

THINK TANKS & ELECTIONS

THINK TANKS: WHY AND HOW TO SUPPORT ELECTIONS

Edited by Leandro Echt and Louise Ball



www.onthinktanks.org

Democratic elections facilitate the exchange of ideas in a country and are an important moment for public engagement in political processes.

Elections present an opportunity for organisations that want to influence or promote a culture of ideas and innovation, evidence-use, transparency, democracy and citizen participation.

This publication seeks to inspire and inform think tanks to act. It is a collection of stories and practical advice from organisations around the world that have influenced their country's electoral process in some way.

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Why elections are a brilliant moment for think tanks

During elections, political parties are more open to new ideas than at any other time. What's more, with heightened interest in policy issues, election periods often generate more funding for think tanks.

So, while you'd be forgiven for thinking that with all the political uncertainty in the lead up to an election there's little point pumping energy into communicating your research, the opposite couldn't be truer.

Elections are a think tank's chance to influence and inform – to step forward as the link between policy, evidence and the public.

Here we tell the stories of different think tanks that have sought to influence and inform election processes in different ways. The stories are packed with inspiration, advice and lessons for other think tanks.

Three ways to support evidence-informed election processes

There are many examples of think tank initiatives around the world that seek to influence and inform elections. They range in ambition and scale, engaging at different levels and stages of the election process.

However, broadly speaking the ways in which think tanks act can be grouped into three categories. Of course, these categories are very much overlapping and many think tank election strategies and initiatives will often seek to address elements of all three.

1. **Promoting public debate**

Public debate gives voters a chance to hear – and question – candidates’ policies and positions.

In many democratic countries, presidential candidate debates have been institutionalised. But in others, this still isn’t the case.

Here, you will read about how a coalition led by an Argentine think tank organised the country’s first ever presidential debate. You will also read about how a think tank in Guatemala was invited by a national media broadcaster to set the television debate questions.

2. **Informing voters and increasing public engagement**

During elections, the public are more engaged in politics than they’ll ever be. And a fully functioning democracy requires informed and engaged voters.

Think tanks play an important role in helping citizens to access information about candidates and election campaigns, as well as to understand, or compare, party positions.

Websites and mobile applications are becoming an increasingly popular way to do this. For example, you will read about how a coalition of Argentine organisations created an interactive candidate-affinity voter app, and about the Ecuadorian think tank who set up a website that was accessible to 9.5 million voters via a Facebook partnership.

Other techniques to help voters make sense of manifestos and policies include using infographics and short videos.

Engaging the media has proved to be another useful, and low-cost, tactic to reach more of the public than ever before. In the practical tools section, you will find examples of how to use infographics to help inform the public.

3. Bringing evidence into political debate

In the lead up to elections, politicians may misrepresent or use false information. And if no one is scrutinising what they say, they'll get away with it. Here, you will read about how a think tank in Chile fact-checked the weekly public appearances of presidential candidates on national television.

Politicians also tend to make vague election promises about universal goals (like creating more jobs or reducing poverty), with no real plan to fund or implement them. Here, you will read about how a group of volunteers in Hungary publicly scrutinised and ranked the political party manifestos to hold parties to account for the promises they make.

In the lead up to elections, political parties and candidates are looking for new ideas and solutions, and so elections are a strategic time to influence policy-makers with evidence. Here you will read about how a think tank in Peru produced a series of policy documents to inform the political agenda.

Six big-picture lessons

Here are six lessons to come out of all the stories we've collected from think tanks working to inform and influence elections processes.

1. **You can't do it alone**

With very few exceptions, strong partnerships play a big role in successful think tank election initiatives. This includes partnerships between civil society organisations, as well as alliances with government, private sector, academic and media organisations.

In the stories that follow, you will read examples of how each of these players can contribute different skills and influence. For example, partnerships with universities introduce the element of neutrality; media partnerships can help reach large numbers of people and increase public scrutiny; and state partnerships can help increase project legitimacy.

2. **Invest in smart communications**

In all the stories we heard, either investing in communications was a success factor, or the need to invest more was a lesson learned.

Whether you're targeting political parties, the public or journalists, spending time and money to make your messages and products relevant, accessible and engaging is a must. Quality infographics, videos and media-broadcast are all good ways to cut through the noise.

You will read about how some organisations brought onboard third-party communications or social media experts to build successful campaigns. You will also read about how digital tools and applications have become increasingly popular – and effective – in communicating with voters.

3. **Build political incentives and costs**

Politicians will not join in public debates or speak openly and honestly about their plans and what is feasible unless there are political incentives to do so, and political costs for not doing so.

Fact-checking can be a powerful tool to hold politicians to account for what they say, as you will read about in the story from Chile. Partnering with the media has proved to be a successful strategy to reach the public and increase political incentives for open and honest dialogue.

4. Political timing is everything

It's important to plan your project according to the election timeline. The year before the election is the best time to start engaging political parties. By election year, campaigns are already locked into agendas and manifestos, leaving little room for dialogue.

When engaging the public, it is best to wait until the election year – any earlier and there is little interest. In the days leading up to the election, voters are looking for information. You will read about how a think tank in Ecuador capitalised on this, via a partnership with Facebook, to reach 9.5 million accounts.

5. Pay attention to the external environment

External factors will also play a big role in how the project unfolds. For example, in the Argentina debate story, you will read about how attempts to set up the first presidential debate failed in one election, with the two leading candidates pulling out, but succeeded in the next, in part because of a different political context.

You will also read about how a project in Ecuador found itself in the same position – the project came close to organising the first presidential debate, but two candidates pulled out at the last minute. Ecuador should be encouraged by Argentina's experience.

6. Failure is a stepping stone to success

The story from Argentina is a good example of this. While the project failed to achieve the first presidential debate in 2011, it learned important lessons, built stronger political presence and relationships and strengthened its institutional partnerships. These elements helped the project to succeed the following election.

Some of the most interesting stories, and most valuable lessons, captured here come from the organisations and initiatives that have been working on elections for many years. For example, in Peru, the story you will read is the fourth iteration of the project – that's 10 years of supporting evidence-informed elections.

Repeating the project, bolstered by lessons learned, increased political presence and stronger partnerships, is part of the process.

Acknowledgements

This publication is a collection of stories, good practice and guidance for think tanks seeking to support evidence-informed elections.

It is based on a series called ‘Election platforms: strengthening capacities to influence the electoral cycle’ (www.onthinktanks.org/initiatives/elections/) – a collection of fourteen good practice case studies and sixteen practical tools, edited by Leandro Echt. Most of the case studies and tools under this initiative are available in Spanish.

The series was developed by On Think Tanks and Grupo FARO, within the Latin American Research Initiative for Public Policies (ILAIIPP), with financial support from the International Center for Research Development (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada, as part of the Think Tank initiative.

The series was originally published in Spanish language. The case studies and practical tools have been translated, adapted and edited for this publication by Louise Ball. The original authors and organisations have been acknowledged at the end of each story, along with links to the original full version (Spanish language).

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors.

1



PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

In this chapter:

Argentina's first ever presidential candidate debate

Guatemala's presidential debate: the question-setters

ARGENTINA'S FIRST EVER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DEBATE



QUICK READ

- Argentina's first presidential debate was broadcast live in 2015.
- The think tank's initiative aimed to raise the quality of debate and promote a culture of public dialogue.
- No clear front runner created a favourable political environment for debate.

Attempts to set up a presidential candidate debate during the 2011 elections had failed, with those candidates leading the polls refusing to join.

However, in 2015 there was a different political climate: President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner would not be permitted another re-election. A handover of power was certain and there was no clear front winner. The political campaigns were highly polarised, creating an appetite for public debate.

