in the country. Even though official figures show different results, voter turnout obtained through administrative resources is one of the factors that shatter the credibility of election results. In this regard, the fact that civil society gives importance to voter education indicates that they are well informed about their country's election reality. At the same time, voter education is an urgent issue for the needs of all social groups and could be of interest to NGOs as a type of activity that does not require a serious resource.



Other response options were those that were of interest to respondents. 64.52% of surveyed organizations preferred improvement election legislation, which means that NGOs are interested and ambitious in participation in forming public policies, especially in the legislative process.

61.29% of NGOs assessed participation in electoral rights protection as an acceptable type of electoral activity. NGOs that prefer to carry our exit-poll were 54.84%.

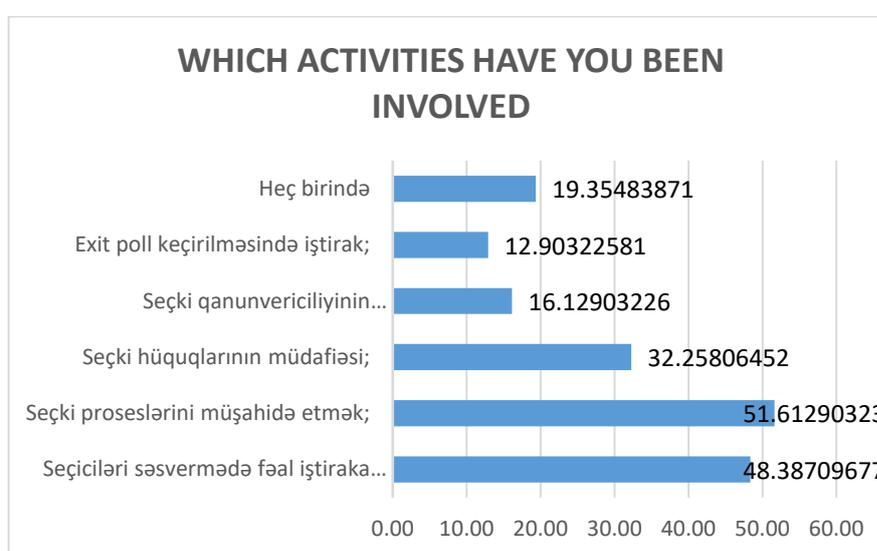
3.2.3. EXPERIENCE OF NGOS ON PARTICIPATION IN ELECTION PROCESS

It is also remarkable that the organizations that noted that they prefer to participate in some form of the election process have ever been involved in any of these activities. It should be noted that the questions included in survey about the experience of the NGO were general, i.e. whether

activities initiated directly by NGO, or activities implemented in frame of partnership with other organization, if members of organizations were involved in such activities.

Thus, those who said that they encouraged voters to actively participate in the voting (48.39%) and those observed election process (51.61%) still had a large majority. In our opinion, these directions are more accessible for NGOs, because they don't demand particular specialization. In other words, it can be implemented without financial support and qualified methodology and theoretical knowledge. In addition, it must be noted that in previous election period some international organizations and donors had programs that supported activity of NGOs in this direction and the opportunity of their involvement was wider.

32.26% were organizations protecting electoral right, 16.13% were participating in improvement of election legislation and 12.90% were those participated in carrying out "exit-poll". The lower percent of organizations operating in these areas may be related to their need for more professional approaches, as well as special accreditation and methodological knowledge and resources.



Only 1 organization told that they were teaching electoral legislation to the media representatives, 1 organization was actively involved in mass actions and propaganda campaign, and 1 organization was involved in election coverage.

One of the interesting results was that 20% of respondents did not take part in any kind of election activity. Although the reasons for non-participation of NGOs are not questioned, it is possible to come to certain conclusions based on expert opinions. NGOs fear from mentioning their names in election process and various threats they may face.

As it was mentioned earlier, this could be one of the main reasons why majority of country NGOs did not participate in survey. The experts who collaborate with the research team believe that election activities are a risky area for NGOs. Election authorities and relevant executive authorities are not interested in the active involvement of civil society organizations in the election process which has a negative impact on the participation of NGOs in the elections. On the other hand, low interest of civil society organization is caused by lack of necessary financial and human resources.

