



Volunteers deployed for Election Preparedness in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro training for First Aid

Appeal: MDRZA017	Country: South Africa	Hazard: Other	Type of DREF: Imminent
Crisis Category: Yellow	Event Onset: Slow	DREF Allocation: CHF 167,795	
Glide Number: -	People Affected: 3,000,000 people	People Targeted: 30,000 people	
Operation Start Date: 2024-05-10	Operation Timeframe: 2 months	Operation End Date: 31-07-2024	DREF Published: 20-05-2024

Targeted Areas: **Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Kwazulu-natal, Mpumalanga, North-west, Western Cape**



Description of the Event

Approximate date of impact

The South African National Government announced that the 7th National General Election will take place on the 29 May 2024. The Voter registration was closed on 23 February 2024 followed by roll objections on the 4 March 2024 and candidate nominations were adjusted then submitted by political parties and independent candidates on 08 March 2024. Voting stations were announced on 12 April 2024 leading to special voting on 27-28 May 2024.



Map of South Africa

Provide any updates in the situation since the field report and explain what is expected to happen.

The South Africa's 7th General elections will be held on May 29. General elections cover national and provincial elections that aim to elect a new National Assembly as well as the provincial legislature in each of the nine provinces. After these elections, the new National Assembly will choose the country's next president from among its members. These elections are anticipated to be the most fiercely contested since the establishment of democracy in 1994.

Recent surveys indicate a potential loss of outright national majority which will result in a hung government for the ruling party making way for a possible coalition, as well as a challenge to its control in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Furthermore, since the launch of the election calendar, there have also been reported several protest and demonstrations. The start of these protest and allegations of some parties increases the indicators for a potential escalation. This analysis is also based on the learnings from the civil unrest recorded in July 2021. This was one of the largest civil unrests since the end of Apartheid, and it was the first election in which the ruling ANC dropped below 50% support nationally. Hence, the emergence of several new political parties and the inclusion of independent candidates present the risk of intensified the campaign landscape, alongside legitimate apprehensions regarding the possibility of violence erupting during or after the elections.

From January, at least nine protests were recorded. Even though South Africa has a relatively frequent history of protest, the events are to be considered in the analysis.

On the 24th of April 2024, it was published that, the Constitutional court will hear the appeal filed by the Electoral Commission of SA (IEC) against the Electoral Court ruling that former president of the country qualified to be a parliamentary candidate under the recently established uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party to contest in the May elections since his imprisonment in June 2021. The order of the Electoral



Court came as a surprise, as his record seemed to place him squarely within the ambit of section 47(1)(e) of the Constitution. The section does not allow anyone who has been sentenced to 12 or more months in prison without the option of a fine from becoming a member of the National Assembly for five years. The MK Party argued that the IEC exceeded its powers because only parliament could implement section 47(1)(e). <https://mg.co.za/news/2024-04-24-concourt-to-hear-iec-appeal-to-mk-party-ruling/> . This is causing much political tensions in the country

On the 26th of April 2024, former president which is the leader of MK Party has been given until Tuesday 30 April to file papers in IEC application. Lawyers for MK Party have successfully sought an extension after arguing that they were unable to meet the original submission deadline as former president, party representatives were campaigning 'across SA <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2024-04-26-zuma-mk-party-given-until-tuesday-to-file-papers-in-iec-application/>.



Red Cross volunteers in the First Aid, Safer Access and CEA training in preparation for the elections in May 2024

Why your National Society is acting now and what criteria is used to launch this operation.

The current planned elections agenda could be summarized as below. With consideration of the past demonstrations and events of 2021, the below dates are the main orientations for NS actions.

- Since January 2024: protest reported, at least 9 cases. Events have generated localized disruptions and incidents. Since, then there has been social unrests and violence events as indicated above. The events are perceived to continue until 15th of June 2024 especially if the election results are disputed by other parties and this might result to election related unrest. Based on expert judgements and publications.
- 23 February 2024: The Voter registration was closed, followed by roll objections on the 4 March 2024 and candidate nominations were adjusted on the 08 March 2024 and expected to be carried through and finalized in March and April 2024. Voting stations were announced on 12 April 2024 leading to special voting on 27-28 May 2024 (page 2).
- Start of the campaign: 1st of March 2024. The pre-election campaign started when the President officially announced the date of Election.
- Election date: 29th May 2024.
- The date of results – 5th of June 2024 (48 after the elections).
- The date of proclamation - The proposed date is 6th of June 2024. Must be confirmed later based on effective process. However as per Electro act of 73 of 1998, the electro election must determine and declare the final result of election within 7 days after the election ended.
- Two weeks from the proclamations: There is a constitutional obligation for the National Assembly to elect a president, and provincial legislators to elect premiers.