A coalition, led by Argentine think tank CIPPEC, set out to achieve the country's first presidential debate. In doing so, it hoped to lay the foundations to institutionalise the event and promote a culture of open dialogue in Argentina.

CIPPEC had led the 2011 debate efforts, and so this time it was equipped with lessons learned, stronger alliances and political presence, and a favourable political environment.

The campaign united individuals and institutions in support of public debate. Together, they managed to instil the understanding that the debate was important for Argentina's democracy. And once citizens began to demand the debate, the political costs of not taking part rose.

On 4 October 2015, the first presidential debate in the history of the country was broadcast live on Argentinian television with all presidential candidates present.

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #1

Argentina's first ever presidential candidate debate

How they did it

1. PRODUCE POLICY DOCUMENTS

Policy documents focused on four big policy priorities: education, infrastructure, early childhood and institutional quality (unlike the 2011 project that produced 15 documents). The priority was to produce documents through dialogue with political actors.

Drafted by CIPPEC and partner organisations, these 'entry documents' were a starting point for dialogue and input from political, academic and business stakeholders.

At the end of the process, they came out with a series of 'exit documents', enriched by the inputs of those consulted.

2014

2. TAKE THE DOCUMENTS TO POLICYMAKERS

In 2014, the year leading up to the presidential elections, documents were discussed with ministers, officials and presidential candidate teams – presenting the policy ideas and evidence.

The year before the election was the ideal time to do this, before manifestos and agendas were finalised.

Meetings were also an opportunity to introduce the candidates to the idea of a presidential debate.

2014

3. BUILD SUPPORT FOR, AND PROMOTE, DEBATE

A year-long campaign was launched to build political and public support for the debate. The campaign had two clear messages: we will achieve the first presidential debate in the history of the country, and debate is a public good.

Advocacy tactics included: a 'presidential debates of the world' public event; media-partnerships; meetings and workshops with journalists; publishing op-eds; participating in civil society forums; using advertising and social media.

OCTOBER 2014 – OCTOBER 2015

4. ORGANISE THE DEBATE

Once candidates were known, the debate content and logistics were organised.

SEE PRACTICAL TOOLS:

- **What to think about when planning a presidential candidate debate, p.51**
- **An example presidential candidate debate structure, p.53**

AUGUST – OCTOBER 2015
Election 25 October 2015*

STORY #1

Argentina's first ever presidential candidate debate

Four challenges

1. **The presidential debate overshadowed advocacy work**

Policy documents were used to initiate dialogue with the pre-candidates and to help structure the debate. But the debate itself ended up overshadowing deeper advocacy work on policy development.

2. **Determining roles and responsibilities**

Donors, think tanks, the media and others all had roles to play and their decision-making was governed by different – and sometimes conflicting – interests. To mitigate this, roles and decision-making responsibilities are best agreed in advance.

3. **Financial management**

For a project of this scale, financial management requires a lot of work and shouldn't be underestimated.

4. **Balancing political and organisational agendas**

A think tank may decide to align its agenda with a new administration's priorities (for example, every four years). However, think tanks need to be careful not to neglect topics that are important for the institute's interests and sustainability.

THE YEAR BEFORE THE ELECTION IS THE BEST TIME TO START ENGAGING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. BY ELECTION YEAR, CAMPAIGNS ARE ALREADY LOCKED INTO AGENDAS AND MANIFESTOS, LEAVING LITTLE ROOM FOR DIALOGUE.

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #1

Argentina's first ever presidential candidate debate

Eight lessons

1. **The political climate was right**

Unlike the 2011 elections, it was unclear who would win. This uncertainty gave the debate greater political relevance.

2. **Construct political incentives and costs**

In order to build widespread political and public support for the debate, campaigners had to instil a sense of importance around the idea. Once the media and public were vocal about their support, the political cost for candidates of not participating became too great and all candidates took part.

3. **Persevere**

A critical milestone for the project was the decision to continue in spite of great uncertainty as to whether or not the candidates would commit to the debate. Contingency plans were rejected and all efforts focused on the realisation of the event.

4. **Balance objectives**

For a project of this scale, it was important to balance the different objectives. You need a plan, but you also need to be flexible to make the most of opportunities that arise. In 2014, dialogue was the priority. In 2015, all efforts were focused on promoting the debate.

5. **It takes time to build trust**

Organising the debate required patience and transparency in order to build trust between actors. You must listen and be aware of the different sensitivities for different actors.

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #1

Argentina's first ever presidential candidate debate

6. **Use social media to mobilise public support**

An active digital and social media campaign, run by third party experts, helped to attract the support of citizens and other actors, such as journalists. For example, the Argentina Debate Twitter account (@argdebate) reached 60.8k followers.

7. **Transparency policy**

The initiative received criticism that it lacked independence because of the funding entrepreneur's links to the opposition party. Therefore, it is important to define a transparency policy around publication of the initiative's financing.

8. **Never stop learning**

2011 efforts and lessons learned shaped the 2015 initiative, its decision-making processes and leadership.

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #1

Argentina's first ever presidential candidate debate

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:

Argentina Debate

LEAD ORGANISATION:

Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC), Argentina.

One of the big learnings from the 2011 initiative was that CIPPEC's leadership alone was not enough to achieve its ambitious objectives. Therefore, alliances and partnerships with organisations that have public legitimacy or capacity were interwoven into the project. Main allies included: civil society organisations, universities, business associations, media, Argentine Chamber of Producers Independent TV (CAPIT) and the Argentine Advertising Council.

PARTNERS

Principal funding came from a group of interested entrepreneurs. Policy documents were produced under existing CIPPEC project budgets. Several embassies also supported televising the debate.

FUNDING

There were three main decision-making mechanisms: (1) An executive committee – formed at the beginning of the project and comprising nine members: the funder entrepreneurs; CIPPEC's President and Executive Director; an academic representative; and a former Argentine official. (2) A strategic committee – a consultative body comprising ex-officials and private sector representatives (from both traditional and innovative backgrounds). They also played a role in promoting and advocating for the debate. (3) Argentina Debate Coordination – an expert called Hernán Charosky was invited to coordinate the debate, reporting weekly or bi-weekly to the Executive Committee and to the Strategic Committee.

GOVERNANCE

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www.argentinadebate.org

[@argdebate](https://www.facebook.com/ArgDebate)

MORE INFORMATION

GUATEMALA'S PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE: THE QUESTION-SETTERS



QUICK READ

- Think tank ASIES invited to co-organise presidential debate and to set the questions.
- ASIES' participation gave the debate legitimacy and transparency.
- 2016 election law reformed according to think tank proposal.

A former TV comedian – with no previous experience in government – won the 2015 Guatemalan presidential election.

The win came after a moment of political turmoil: the former president and vice president had resigned, just days before the elections, following corruption allegations and citizen protests. Public distrust of and discontent with the political class was high.

The Guatemalan think tank ASIES had been working to inform public policy agendas in the lead up to elections since 1990.

In 2015, the project hadn't planned to organise or be involved in televised candidate debates. But ASIES was approached by the television channel Albavisión to co-organise and write the questions for the debates.

The public was also distrustful of the media, accusing it of having election favourites. And so ASIES was able to bring legitimacy and transparency to the process. The debate dates and groupings were drawn live on television, for transparency.

The debate questions were based on an ASIES document 'Guatemala walks: reflections for change' – a tool to interrogate politicians on their plans, produced for the media and civil society. The document covered 12 policy areas, introducing the current policy situation, the campaign proposals and important questions to ask.

In 2016, the government reformulated the electoral law to introduce proportional representation of minorities – one of the policy document proposals by ASIES.