3.2.4. STATE OF NGOS' WORK WITH TARGET GROUPS

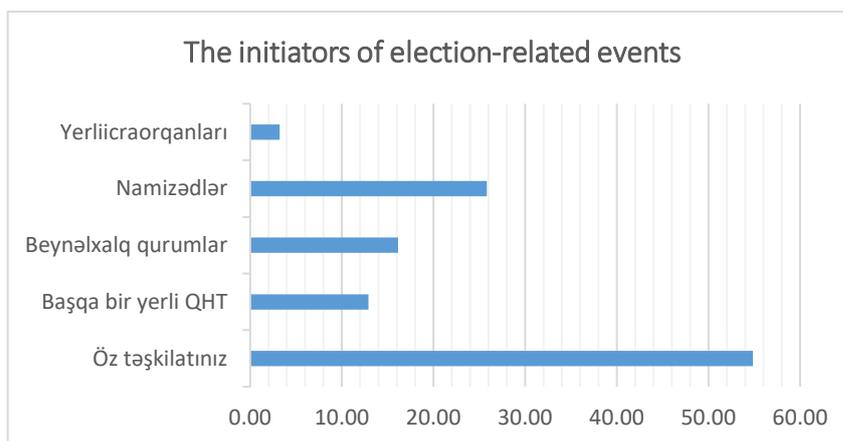
One of the main challenges of the research was to determine how civil society organizations sensitive to the election subject in their activities addressed to their target groups. Naturally, first of all NGOs seek to strengthen and empower their target groups in accordance with their organizational priorities. These can cover various aspects of human rights and freedoms. But in

our opinion, all civil society organizations should be interested in increasing election sensitiveness of their target groups as the main element of a democratic society. Some of the questions addressed to the Azerbaijani NGOs on this aspect were covered by the issue of target groups. As can be seen from the above section, the vast majority of NGOs (90%) who cooperate with the research team stated that increasing the participation of target groups in the elections in line with their common goals and they share this opinion. Questions given in next chapter creates opportunity to define practical situation in this area. Thus, 71 % of survey respondents noted that they have implemented relevant activity on participation of target groups in election. It is possible to say that the outcome of the survey is satisfactory. However, it should not be forgotten that this result is based on the experience of the most active part of the country's civil society.

a. The initiators of election-related events

According to the previous experience, when planning their own activities, NGOs are not always the direct initiators of these activities. In Azerbaijan experience besides organization the initiators of election-related events can be other local organizations specialized in this direction, foreign and international foundations, and in some cases local institutions and even candidates themselves.

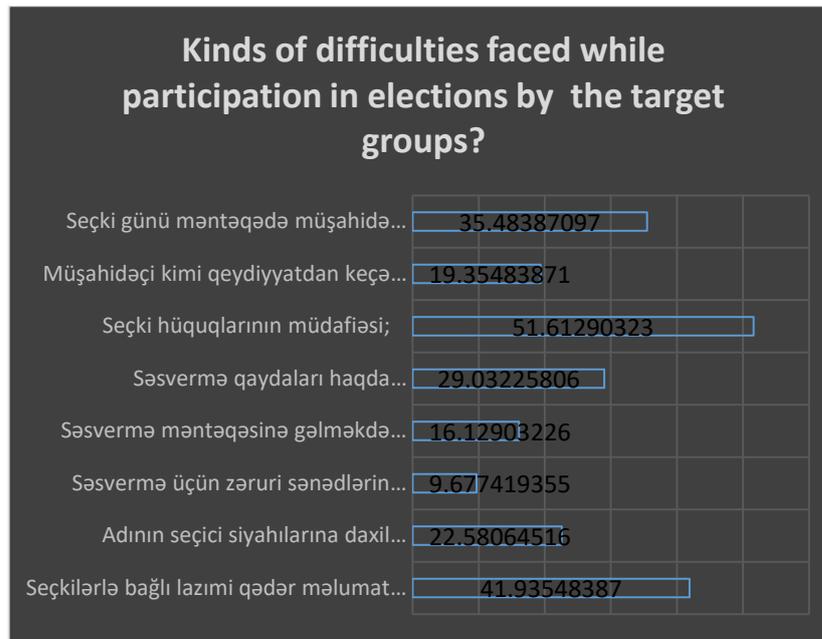
A separate question was addressed to the respondents to determine the identity of the initiators of the election activities. The results are given in chart below