Scenario analysis based on various experts and information collected indicate that there could be unrests or violence during the voting but there is an increased likelihood of public protests during the two-week interval between the declaration of results and the constitutional obligation for the National Assembly to elect a president, and provincial legislators to elect premiers. In March 2024, the presidency underscored that law enforcement agencies were gearing up for all possibilities to guarantee free and fair elections. Additionally, it is anticipated that the country might experience a huge number of service delivery protest from the dissatisfied communities during campaigning and on election day, often related to failures in service delivery.

This analysis follows historical and recent events from which NS has learnt the necessity to anticipate on such circumstances based on the above indicators. Indeed, the country witnessed one of the most significant outbreaks of violence. This violence was attributed to be

triggered by the imprisonment of the former president in July 2021 and happened during the first election in which the ruling ANC dropped below 50% support nationally. This resulted in social unrest (rioting and looting) which claimed over 300 lives and left thousands unemployed, causing an economic loss of R50 billion. Considering the anticipated tight results of these elections, there is also apprehension regarding the period following the elections. It is possible that certain parties or their followers might resort to street demonstrations if the results do not align with their expectations. Hence, with the recent surveys indicating a potential loss of outright national majority plus the emergence of several new political parties and the inclusion of independent candidates, the situation could likely bring factors for social unrest in some areas. These concerns are exacerbated by the emergence of the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party, whose members have made open threats of mass violence if electoral expectations are not met, and allegations of electoral manipulation further compounding the risks. The riots and protest already witnessed since January are also considered in this planning.

Triggers: and analysis considered:

1) The ongoing case of the MK Party vs the African National Congress (<https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2024-04-22-anc-loses-mk-trademark-court-case/>) pertaining to the trademarking of the name has the potential to trigger unrest and uncertainty arising from the legal battle. The African National Congress has lost its legal bid in the KZN High Court and looks to approach other courts for clarity.

2) Whilst the IEC and other applicants have approached the Constitutional Court to seek clarity on the outcome from the Electoral Court, this will further intensify already growing political tensions coming from the MK Party supporters and its leadership ([https://www.elections.org.za/pw/News-And-Media/News-List/News/News-Article/Electoral-Commission-approaches-the-Constitutional-Court-for-Clarity-on-Section-47\(1\)\(e\)-of-the-Constitution?a=AlSDGvpz75ps1usOfX7oipctYQxHaGTy4Kf8EGcX+ok=](https://www.elections.org.za/pw/News-And-Media/News-List/News/News-Article/Electoral-Commission-approaches-the-Constitutional-Court-for-Clarity-on-Section-47(1)(e)-of-the-Constitution?a=AlSDGvpz75ps1usOfX7oipctYQxHaGTy4Kf8EGcX+ok=)).

3) This pertains to the eligibility of the former State President who is Leader of the newly formed MK to run for the election as a candidate is one of public interest and it is another pre-election trigger due to various reports of unrest should the outcome of the case not be in favour of the former President and his political party (<https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/mks-visvin-reddy-back-court-june/>).

4) The recent amendments to South Africa's Electoral Act, championed by President Cyril Ramaphosa and coming into effect following a Constitutional Court ruling, now allow independent candidates to participate in national and provincial elections. This shift, meant to broaden political inclusivity, faces scrutiny over its potential to reshape the electoral landscape and challenge the existing party-centric system. Concerns linger about the high signature thresholds required for independents, suggesting possible systemic inequities that could undermine the intent to democratize political representation. As the Electoral Commission updates its systems to accommodate these changes, the effectiveness of these reforms will be critically tested in the forthcoming elections, setting a significant precedent for South Africa's democratic processes <https://www.elections.org.za/content/About-Us/News/Electoral-Commission-welcomes-the-signing-of-the-Electoral-Amendment-Bill-into-law-by-President-Cyril-Ramaphosa/> (<https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/will-independent-candidates-benefit-or-challenge-sas-constitutional-democracy-in-2024-elections/>)

5) Further to the above, these elections have been characterized by the South African government's security clusters as the most contested in South Africa's history. 70 political parties are contesting the elections, 11 independent candidates, and the national contestants are 52. In total, there are over 14,903 candidates vying for 887 seats in the National and Provincial Legislatures. <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/justice-crime-prevention-and-security-cluster-ministers-outline-state>.