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #2

Guatemala's presidential debate: the question-setters

How they did it

1. PREPARE POLICY DOCUMENTS

Twelve policy proposals produced. Topics selected by ASIES. Following political events in 2015, two priorities were added: tax revenue and education.

Documents were a starting point for discussion with political parties.

An additional document was produced for the media and civil society: 'a tool to interrogate politicians about their plans.'

2014 – MAY 2015

2. WRITE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

With support from the global communications agency Burson-Marsteller, ASIES' communications team developed a communications strategy.

Messaging focused on shaping a renewed image of the national agenda following the political crises.

The strategy included the production of five videos summarising the policy proposals and media partnerships.

NOVEMBER 2014 – MAY 2015

3. DISSEMINATE POLICY DOCUMENTS

Tactics to disseminate the proposals included: bilateral meetings with candidates and their teams; four regional debates; participation in university forums; and media workshop.

JUNE – JULY 2015

4. CO-ORGANISE TELEVISION DEBATES

A presidential candidate debate was not part of the original project plan. However, ASIES was invited by Albavisión to co-organise the debate and write the questions.

Three televised debates took place; 14 candidates participated in groups of four and five. The second round of the debate incorporated questions from the public via social media.

ASIES' participation gave the debate legitimacy and transparency. The dates and groups were drawn live.

ASIES also collaborated in the organisation of mayoral candidate debates in Antigua.

AUGUST–OCTOBER 2015
Election: 6 September 2015

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #2

Guatemala's presidential debate: the question-setters

Three challenges

1. **Changing context**

The political crisis engulfed the country, changing the political context, people and priorities in a short space of time. To remain relevant, ASIES relied on a multi-disciplinary team to quickly compile new information.

2. **Funding the communication work**

It wasn't possible to get funding for the large-scale dissemination planned. Therefore, a more modest strategy had to be developed to reach the public and key people in the electoral process.

3. **Reputational risk**

The public was very distrustful of the media in the election process; Albavisión was accused of giving more coverage to certain candidates. ASIES decided to take the risk and partner with Albavisión to open up debate to a broad television audience.

STORY #2

Guatemala's presidential debate: the question-setters

Three lessons

1. **You need flexible plans**

Communications and advocacy strategies must be flexible, so you can adapt easily. Instead of prioritising presenting the proposals to the political parties, ASIES shifted focus to the public and other different areas following the changing political context.

2. **Invest in media relations**

The media approached ASIES to support the televised debate, in part because they had an existing relationship. This encouraged ASIES to be more proactive in building and nurturing the relationship with media.

3. **Setting debate questions gives you influence**

ASIES' role as the debate-question-setter and moderator allowed it to guide the debate towards priority topics. Forums became an opportunity to disseminate the project's national agenda.

PROMOTING PUBLIC DEBATE

STORY #2

Guatemala's presidential debate: the question-setters

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:**Guatemala camina: pasos firmes para cambiar****LEAD ORGANISATION:****Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES), Guatemala**

Albavisión, Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, Cámara de Industria de Guatemala, Guatevisión, TV Azteca y Radio Corporación Nacional RCN and Fundación del Valle de Panchoy.

PARTNERS

Funding came from The Think Tank Initiative and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Research Centre. ASIES staff participation as debate moderators was donated by the organisation.

FUNDING

The project was coordinated by the ASIES Board of Directors and Executive Secretariat, who selected the policy topics. ASIES' research and communications teams prepared and disseminated the documents. External consultants were hired to make the videos and support public relations. A committee was formed with ASIES consultants, associates and executives to formulate and review the debate questions.

GOVERNANCE

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MORE INFORMATION

2

INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In this chapter:

Helping Ecuador decide how to vote

Enter your UK postcode to find your local candidates

Find your ideal candidate with this interactive app

HELPING ECUADOR DECIDE HOW TO VOTE



QUICK READ

- **New website presented comparing party manifestos in accessible formats.**
- **Facebook partnership put link to website on 9.5 million Ecuadorian accounts.**
- **The initiative organised five national assembly candidate debates and a televised expert debate series with citizen participation.**

Donors weren't too interested in the 2017 Ecuadorian elections until four months before they were due to take place and the polls forecast a close race. After a tight and polarising campaign, Ecuador's ruling party won the 2017 presidential election 51% to 49%.

In the year leading up to the elections the Ecuadorian think tank Grupo FARO set up *Ecuador Decide*, a project that sought to inform the public on important election issues, and to involve them in policy processes.

Ecuadordecide2017.org used accessible language, infographics and videos to break down and compare the major political party election proposals. The campaign targeted the public through social media and popular radio broadcasts.

A partnership with Facebook meant that all Ecuador accounts (around 9.5 million) displayed a button in the two days leading up to the elections, which took them to a website featuring candidate information. Media interest resulted in about USD 300,000 worth of free advertising.

Ecuador Decide also came close to organising the country's first public presidential candidate debate. The date was set and rules agreed. But two major candidates were absent, and it was cancelled.

Despite the disappointment, a televised expert debate took place instead, which led to a series of further online expert debates broadcast via Facebook Live. An interactive map was embedded in the Telegraph Online election live blog.

National Assembly candidate debates were a success, taking place in five locations. Forty-six candidates participated from 16 parties and were viewed by 13,000 people on Facebook Live.

INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STORY #1

Helping Ecuador to decide how to vote

How they did it

1. SET UP WEBSITE

Ecuadordecide2017.org is a web platform for citizens to find out about the presidential candidates' policies and proposals.

It presents seven policy questions. Citizens can click on the question and find out the political candidates' positions.

NOVEMBER 2016 –
APRIL 2017

2. CAMPAIGN TO INFORM VOTERS

Dissemination techniques included: Facebook partnership, short videos shared on social media, Twitter and popular radio station broadcasts. Media interest helped expand reach.

SEE PRACTICAL TOOL:

- **How to use infographics to communicate with the public, p.57**

NOVEMBER 2016 – APRIL 2017

3. PUBLIC DEBATE AND DIALOGUE

Ecuador's first presidential debate was organised, with the date set and announced. However, two major candidates pulled out. Instead, a televised debate with four experts took place. This led to a series of online thematic debates, organised by *The Economist*. Experts presented their positions and audiences could vote in favour or against.

National Assembly candidate debates took place in five locations, closing with a citizen question via the Facebook Live broadcast.

DECEMBER 2016 – FEBRUARY 2017
Elections: 19 February 2017*

Ecuador Decide was a large-scale initiative comprising five interrelated components to raise the quality of public debate, inform voters and influence the policy agenda: **(1) Informed voter campaign; (2) Citizen informed politics; (3) Public debate and dialogue; (4) Putting words into action; and (5) Government and civil society training.** In this analysis, we focus on the first informed voter campaign and the public debate and dialogue.

**INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT****STORY #1**

Helping Ecuador to decide how to vote

Three challenges

1. **Two candidates refused to take part in the debate**

Strong polarisation was likely one of the factors that led the candidates leading in the polls to decide not to participate. Another challenge to realising the debate was that there were other debates being organised by the media and trade unions, all vying for attention.

2. **Lack of donor interest until the last stretch of the campaign**

The initiative sought to raise funds one year in advance but donors, despite finding the proposal relevant, were reluctant to finance it. Just four months before the first round, when it was clear that there would be a competitive process between the current government and the opposition, there was renewed interest in providing finance.

3. **Remaining neutral**

After the elections, there was a strong dispute between two factions of the ruling party (the outgoing and incoming administration). This created a polarised environment in which it was difficult to criticise the current or previous management without being seen as taking a position in support of one side.