Respondents could choose some of the proposed options, but with some exceptions, the majority had selected only one answer option. 54.84% of respondents mentioned their own organization, 12.90% other local organization, 16.13% international organization, 3.23% local administrative body, and 25.81% candidate that take part in election as initiator of election-related activity. More than a half of the surveyed organizations stated they were directly interested in the participation of the target groups in the elections by stating that these events were held on their own initiative.

b. Needs of target groups

Taking into consideration the existence of groups with limited possibilities to exercise both active and passive electoral rights in Azerbaijan, NGOs were asked about the difficulties faced while participation in elections by their target groups. According to the results of survey quarter of NGOs believe that quarter of their target groups have certain difficulties with participation in the elections. Half of these organization marked women and youth, 40% internally displaced persons and 17% people with disabilities among their target groups.



Also organization defined what kind of difficulties they are. They had opportunity to select several answer options. More than half of the respondents (51.61%) mentioned the protection of election rights, 42% of the respondents obtaining enough information on the elections, and 35.48% observing in the during the polling day as the main difficulties of their target groups.

29% of respondents said that low awareness level on voting rules were among the problems of their target group, 23% of those mentioned absence of names in voter list, 19.35% of those cannot be registered as an observer, 16.13% of those faced difficulties in coming to the polling station, 9.68% of respondents indicated the absence of necessary documents for voting.

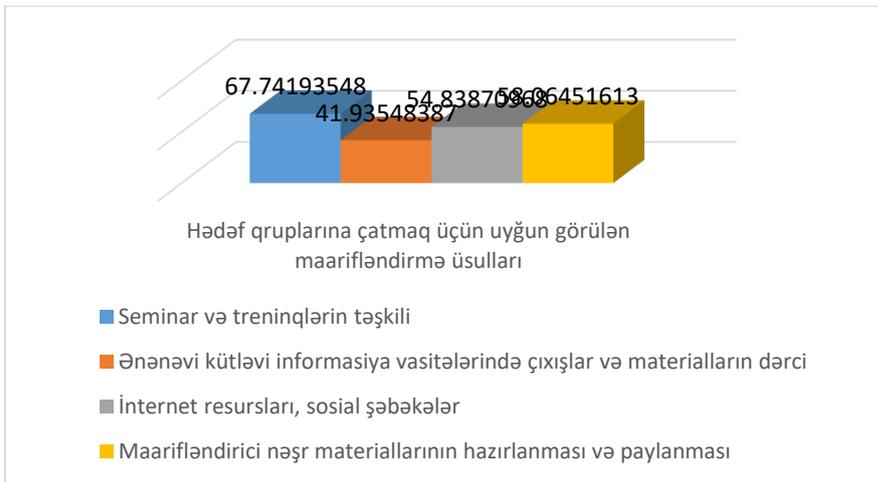
Obviously, this question is indirect in terms of needs assessment and it requires a high level of awareness of NGOs about their target groups' need on involvement in the elections. This awareness can be achieved based on conclusiona attained via special researches or long-term observation.

Considering that most of the organizations participating in the survey are already experienced organizations (87% were organizations that founded before 2010 and were well aware of their target groups and were aware of their needs), the reliability of the results can be assured

c. Methods of working with target groups

Considering the limitations related to the activity of NGOs, we learned their opinion which methods they prefer to access their target groups under current conditions. Respondents could mark several methods while resonding to the question.

Thus, 67, 74% of respondents said organization of workshops and trainings, 58.06% of those said preparation and dissemination of informative printing materials, 54.84% of those preffered internet recources and social networks, 41.94% of those marked traditional Mass-media coverage and outreaches as essential methods to access their target groups.



We can say that any trend towards the basic methods used in voter education programs is not felt. However, the only point that draws attention is that it is highly preferred to use seminars and trainings that allow face-to-face contacts. Despite the administrative difficulties in organizing such events, two-thirds of NGOs consider these methods more effective. Using the capabilities of the mainstream media is relatively less supportive. This can often be explained by a lack of access to the media, restrictions on programs and sensitive issues such as elections.

Also 1 organization considered posting enlightenment videos on YouTube when facing election violation cases or election fraud; while 1 other organization gave preference to the door-to-door inviting people to the election. There were no significant difference between given reasons. Organizing workshops and trainings, preparing and distributing educational literature, Internet resources and social networks, publication of coverage's and materials in traditional media are considered very important.