Scope and Scale

The 2024 general elections in South Africa are set against a backdrop of significant socio-political tension, with heightened risks of electoral violence that could impact lives, livelihoods, well-being, and infrastructure across various regions.

1) High-risk areas such as Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the Eastern Cape, and parts of the Western Cape are particularly vulnerable. Gauteng, with its dense urban centres like Johannesburg and Pretoria with a history of fatal political clashes, are of special concern.

2) Medium-risk provinces such as Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and North West have experienced sporadic disturbances, which, while generally less severe, still require vigilant monitoring. Conversely, the Free State and Northern Cape are considered low-risk areas due to their historically peaceful elections. The electoral landscape is informed by historical data which shows that while the 1994 and 2004 elections were largely peaceful, the 2021 local government elections identified 300 hotspots of potential violence, underscoring the ongoing challenges

The direct impacts of electoral unrest are most acutely felt by vulnerable groups including the elderly, children, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and residents of informal settlements. These groups are at a heightened risk of suffering due to their socio-economic conditions, reliance on community and government support, and proximity to politically sensitive areas. Historical precedents indicate that election periods marred by social unrest and violence have not only led to loss of life and injuries but also caused significant disruptions to economic activities and access to essential services, thereby exacerbating the vulnerabilities of already marginalized groups.

The above scope analysis is based on the major events in the past and recent witnessed protests. Other historical notable instances include the July Unrest between the 9th and 17th of July 2021, which escalated due to urban violence following political discontent during the incarceration of former President Jacob Zuma for contempt of court, after he refused to testify at the State Capture Commission. This unrest resulted in significant violence, including looting and riots in KwaZulu-Natal and parts of Gauteng, causing extensive damage and



numerous deaths.

Furthermore, the 2008 xenophobic attacks that followed tensions in impoverished areas over job competition and social services are another critical historical data point. These attacks led to 62 deaths and the displacement of thousands, which significantly influenced the National Society’s readiness and response mechanisms in subsequent elections and crises.

The 2016 local government elections also offer valuable lessons. These elections were marked by significant shifts in voter behaviour and allegiance, with major cities like Johannesburg and Pretoria seeing a change in political leadership. The unexpected outcomes led to spontaneous protests and a heightened state of readiness by response organizations.

In response to these potential threats, targeted interventions are being prepared to mitigate risks, particularly in high-risk areas. SARCS leveraging lessons from past elections, emphasizes the importance of readiness and response plans that are inclusive and adaptive to the needs of those most at risk during electoral periods. Such strategic planning is crucial to safeguard vulnerable communities and maintain the overall stability of society during the election period.

Overall, the scope and scale of the 2024 elections necessitate a comprehensive approach to security and community support, aiming to prevent the recurrence of the scale of violence seen in the past politically related scenarios while ensuring a free and fair electoral process for all South Africans during the election period.

[Supporting Documentation](#)

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. Mail&Guardian	https://mg.co.za/news/2024-04-24-concourt-to-hear-iecs-appeal-to-mk-party-ruling/
2. Justice and Crime Prevention Cluster, SA Government	https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/justice-crime-prevention-and-security-cluster-ministers-outline-state
3. Experts analysis - Oxford	https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/south-africa-what-the-july-unrest-tells-us-about-the-2024-elections/
4. Africa News	https://www.africanews.com/tag/south-africa-protests/
5. Government Parliament official website	https://www.parliament.gov.za/national-assembly
6. SABC News	https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/timeline-the-july-unrest-that-left-the-country-crippled/
7. Bussiness Live	https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2024-04-26-zuma-mk-party-given-until-tuesday-to-file-papers-in-iec-application/

Previous Operations

Has a similar event affected the same area(s) in the last 3 years?	No
Did it affect the same population group?	-
Did the National Society respond?	-
Did the National Society request funding form DREF for that event(s)	-
If yes, please specify which operation	-



If you have answered yes to all questions above, justify why the use of DREF for a recurrent event, or how this event should not be considered recurrent:

-

Lessons learned:

SARCS need to intensify community awareness on its 7 fundamental principles to ensure that it will not be mistaken for any political party or their affiliates. A clear mandate of SARCS role continue to be disseminated in all NS initiatives.