Five lessons

1. **Build in time and resources for partnership work**

Ecuador Decide opted to work in a diverse consortium, building alliances for each component of the project. While this brought many benefits, it's important to account for the transaction costs and time needed to build consensus among diverse actors.

2. **Plan the project according to election timelines**

For a multi-component project it's important to plan and coordinate the different components well, paying attention to the election cycle and timelines. In *Ecuador Decide*, the 'Citizen informed politics' component was delivered too late, and the policy proposals were not communicated to the political parties during the time that they were developing their plans. It is helpful for projects to have short-, medium- and long-term objectives to prioritise work and allow for results analysis at each stage.

3. **Build a relationship with the candidates**

Early contact with the candidates and their teams to build trust and confidence is essential to achieve support for key components, such as organising a presidential debate. It's also important to seek the approval of candidates for the information published about their positions on policy topics.

4. **Map your audiences and prioritise your efforts**

In a big, multi-component initiative, it's important to identify which audiences you want to focus your engagement efforts on. For example, under the 'Citizen informed politics' component, the initiative sought to influence both citizens and election candidates and the diffusion of efforts brought up additional challenges and weakened the proposals.

5. **You need strategic partnerships and allies**

Strategic alliances can bring visibility and legitimacy to your initiative. In *Ecuador Decide*, partnerships with the National Election Council and the United Nations Development Programme gave the project a lot of backing. Facebook was important for generating media interest and reaching large numbers of people with limited resources. Universities provided impartiality to the monitoring component. And at the local level, it was important to have partners to help with logistics and to leverage their networks to achieve the five provincial debates.

INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STORY #1

Helping Ecuador to decide how to vote

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:

Ecuador Decide

LEAD ORGANISATION:

Grupo FARO

Consejo Nacional Electoral; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Confederación Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones y Sociedad Civil (CEOSC); Facebook; universities; media.

PARTNERS

Financing amounted to USD 500,000. Funding came from three organisations: Think Tank Initiative of the International Development Research Centre (supported the informed voting component); European Union (supported the citizen informed politics component); and Counterpart International (supported the informed voting, dialogues and debates, capacity building and the putting words into action components).

FUNDING

The initiative was led by Grupo Faro and implemented by a consortium of organisations (the partners).

GOVERNANCE

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MORE INFORMATION

ENTER YOUR UK POSTCODE TO FIND YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES



QUICK READ

- **Volunteers compiled UK's biggest ever online candidate database, polling-station finder and results reporting for local elections.**
- **There is a public appetite for even more information to be available online in the run up to elections.**
- **Think tank's input contributed to UK Government commitment to speed up / improve results reporting.**

In the lead up to the May 2016 UK local elections, political news was being dominated by the European Union (Brexit) referendum taking place the following month, and the US presidential primaries.

What's more, it was a particularly complicated election, with citizens voting for assembly members, local councillors, mayors and police commissioners – over 13,000 candidates.

The result: a largely uninformed voting public.

Yet, research shows that people in the UK want election information – and that they look for it online. The year before, on the day of the 2015 general election, all of the top 10 Google searches were election related.

Think tank Democracy Club (DC) sought to help voters get the information they needed to make an informed vote, by building the biggest ever online candidate database for the local elections.

By polling day, details of all 13,068 candidates were uploaded, providing candidate names, photos, party affiliations and contact information. For voters in Wales, it also provided the address of their local polling station.

WhoCanIVoteFor.co.uk was used by 180,000 people. In Wales, 47% of the electorate used the polling-station finder.

All data was free and open, and was disseminated and reused by others. For example, BuzzFeed used the data to tell its readers which elections they could vote in; the *Telegraph* online embedded the real-time results data into its election liveblog; and the London School of Economics used it to create a Democratic Dashboard – an online platform for citizens to find electoral information for the 2018 elections.

Thanks partially to DC's efforts, the UK Government committed to developing a common data standard for reporting UK election results faster and more efficiently, and planning to support electoral administrators to voluntarily adopt the standard. This was commitment #7 in the UK's National Action Plan as part of the UK's membership of the Open Government Partnership.

INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STORY #2

Enter your UK postcode to find your local candidates

How they did it

1. MAP ELECTIONS

Initially, Democracy Club tried to crowdsource information on the election candidates, and they soon found election experts who kept their own records and were willing to share.

DECEMBER 2015 –
FEBRUARY 2016

2. BUILD A DATABASE OF CANDIDATES

Volunteers worked from the published Statement of Persons Nominated, trawling through council websites and transcribing information into online forms that would populate the database. Data was checked and verified by other volunteers.

All 13,068 candidates were covered by polling day.

MARCH – MAY 2016

3. CREATE A POLLING-STATION FINDER

Acquiring, checking and cleaning / sorting polling station data from all UK councils was difficult.

Therefore, Democracy Club decided to focus on Wales. With support from NUS Wales and the Welsh government, 22 councils provided the data needed in the specified formats. Many provided the data quickly, others only provided partial data or didn't respond at all.

JANUARY – MAY 2016

4. RECORD RESULTS

In England, Democracy Club worked with the Local Government Information Unit and Open Data Institute to produce open election results data. Data included votes per candidate, winners, spoiled ballots and turnout. Data was added and verified by volunteers and Local Government Information Unit staff.

Results data was produced in near-real time.

MAY 2016

STORY #2

Enter your UK postcode to find your local candidates

Five challenges

1. **The size of the database and data gathering task**

Acquiring, checking and cleaning the data for a large number of councils in the UK was time consuming and difficult. Data was provided in lots of different formats and varying degrees of quality. Many councils didn't have the data needed to populate the polling-station finder. Some councils were not supportive or did not see the value in the tool. As such, getting the database ready on time, before the elections, was a challenge.

2. **Low number of data partners**

The number of partners who used the data, such as the media and campaigners, was smaller than hoped. In part, this can be explained by the delays in getting the database completed.

3. **Lack of public interest**

The 2016 May elections were overshadowed by the upcoming European Union referendum (Brexit) and the US presidential primaries. This resulted in a general lack of public and political interest in the elections and the database.

4. **Low funding**

The overall funding for the initiative came to USD 100,000. Democracy Club believes that it would need to raise an estimated USD 350,000 to conduct the work sustainably.

5. **Measuring impact**

A downside to making data open is that people and organisations don't have to notify the original data provider if they use it. This makes it harder to measure the initiative's impact.

**INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT****STORY #2**

Enter your UK postcode to find your local candidates

Four lessons

1. **Focus on user needs**

Research on Google searches and tweets on and around polling days provided valuable evidence that tens of thousands of people were seeking more election information. This helped to build a user-focused product.

2. **Start earlier**

The initiative began six months before the elections. Ideally, crowdsourcing and relationship building would have started one year earlier. Starting earlier would also have helped to raise more awareness for the database, encouraging campaigners and activists to join forces to update the one single database, rather than maintaining their own.

3. **The public wants to know more**

The most consistent feedback from visitors to the website was that they wanted more information. A list of names and social media links wasn't enough. They wanted to know where their candidates stood, their manifestos and policies.

4. **Seek government support**

Open data should be seen as a public good. Therefore, the simplest and most transparent support mechanism for open data projects is financing by the central government.

INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STORY #2

Enter your UK postcode to find your local candidates

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:

Towards better elections

LEAD ORGANISATION:

Democracy Club, UK

The Electoral Commission (made requests to councils on Democracy Club's behalf); NUS Wales (helped to establish partnership with Welsh government); LocalGovDigital (civil servants' group that helped with local government contacts and writing about the issue); Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) and Open Data Institute (helped create results recorder).