3.2.5. NEEDS / OBSTACLES / FUTURE PLANS

a. Needs

One of the key points that the research focused on was the assessments of needs of organizations while organizing their activities. In our opinion, it is possible to improve the quality and scale of election programs implemented by NGOs in future by identifying their such needs. By learning such needs donor organization and national organization specialized in election sphere can implement more successful programs to increase the role of civil society.

Thus, about two-thirds of respondents (64.52%) point out the lack of financial support to their basic needs, which indicates a lack of donor organizations that focus on election issues and implement specialized programs in this area in the country and implement specialized programs in the country.

Of course, this result can be considered natural in the background of restrictions on the activity of donors in general in the country in the recent years.

22.58% of those mentioned lack of informative printed materials and 16.13% of those mentioned lack of experts in the field of elections among their basic needs.



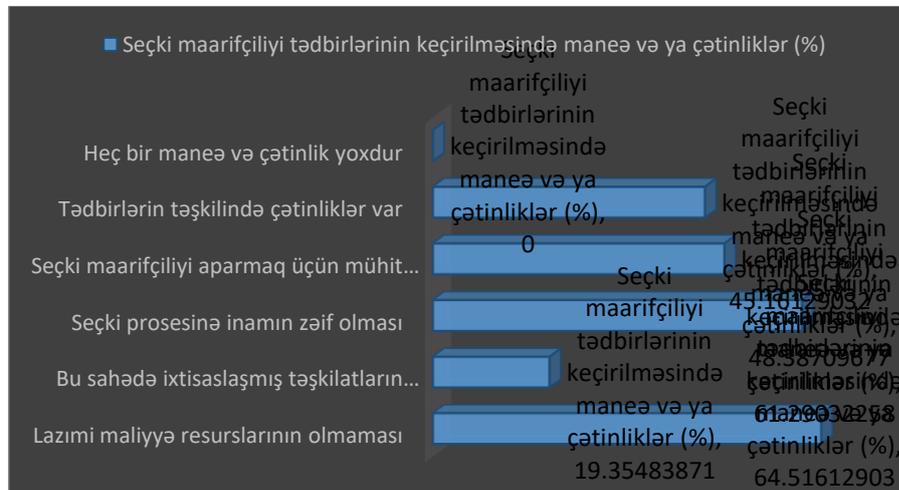
We believe that, some of above mentioned needs may give certain conclusions to the official authorities.

29% of surveyed organization said they don't have place to hold events, 22.58% said they have limited access their target group. Only 10% of respondents said that they don't face any mentioned difficulties related to the above mentioned reasons at all.

2 organizations noted that they face difficulties to organize trainings/workshops, 1 organization face difficulties on building cooperative relations with state authorities and 1 organization has faced difficulties in establishing contacts with donors.

b. Obstacles

Among the opinions on obstacles or difficulties in conducting election campaigns in the country 64.52% of respondents mentioned lack of financial resources, 61.29% of those said lack of trust in election process, 48.39 of those said lack of favorable environment for election enlightenment, 45.16% of those said difficulties on organizing events, 19.35% of those said lack of specialized organizations in election sphere.



Thus, the vast majority those who think that there are obstacles or difficulties in conducting election awareness campaigns have shown as a reason the lack of necessary financial resources

Two of per three organizations emphasized weak confidence in the electoral process, half of surveyed organization underlined lack of favorable environment for election education and difficulties in organizing events. The reasons of the results arising from here are similar with previous results.

c. Future plans

An interesting picture emerged when asking organization participating in survey about what kind of activities they plan to implement to eliminate these challenges of target groups in the upcoming elections and/or actively involve them in election process.

More than half of organization (54.84%) said that they are planning some activities to implement to eliminate these challenges of target groups in the upcoming elections and/or actively involve them in election process, and 45.16% of them declared that they don't have any such plan.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Country legislation on NGOs participation in elections does not conform to the international principles and recommendations and limits their participation in the elections. Limitations created by legislation on participation in elections restrict NGOs from supporting platforms that defend public interests. The possibility of conduction of the election observation activities only by NGOs operating in elections sector and the determination of the requirement for accreditation to carry out exit-polls by the CEC violates the right to the equality and is contrary to the law.

Most of the country's NGOs have demonstrated that they are totally out of the electoral process, not participating in the survey. The general analysis of approximately one-fifth of the surveyed organizations shows that they don't have any experience and activity in election field. According to the both results the number of Azerbaijani NGOs involved in these and other kind of election processes is in minority compared to the total number of civil society organization. While the NGOs established in 2000-2010 have a high level of activity, the lowest level of activity was revealed in the organizations registered after 2010.