PARTNERS

Small grants from Google.org (USD 30,000) the Rowntree Trust (USD 30,000) and Bethnal Green Ventures (USD 10,000). Subsequently, grant received from the Welsh government via the NUS Wales (USD 30,000) for additional support to Wales. Won an Open Data Institute showcase grant (USD 8,000) with the Local Government Information Unit to assist with results work. Overall funding came to USD 100,000.

FUNDING

Team comprised two full-time coordinators, one leading on technical development, one who worked with partners and volunteers.

GOVERNANCE

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www.democracyclub.org.uk

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MORE INFORMATION

FIND YOUR IDEAL CANDIDATE WITH THIS INTERACTIVE APP



QUICK READ

- **Open the app, answer a series of questions.**
- **Presidential candidates' answers are revealed.**
- **Get a percentage affinity to each candidate.**

Yo quiero saber (I want to know) is a political match-making app!

During the run up to Argentina's 2017 parliamentary election, candidates of the main provinces of the country were asked to complete a questionnaire, sharing their position of a number of important policy topics.

Users who download the app are asked those same questions. A response is selected by the user and then the respective candidates' positions are revealed.

At the end of the process, users are given a percentage affinity to each candidate, and can share their results on social media.

**INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT****STORY #3**

Find your ideal candidate with this interactive app

How they did it

1. IDENTIFY POLICY TOPICS

The topics to be included on the app were selected according to existing congress projects, and areas of public interest in the lead up to the election.

2. MAP CANDIDATES' POSITIONS

A questionnaire was developed and sent to candidates via social media, email, campaign telephone numbers and candidate advisors.

The questionnaire allowed four types of responses: (1) A resounding yes; (2) A qualified yes; (3) A no with some reservation; and (4) A resounding no.

Candidates' responses were verified by experts. If candidates failed to respond, the team searched for media statements, public speeches and official documents to answer the questions.

In parallel, teams worked to build candidate profiles.

3. BUILD APPLICATION

All information was uploaded to the website and app.

The app was designed so that the user can respond to the statement presented to them with the same four options (resounding yes or no, yes or no with qualifications).

Once the user chooses their response, the candidates' respective positions are revealed. The information source is always provided.

At the end, the user gets a percentage affinity with each candidate and results can be shared on social media.

**INFORMING VOTERS AND INCREASING
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT****STORY #2**

Enter your UK postcode to find your local candidates

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:**Yo Quiero Saber****LEAD ORGANISATION:****Fundación Conocimiento Abierto**

Fundación Conocimiento Abierto, Fundación Democracia en Red, journalists,
University of Buenos Aires (volunteer students).

PARTNERS

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www.yoquierosaber.org

www.facebook.com/YoQuieroSaber/

@YoQuieroSaberAr

#YoQuieroSaber

MORE INFORMATION

3



BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE POLITICAL DEBATE

In this chapter:

Chile's election fact-checkers

Hungarian civil society rates political manifestos

Informing Peru's public policy

CHILE'S ELECTION FACT-CHECKERS



QUICK READ

- Presidential candidates' weekly television appearances fact-checked by think tank.
- It raised the political cost of misrepresenting facts or using false information.
- Method and training from leading Argentine public discourse verification centre.

During elections, politicians tend to exaggerate the state of affairs or announce policies that are difficult – or impossible – to implement. It's a breeding ground for fake news and misinformation.

Fact-checking can be a powerful tool to hold candidates to account for what they say. It helps citizens to make better informed decisions and helps journalists to critically investigate policy proposals. Ultimately, it raises the political cost of using false information or misrepresenting the facts.

Ahead of Chile's 2017 election, an alliance of three civil society organisations set out to fact-check the public political discourse.

They partnered with two television channels: CNN Chile and Chilevisión, who hosted presidential candidates on a weekly show: *Aquí Está Chile*.

The fact-checkers verified candidates' statements during the weekly show. Findings were presented the following day on a 30-minute programme broadcast on CNN Chile and ChileVisión News.

**FACT-CHECKING CAN BE A POWERFUL TOOL TO HOLD CANDIDATES
TO ACCOUNT FOR WHAT THEY SAY.**

BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATESTORY #1
Chile's election fact-checkers

How they did it

1. PREPARE FOR FACT-CHECKING

The initiative's executive and journalistic teams underwent training with the Argentine public discourse verification centre *Chequeado.org*.

They held four virtual training sessions with the executive team and five with the journalistic team.

After completing the training, the team ran two pilot days, verifying statements in real time.

2. FACT-CHECK STATEMENTS

Fact-checking took place during the presidential candidates' weekly appearance on the television programme *Aquí Está Chile*.

The day after transmission, the project team selected five to eight sentences per candidate to be checked. Sentences were selected according to two criteria: the public interest in the subject and the contribution that verification would make to the debate.

Selected statements were rated into eight categories: true; true but ...; debateable; unverifiable; exaggerated; deceitful; false; disparate.

SEE PRACTICAL TOOL:

- **Fact-checking methodology, p.54**

3. SHARE RESULTS

Findings were presented the following day in a 30-minute programme on CNN Chile, and part of it was also broadcast on the Chilevisión news programme.

Findings were also published on chilecheck.cl.

JUNE – AUGUST 2017

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2017

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2017
#Election: 19 November 2017*

**BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE**STORY #1
Chile's election fact-checkers

Two challenges

1. **The tension between fast and in-depth analysis**

Given the nature of the project (an alliance between research centres, involving the television media and with fast deadlines) balancing the format's need for swift results with the initiative's preference for richer analysis was a permanent tension.

2. **Reputational risk**

Again, given the media-format and fast-paced nature of the project, it was possible that a mistake would be made in rating a candidate's positioning. This presented a reputational risk to the candidate, the integrity of the fact-checking initiative, and the think tank.

Four lessons

1. **A well-defined fact-checking methodology is a must**

This requires a team of trained experts who are well-practised in the process. Approaching an experienced organisation to train the team was important.

2. **Pilots are essential**

The two pilot days were essential to refine the final product. For example, they helped to find the most appropriate phrases; to diagnose potential difficulties accessing public data sources; and to find alternative data sources.

3. **Build a database of experts**

During the pilots it became apparent that a database of topic experts to consult in the affirmation of candidate statements would be a valuable, and necessary, resource. Sometimes it wasn't possible, or it would take too long, to find reliable information online.

4. **Set a time threshold for verification**

Pilots also exposed the need to set a time threshold for verifying statements. If information to verify the statement could not be found within a certain timeframe, it would be discarded.

BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATESTORY #1
Chile's election fact-checkers

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:**ChileCheck****LEAD ORGANISATION:****Espacio Público, Centro de Estudios de la Sociedad and Turner Chile.**

CNN Chile and Chilevisión.

PARTNERS

Funded by the two partner television channels, as well as resources from the lead organisations.

FUNDING

Board of directors comprising one representative from each lead organisation. The executive team comprised the Espacio Público executive director; Turner Chile general editor and web editor; and the Centro de Estudios de la Sociedad's associate editor.

GOVERNANCE

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MORE INFORMATION

HUNGARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY RATES POLITICAL MANIFESTOS



QUICK READ

- Volunteer economists, financial analysts and lawyers rated election manifestos.
- Scores published online and picked up by the media.
- Funding deficiencies and late publishing of manifestos limited outreach.

In the lead up to elections, politicians make all sorts of promises. They are often deliberately murky and sometimes downright unfeasible.

When an independent group of experts scored Hungary's 2010 election manifestos, the ruling Socialist Party (MSZP) received an overall score of 2.0 on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best).

The other two major parties – the far-right Christian Democrats Party (Jobbik) and the centre-right Democratic Forum Party (MDF) – did marginally better, scoring 2.5 and 3.0 respectively.

On a mission to raise the quality of Hungary's policy debate and promote political accountability, a group of independent economists, financial analysts and lawyers shed expert light on those murky promises.

Party manifestos were rated on how they addressed seven important policy issues. Analysis focused on how targeted and robust proposals were, and whether parties could be made accountable for them.

The results were published on a public website and given to the media. Print, radio and television picked up on the initiative helping to spread the word across the country.

Jobbik and MDF went on to win the election, forming a coalition. MSZP came in at third place after growing dissatisfaction with the party that had been in power since 2002.

**BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE****STORY #2**

Hungarian civil society rates political manifestos

How they did it

1. MAP POLITICAL PARTIES' MANIFESTOS

Political parties that received 5% or more of the vote during the European Parliamentary elections in 2009 were selected for analysis.

2. IDENTIFY THE MOST CRITICAL POLICY ISSUES

The top seven public issues were chosen using a survey of 40 non-partisan opinion leaders.

The seven issues were: public education, favourable business environment, low-skilled employment, corruption, integration of Roma population, healthcare and budgetary policy.

3. ASSESS POLITICAL PARTIES' PROGRAMMES

Analysis of the programmes used three evaluation criteria: (1) targeted-ness (2) robustness (3) accountability.

Each programme was assessed by three experts independently, assigning scores on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the top). The average of all scores gave the final party score. Scores were revised as political figures made subsequent public statements.

4. OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

The results were published in a chart with accompanying text on a public website.

The media was informed, and short interviews were given on radio and television media outlets.

**BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE****STORY #2**

Hungarian civil society rates political manifestos

Three challenges

1. **Political parties submitted their manifestos late**

The late publication of party manifestos left little time for public outreach after the assessment was completed.

2. **Limited funding and public support**

The 2010 assessment was completely volunteer led. In 2014, the team turned to crowdsourcing in an attempt to raise additional funds. Sadly, it raised very little money. While the results were picked up by the media, with limited funding, communications and outreach efforts were minimal.

3. **A lack of political engagement**

There was a very low rate of political response to evaluations and tailor-made suggestions.

Two lessons

1. **Continuity and comparability across elections**

The initiative was relaunched in 2014 and will be conducted again in 2018, as a seasonal exercise of accountability towards political parties' programmes. While the policy priorities and opinion leaders who help screen the political agenda have changed a little, the assessment methodology remains the same. Maintaining it in the same format means the results remain comparable across the years.

2. **Invest more in communications**

Although the media attention was considerable, communications efforts were limited given that the team was working on a voluntary basis. To address this, a communication expert responsible for media relations will be involved in the 2018 initiative.

BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE

STORY #2

Hungarian civil society rates political manifestos

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:**Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis (BIPA), Hungary****LEAD ORGANISATION:****Twelve individuals: economists, financial analysts and lawyers**

None.

PARTNERS

Work was done on a voluntary basis.

FUNDING

Decisions taken on a consensus basis within the group of 12 individuals.

GOVERNANCE

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MORE INFORMATION

INFORMING PERU'S PUBLIC POLICY



QUICK READ

- Think tank policy proposals taken up by the new administration.
- Topics for proposals identified with political parties to get early buy in.
- Project's fourth election – allows strong political relationships and trust to be leveraged.

Ahead of the 2016 Peruvian elections, an alliance of civil society organisations, universities and think tanks led by CIES wrote 17 policy proposals, each including policy options, costs, benefits, obstacles and a road map for 100 days, one- and five-year milestones.

Several of the proposals were either totally or partially accepted by the new administration – especially those related to transport, security and corruption.

How did they do it?

The first thing to note is that this election was the fourth iteration of the initiative *Focusing the electoral debate (Centrando el debate electoral)*. Over the years, it had built relationships and trust with the political parties.

Unlike previous elections in which CIES chose the policy topics, this time they were identified in partnership with the political parties, leveraging these important relationships.

Through a series of meetings, they were able to find out the parties' priorities and research needs. Thus, by the time the proposals were ready, political teams had already bought in to the overall concept.

The choice of authors for the policy proposals also likely helped with their uptake. Recruited through an open call for authors, some had previous experience in public office. Others went on to join the new administration taking their proposals with them – such as Elsa Galarza, co-author of the climate change document who subsequently became the Minister of Environment.

BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATESTORY #3
Informing Peru's public policy

How they did it

1. ESTABLISH TOPICS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Meetings held with political parties to identify their priorities and research needs.

Subsequent meetings held with donors to seek funding.

2. PREPARE POLICY DOCUMENTS

Seventeen documents to be produced under five priority policy areas. Each included: policy options, costs, benefits, obstacles and implementation road map for 100 days, one- and five-years.

Open call launched to find six authors; other documents authored by ally institutions. Each document assigned an academic author, a thematic peer reviewer and a gender specialist. All documents edited and designed.

3. PRESENT POLICY DOCUMENTS

Final documents presented to the candidates and technical teams at a series of closed-door workshops.

Meetings were also an opportunity to start a dialogue with the political teams about participation in a candidate debate.

4. DISSEMINATE FINDINGS

A series of infographics, videos and summaries produced.

Press briefing produced: 'What questions should the candidates answer?' to help journalists critically examine candidate proposals. Series of open- and closed-door workshops held with national and local journalists. Authors and initiative leaders gave over 50 media interviews.

All materials uploaded to the project website and disseminated on social media using #elCandidateResponde.

Focusing the Electoral Debate also had a public debate component. First and second round presidential candidate debates were organised. In the second round, two debates were held outside of the capital city for the first time.

APRIL – SEPTEMBER
2015

OCTOBER 2015 – JANUARY 2016

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER
2015JANUARY 2016 – APRIL 2016
10 April 2016 election

**BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE**

STORY #3
Informing Peru's public policy

Nine lessons

1. **Seek multiple funding sources**

It was more difficult to raise funds for the 2016 elections than it had been for the 2011 elections. Peru was more stable and donors, in general, were giving less money to the country. By building a 'basket' of donors you can raise more funds.

2. **Identify policy topics with political parties**

In previous years, CIES decided the policy document topics themselves. But in 2016, these were agreed with the political parties and partners. This led to greater interest in the documents from the candidates and their teams. There were some topics that were not on the political parties' agenda, but that the initiative considered important; in this case, for example, gender. In the end, the initiative was able to include gender by addressing it as an issue across the documents.

3. **Hire a strong project coordinator**

In a multi-component, multi-actor initiative like this, the project coordinator role is vital. The person needs to be experienced and comfortable interacting with different types of actors, and in particular with politicians. They also need to be a good diplomat who can help resolve differences between the initiative partners. Working with so many actors – and especially risk-averse ones – is always a challenge. Written agreements on how to work together, who is responsible for what, and the signing of meeting minutes (among other things) are helpful.

4. **Invest in communications**

The greatest investment must be in dissemination. It's important to have a press unit that has experience working with the government. It is also important to advise and prepare the document authors for any media engagement they may have to do. It's also extremely useful to translate documents into dynamic formats, such as videos or infographics to make them accessible and engaging to different audiences. Partnerships with rural radio stations also helped to disseminate information in the local Quechua language.

5. **Use digital tools for citizen participation**

The use of social media and other digital tools allowed the initiative to incorporate citizen perspectives and concerns into the debate. For example, questions from citizens were included in the candidate debate.

**BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE**

STORY #3
Informing Peru's public policy

6. Be open to adapting the debate format

In 2016, 'surprise' elements were introduced into the debate, such as citizen questions. The initiative was also more flexible with the timings and a more active role for the moderator was encouraged. With more candidates participating, new formats were explored, such as head-to-head debates between pairs of candidates.