From a theoretical point of view, NGOs founded in period when social media, social networking and other Internet resources were rapidly spreading, global information environments existed should be more active. But as it is seen, Role of problems in NGO registration and subjective factors had negative influence to the quality indicators of civil society.

Active part of country NGOs think that they are well informed about election process. Depending on awareness level of NGOs the involvement level in election process changes. This group approaches to the involvement of their beneficiaries in elections positively and sees voter education among their priorities.

This part of Azerbaijan NGOs have positive attitude toward main activity forms related to the civil society participation in election process used and recommended in international experience. Azerbaijan NGOs need election observation and voter education activities, consider them more effective and believe in that NGOS can make contribution in these directions. At the same time, majority of leading NGOs have good experience in mentioned areas. Level of collaboration with media organizations is low, and it indicates that there is cooperation between two main elements of civil society is weak enough.

Reluctant approach of country NGOs to the election process tells us about serious problems with the attitude of civil society towards the election process. The fact that a large number of NGOs does not consider it important to encourage their target groups to participate in the elections, including non-participation in any election-related activity points to the problems with properly evaluating the concept of civil society.

In addition, the inclusion of mostly more active social groups into target groups creates the impression that NGOs are not interested in working with vulnerable groups. Clear approaches for active involvement target groups in election process do not exist.

The most of the difficulties for participation in elections are not related to organizations itself, but rather caused by relevant bodies that responsible for creation this environment. State bodies are

less inclined create wide opportunities in this direction just as NGOs do not make much effort to implement the rights provided them by legislation. Majority of national NGOs consider participation in election process as risky activity area.

Poor access to target groups was regarded as a major deficiency in achieving goals and objectives. Moreover, lack of financial support, space for events, educational materials and experts specialized in the elections is among the main problems in achieving the goals and objectives.

CHAPTER 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The national legislation should be adapted to the international principles and recommendations, and additions and amendments emphasizing NGO participation in the election process in a broader context should be made to the legislation. First of all these additions and amendments should create opportunity for NGOs to support election or referendum platforms or act as an initiator of this activity in order to achieve its legitimate goals. Since the essence and role of the elections excludes any discrimination restriction defined by legislation on observation of elections by NGOs should be eliminated and everyone should be able to observe the elections.
2. The practice of selective registration of NGOs, the approaches causing their image degradation should be refused from and a more favorable legal and practical environment should be created to strengthen the civil society sector.
3. State authorities, in particular the election administration, should effectively use the resources and potential of local NGOs in organizing voter education work. NGOs' access to the groups with low access to information and vulnerable social groups should be well evaluated and they should benefit from positive innovation practices offered by civil society to increase their motivation for participation in the elections. Effective cooperation with NGOs should be created to increase the motivation of voters from these target groups, as well as their ability to make informed and deliberate choices.
4. Election administration can review the participation of NGO representatives in work groups established to examine of voters' signatures and investigate complaints to achieve transparency in registration of candidates and investigation of election complaints
5. Election administration should apply the experience of using human and technical resources of non-governmental organizations' to ensure transparency in election processes. Co-operation with NGOs can make significant contributions to the independent and professional organization of public oversight of the election process. It can also stimulate the emergence of numerous important findings and recommendations to improve election practices.
6. The administrative oversight of NGOs' activities on election processes should be abandoned. With this aim measures should be taken to increase the access of NGOs to internal and external financial resources, in particular grant registration procedures should be simplified.
7. Regardless of their goals and objectives NGOs should be more sensitive to the elections issue, and should consider issues of election awareness and participation as their social duty and it should not be left out of the initiatives in this direction. Promoting the participation of target groups in the elections should be seen as one of the main goals of each NGO
8. NGOs working in human rights and democracy sphere are more responsible for increasing election awareness in the society. These organizations should convince their colleagues to consider election issues as a priority mission. Despite limited recourse causes some difficulties, modern technological opportunities opens up additional opportunities to achieve certain progress in this direction. It is always possible to keep the focus of public attention in urgency of this issue by using the capabilities of social networks
9. Enlargement of partnership among NGOs, exchange of information, improvement of trust between state bodies and NGOs can establish base to achieve development in this direction