7. Generate political costs

It is important to articulate the political costs to candidates if they do not take part in the debate, i.e. that it will affect their electoral performance. The more candidates that participate, the greater the legitimacy of the debate and the greater the feeling of inexorability.

8. Build trust by investing in long-term relationships

Direct dialogue with the political parties helps build confidence in the campaign leaders and candidates. In turn, the collaborative working means that when the elections are over and the new administration is in place, an 'open-door' relationship has been built, both with the government and the opposition, to work together in the post-election period.

9. Never stop learning and building your brand

Focusing the Electoral Debate started in 2005, and has contributed to five elections, with 72 policy documents and 17 election debates. Each reinvention of the project builds on the lessons learned from the previous ones, while adapting to the new political context. It is a continuous process of improvement and innovation. With each iteration of the project, CIES has strengthened its monitoring and evaluation efforts, both for institutional learning and for the raising of future funds.

**THE TOPICS FOR POLICY DOCUMENTS WERE AGREED WITH
POLITICAL PARTIES, SO THEY WERE ALREADY INTERESTED IN
AND 'BOUGHT INTO' THE FINAL PROPOSALS.**

BRINGING EVIDENCE INTO THE
POLITICAL DEBATE

STORY #3

Informing Peru's public policy

Key facts about the initiative

INITIATIVE NAME:

Centrando el debate electoral

LEAD ORGANISATION:

Consortio de Investigación Económica y Social (CIES), Perú

Centro de Investigación de la Universidad del Pacífico (CIUP), la Escuela de Gobierno, Políticas Públicas de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (EGPP-PUCP) and the National Elections Jury, among others.

PARTNERS

Total funding for the project was USD 450,000 and came from 20 sources. Donors included the Inter-American Development Bank; the Latin America Development Bank; the World Bank; the World Wildlife Fund (WWF); the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; and the German Agency for International Development (GIZ).

FUNDING

The project was led by CIES executive office and the communications/press team. Strategic decisions were taken in consultation between the three partner organisations.

The projects alliances and partnerships can be categorised into (1) Co-organisers – partnerships sought to avoid duplication of initiatives with similar objectives and to bring together different academic expertise. (2) Collaborators – institutions that supported the project in different ways. Such as the World Bank, the International Center of Tax Administrations (CIAT) and the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP) who financed the production of the policy documents. (3) Sponsors – that provided support to the project as a whole. (4) Allies – with various institutions who shared all, or some, of the project's objectives. Such as, the National Elections Jury alliance made it possible to organise the debates. IDEA International's support focused on strategies for working with political parties. A partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aimed at ensuring that the parties understand the importance of aligning their proposals with the Sustainable Development Goals.

GOVERNANCE

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MORE INFORMATION

4

PRACTICAL TOOLS

Tools for planning a presidential candidate debate

What to think about when planning a debate

An example debate structure

Tools for scrutinising what candidates say

Fact-checking methodology

Assessing political programmes methodology

Tools for communicating with the public

How to use infographics to inform the public

PRACTICAL TOOLS

PRACTICAL TOOL #1

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT WHEN PLANNING A DEBATE

This tool was prepared by the think tank CIPPEC, based on its experience in Argentina organising the 2015 presidential candidate debate (see page 11).

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Event name | The initiative name could be your event name. For example: <i>Argentina Debate 2015</i> . |
| Date, time and location | It is optimal for the debate to take place close to the election date. It could take place in a public building that has legitimacy or is considered neutral by the candidates, such as an academic institution. |
| Organiser(s) | The institution, or institutions, that is organising the debate. The organiser could also be an initiative, as was the case with <i>Argentina Debate</i> . |
| Participants | Establish who is invited to participate in the debate (i.e. the candidates). |
| Host | Announce the institution that will host the event and, if relevant, its authority. |
| Debate topics | Present the topics that will guide the debate and explain the selection process. This is a good opportunity to bring in earlier components of the project that led to the debate (for example, research into policy areas, rounds of dialogue with candidates). This document should present a common framework for each segment, including potential sub-topics. |
| Moderation | Present the debate moderators and their responsibilities before, during and after the debate. Moderators tend to be well-known journalists. Consider the diversity and gender of moderators. |
| Event format | Establish the quantity, duration and content of the debate segments. Provide as much detail as you can about the structure and format, presenting a 'minute-by-minute' account of the event. |
| Event structure | Establish the main sections of the event – for instance, the event opening, the institutional introduction, the candidates' entry, the presentation of the rules, the thematic sections, the candidates' closing remarks, the closing of the event. |

PRACTICAL TOOLS

PRACTICAL TOOL #1

What to think about when planning a debate

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Pre-debate draw | Establish the day, hour and location of the pre-debate draw to determine the order in which candidates will appear, the order in which they will speak, and where they will stand. The draw should be attended by representatives from a notary association, or similar institution. |
| TV production | Establish the institution that will produce the event. |
| Duration | Establish how long the event will last, including commercial breaks. |
| Transmission | Establish the form of transmission of the event, who can show it (for example, terrestrial television, cable, radios, digital channels) and the terms and conditions for re-showing the event. |
| Publicity | Establish how many advertising segments to produce, and when to release them. |
| Technical production | The production of the event must include fair and equal treatment of the candidates. This includes the stage setting, music, signage, makeup and hair, audio-visual treatment and support given to the candidates. |
| Press accreditation | Establish who will cover the event (print, television, radio and digital media), what space to assign them, the accreditation process and protocol during the event, and the location of photographers. This also refers to the candidates' press teams. |
| Public invitations | Establish the number and profile of invitees, the number of invitations given to the candidates and their level of access. |

PRACTICAL TOOLS

PRACTICAL TOOL #2

A SAMPLE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE STRUCTURE

This example debate structure was prepared by the Peruvian think tank CIES for the 2016 presidential candidate debates, including the first ever debates to be held outside of the capital city, Lima.

FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE, SECOND ROUND PIURA, 22 MAY 2016

| Segment | Topic | Time |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Vision for the country | 3 minutes Candidate A 3 minutes Candidate B |
| 2 | Decentralisation | 3 minutes Candidate B 4 minutes response Candidate A 3 minutes Candidate A 4 minutes response Candidate B |
| 3 | Regional competitiveness | 3 minutes Candidate A 4 minutes response Candidate B 3 minutes Candidate B 4 minutes response Candidate A |
| 4 | Natural resources and social conflicts | 3 minutes Candidate B 4 minutes response Candidate A 3 minutes Candidate A 4 minutes response Candidate B |
| 5 | Infrastructure | 3 minutes Candidate A 4 minutes response Candidate B 3 minutes Candidate B 4 minutes response Candidate A |
| 6 | Closing remarks | 3 minutes Candidate B 3 minutes Candidate A |
| Total time per candidate | | 33 minutes |
| Total debate time (including breaks) | | 1 hour 30 mins |

FACT-CHECKING METHODOLOGY

This tool was prepared by Espacio Público, Chile. It was the methodology used by the *ChileCheck* initiative, during the 2017 election campaign (see page 37).

1. What statements are checkable?

Statements that refer to facts or objective data.

2. How to select which statements to check?

Following the broadcast, select between five and eight sentences to be checked. Apply the following two criteria: (1) the public interest of the topic being addressed (2) the contribution that fact-checking would make to the debate. For the first criteria, *ChileCheck* prepared a list of high-priority topics to be cross-referenced. Selection should also consider the capacity of the journalistic team – some statements cannot be verified because of a lack of information.

3. When to contact the candidates?

Once the statements for verification have been selected, the journalistic team telephones the candidate – or a member of their team – to request the information source used as the basis for the statement. If no response is received, continue with the verification process.

4. How to check the statements?

Consult official public data sources – from reports to statistical databases. The statement is compared to these sources. Alternative sources are also consulted, to ensure that the official source is the ‘best available data.’

5. How to select sources to consult?

Develop a database of experts for each policy area to provide support in finding and cross-checking data. Experts who collaborate in the process should be cited in the results.

6. How to grade the statements?

Journalists gather enough evidence to present to the board the assignment of one of the following categories:

TRUE. The statement has been proved to be true by reliable data sources and experts.

TRUE BUT.. The statement is consistent with available data, but an important element of context was omitted, or there was a projection for which there is no data.

DEBATABLE. It’s not clear; it depends on variables with which it is analysed. It partially agrees with some data, but there is a lack of substance to fully verify.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

PRACTICAL TOOL #3

Fact-checking methodology

UNVERIFIABLE. The statement is not verifiable. The sources and documentation don't exist or the sources of information that support and contest the statement have equal weight.

EXAGGERATED. The statement is not strictly true, but the concept or tendency to which it refers is.

DECEITFUL. The claim is based on accurate data, but intentionally or not, the data has been manipulated to support a particular message.

FALSE. The statement contradicts reliable sources and data. It has been proven to be false.

DISPARATE. The assertion has no logical basis, or it is a joke.

If unanimity of the board in classification is not reached, the board will request that the journalistic team clarify or argue the case. A vote could reject the rating.

7. HOW TO DISSEMINATE THE RESULTS?

Publish the data online, and if possible disseminate via the media. For Chile Check, the results were broadcast on a 30-minute television programme the day after the debate.

METHODOLOGY TO ASSESS POLITICAL PARTY PROPOSALS

This tool was prepared by the think tank BIPA in Hungary. It presents the methodology used by BIPA to assess and rate the political party manifestos in the lead up to the 2010 elections.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Targeted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear message about where the country should be heading? • How clear and well-defined are the goals set out in the programme? • How clear are the priorities in the programme? • How extensively does the programme cover country priorities? |
| Soundness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any controversies between key programme points? • Do the goals / measures supplement or eliminate each other? • Budget balance: how risky is the revenue and spending set out? • Timing of the planned actions: does the party differentiate between short-, medium- and long-term achievability of measures? |
| Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By end of the election term, will we be able to determine whether planned measures were seen through? • Will we be able to gauge during the government cycle how far implementation of given measures progressed? • Has the party identified socio-economic impacts that will be induced by the planned measures? If so, does it specify short-, medium- and long-term consequences? |

In the case of BIPA, assessments were carried out by three experts for each party programme. They assigned scores on a 5-1 scale (5=best, 1=fail) per evaluation question. The average scores gave the party's overall rating. The original score could be revised based on subsequent public statements until election day.

Use charts to illustrate results. Make public scores for each criterion, with a brief (500 words) summary of the result.

HOW TO USE INFOGRAPHICS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC

ECUADOR

Ecuador Decide used infographics to present and compare candidates' positions on important campaign issues. The infographics aimed to make their positions accessible and engaging. They also sought to standardise the information, so that it was easier to compare positions. The *Ecuador Decide* infographics were published on their website and disseminated via social media.

This type of infographic can be broken down into three pieces of information:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Main topics | Each infographic addresses one relevant campaign topic. For Ecuador Decide, these were: education, employment and productivity, the environment, and transparency and public participation. |
| Sub topics | For each topic, identify a number of sub-topics on which the candidates have taken a position. For example, for the environment subtopics could include climate change and oil exploitation. |
| Candidates' positions | Candidates are grouped according to their position (or lack of position). Plans presented to the electoral authority can be used to determine the candidates' positions. Ecuador Decide shared the positions with the candidates' campaign teams for approval. |

Ecuador Decide infographics can be viewed here: www.ecuadordecide2017.org

PERU

The 2016 initiative *Peru: Dialogo y política* used infographics to communicate its policy proposals in an accessible and attractive format for journalists. It produced 14 in total, each following the same structure and aesthetic, with a different colour chosen to distinguish the policy theme.

| | |
|--|--|
| Information about public policy | Presents general data on the policy topic, including the performance of the state and the citizen perspective. For example, for public expenditure, the level of citizen satisfaction with public services was included. |
| What the next government would do | Presents the main options / proposals that the next government should consider to solve the policy challenges. |

PRACTICAL TOOLS

PRACTICAL TOOL #5

How to use infographics to communicate with the public

| | |
|---|---|
| The questions candidates should answer | Presents the questions that candidates should answer. The aim is to guide journalists in their dialogue with presidential candidates. |
| About the policy dialogues | Describes the public policy dialogue component of the project. |
| Who helped produce these proposals? | Presents all actors involved in the policy proposals, to demonstrate the collective spirit of the initiative. |
| Subject supporters | Recognises the support of all the initiative donors (regardless of the policy topic in question). |

All 14 infographics can be viewed here: www.dialogosperu.pe/wp/

A SAMPLE POLICY PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

This tool was prepared by CIPPEC in Argentina and is based on policy proposals produced ahead of the 2011 elections.

CIPPEC produced 15 policy proposals (or ‘memos’) on ‘issues of national importance.’ The documents were authored by CIPPEC and its partner organisations with specialised expertise in different policy areas.

The initiative’s Executive Committee developed the structure and tone for the documents, giving them coherence and consistency. Weekly meetings were held to discuss progress. CIPPEC’s communications department led the editing process, with special attention to consistency and coherence across the memos.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Each document was up to 16–pages long.

| MAIN TOPICS | CONTENT |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Message to the future president | Introduction includes a succinct top–line message to the future president from the document author. |
| Diagnosis | An overview of the general state of the sector / policy area, highlighting critical issues to be addressed by the memo. |
| Current policies | Describe the progress made in recent years and analysis of the benefits to society that this has brought. |
| The big challenges | Present two of three the critical issues facing the sector, the current public / policy position and the author’s position. |
| Recommendations | Present policy options to raise the quality of election debate and to inform the future president’s policy agenda. |
| Feasibility | Analysis of the political and budget feasibility of each recommendation. |

PRACTICAL TOOLS

PRACTICAL TOOL #6

A sample policy proposal structure

OUTPUTS

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Printed version | Shared with front-line actors, including presidential candidate teams, governors and other high-ranking officials. |
| Personalised package | Delivered exclusively to the presidential candidates in closed meetings. |
| Digital version | Allowed for wider dissemination via the website and email, at a low-cost. |
| Videos | Each author presented a summary of the policy proposals in a short and dynamic video. |
| Annual magazine | The memos were compiled in the annual CIPPEC magazine 'Public Presidential Agenda.' |
| Book | '100 policies to boost development.' In 2012, CIPPEC published a book with 100 policy proposals, enriched by the dialogues held around the memos to inform the 2012-2015 policy agenda development. |

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

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|--|---|
| The media | Media partnerships helped to raise the project's visibility. Interviews with the authors and opinion pieces were published in various media outlets, and the memos were presented on radio and television programmes. |
| Meetings with presidential candidates and their teams | Meetings with the candidates and their teams aimed to strengthen the quality of the proposals and to encourage their uptake. |
| Bilateral meetings | Other bilateral meetings took place with specialised NGOs and high-ranking public officials. |
| 'Presidential memo' event series | A series of events were held at CIPPEC, for authors to present and discuss their memos with relevant stakeholders, including politicians, business leaders, NGOs, diplomats and academics. |
| Workshops | Personalised workshops were held with the media, academics, politicians and political advisors. Workshops sought to generate awareness and to build a coalition to promote debate among the candidates. |