Current National Society Actions

National Society anticipatory actions started

2024-05-24

National Society Readiness	SARCS has prepared for national elections by implementing a multi-faceted readiness strategy guided by both international guidelines and lessons from past experiences. SARCS has a set-up and personnel ready for each potential scenario. • 45 branches and 5,000 trained volunteers in the country which are well-positioned in metros/urban settings, peri-urban and rural settings to address any ongoing and growing humanitarian needs. • The NS has 3 ambulances which are operational in Gauteng and well-positioned in the identified hotspots. • This comprehensive approach included a initial risk assessment which was conducted a week after the proclamation of the election day the State President to identify and address potential areas of unrest and emergency, which are informed by historical data and the current political climate. • To ensure effective community engagement, SARCS actively involved local communities in the planning process, which helped in understanding their specific needs and vulnerabilities. In preparation for the upcoming election currently SARCS is: • Enhancing the capacity of its volunteers and staff in Safer Access Framework and first aid, ensuring that all personnel are equipped to manage and navigate the complexities of election environments safely. SARCS also focused on logistical readiness, prepositioning necessary emergency supplies to facilitate immediate response. • Furthermore, SARCS maintains active participation in interagency collaborations, particularly with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), to foster a coordinated response during the election period. Enhanced readiness not only emphasizes on rapid & effective response but also prioritizes the safety and effectiveness of their interventions, ensuring that SARCS can provide uninterrupted and efficient aid during elections.
Assessment	SARCS conducted assessments from the 28th of February 2024, which is a week after the pronouncement of the Election Day by the State President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa in order for SARCS to enhance election preparedness through systematic and structured approaches. Initiating with a comprehensive risk assessment, SARCS identified potential election-related risks such as political unrest and security concerns by analysing historical data and current as well as evolving socio-political conditions across the country. Community engagement is emphasised, involving the use of the Kobo tool and meetings to gather direct insights on vulnerabilities and needs pertaining to upcoming election. Collaboration with local authorities and other agencies is critical, improving coordination and understanding of the security landscape, while continuous monitoring allows SARCS to adapt its proposed actions to any changes in the political environment or emerging incidents. Assessments also avert the duplication of services and actions.
Resource Mobilization	SARCS has implemented resource mobilization strategies to ensure comprehensive preparedness for the national elections. These strategies focus on securing the necessary human, financial, and material resources to effectively respond to potential emergencies during the election period. SARCS has proactively engaged with a range of donors, including government departments involved in election preparedness and private



	sector/corporates to secure funding and supplies. This includes not only financial contributions but also donations of critical supplies such as first aid kits, emergency medical equipment, and vehicles for transportation. In addition to external resources, SARCS has also mobilized a large volunteer base, providing extensive training to ensure that all personnel are equipped to handle various scenarios that may arise during the elections. This preparation enables the quick deployment of resources to identify hotspots and ensures that SARCS can maintain continuity in its operations, even under challenging conditions. Furthermore, SARCS leverages its existing network and partnerships for logistical support, ensuring that resources are pre-positioned and readily available wherever they are most likely to be needed, thus enhancing the organization's responsiveness and effectiveness during the electoral process.
National Society EOC	In response to the upcoming national elections, SARCS has activated its Emergency Operations Centre coordinated by the National Response Team (NRT), enabling SARCS to centralize command and control, enhancing coordination and communication across all levels of the National Society. The EOC serves as the hub for all operations including election preparedness, providing real-time monitoring of situations and rapid dissemination of information to facilitate swift decision-making and deployment of resources. This ensures that SARCS can effectively manage and respond to any incidents that may arise during the elections. The EOC is equipped with advanced communication tools and staff trained by trained personnel who are well-versed in emergency management and operational procedures. By leveraging these capabilities, SARCS aims to maintain a state of readiness, to ensure the safety of volunteers and staff through the Safer Access Framework as well as provide efficient and effective humanitarian assistance throughout the election period.

IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	In the context of election preparedness, IFRC has been actively supporting SARCS through the Pretoria Cluster Office as it continues to provide crucial technical support through its Secretariat role to the National Society.
Participating National Societies	N/A

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

ICRC through its Southern Africa Delegation Office also contributes to the election preparedness efforts of SARCS, focusing specifically on aspects of humanitarian principles and access. The ICRC's involvement primarily centres around providing training in the Safer Access Framework to assist the National Society gain safer and more effective access to affected populations during times of armed conflict or other disturbances, such as elections. The ICRC supports SARCS through workshops, simulations, and advisory services, enhancing their capacity to operate safely in potentially volatile electoral contexts.	
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Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	No
National authorities	In South Africa, national authorities undertake comprehensive measures to prepare for elections, ensuring safety and order during this pivotal time. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) leads these efforts by coordinating with various government agencies to enhance security and manage logistics. This coordination involves the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which ramps up security operations to monitor hotspots for election-related violence and ensure the protection of voters and polling stations. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) plays a crucial role by managing the electoral process, setting up robust mechanisms to ensure that elections are free, fair, and transparent. This includes voter education campaigns, efficient handling of the electoral rolls, and ensuring that all polling stations are equipped with the necessary

	materials and staff trained by trained personnel. Additionally, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) is activated to address any emergencies or natural disasters that may occur during the election period, ensuring a swift governmental response to maintain public safety and infrastructure integrity. Together, these entities work in a coordinated manner to uphold the democratic process and ensure that elections are conducted smoothly and peacefully. Furthermore, SARCS as an auxiliary to the Government and its Departments responsible for humanitarian and social affairs is well-positioned to assist during the election period and ensure a holistic approach to addressing humanitarian needs.
UN or other actors	United Nations Development Program, have been in collaboration with the NS in relation to election preparedness since last year through ensuring that SARCS staff and volunteers participated in 'Elections Observer' training to attain "Observer Status" in line with IEC regulations, additionally, SARCS' role will be to provide first aid services at the identified voting stations should the need arise.

Are there major coordination mechanism in place?

In South Africa, a major coordination mechanism specifically designed to oversee the smooth execution of the national, provincial and regional elections is the National Joint Coordination on the National and Provincial Elections. Led by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), this mechanism serves as a pivotal platform for various government entities to collaborate effectively. Its primary role is to synchronize efforts across different levels of government and ensure that all aspects of election preparedness—from security to logistics—are comprehensively managed. This coordination involves key stakeholders such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and other relevant agencies, who work together to address potential risks and implement preventive measures. By fostering a united response framework, this coordination mechanism enhances the capacity of the government to manage and respond to any issues that might arise during the election process, thereby ensuring that elections are conducted smoothly and without disruption.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Based on the context described and projections, SARCS is Anticipating the heightened health needs such as psychosocial support and first aid during election periods which might arise as a result of unrest, trauma and stress during this highly contentious period and expected events.

Political rallies, demonstrations, and campaign events will be held nationwide but will essentially be concentrate in large urban areas, including Cape Town, Durban, Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Polokwane and Pretoria (Tshwane). Hotspots will likely include large venues and stadia, party headquarters, government buildings, and state-owned utility offices, polling stations. Some parts of the country which include Mpumalanga, KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng, and Western Cape are already experiencing sporadic political social unrest, attributed to current political tensions. Need for first aid in some of these events have already been reported. Based on trends of past events, it is likely that there will be more demand and alerts to be managed in terms of first aid and potentially referral/evacuation.

The scope of the risk extend to the nine provinces even if highest risk is for the provinces of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the Eastern Cape, and parts of the Western Cape. Densely populated areas and polling stations being the main hotspots within those provinces.

The extend of potential risks on community wellbeing, life will require a quick support from SARCS. Recognizing the potential for emergencies and heightened stress among the population during elections as well as an anticipated influx in voter turnout and sporadic events of unrest and possible violence due to election-related issues such as the announcement of results and ongoing cases. Physical injuries, which can range from minor accidents to serious emergencies arising from election-related activity are anticipated. Alongside physical health emergencies, psychological stresses are common during the emotionally charged election period, making PFA equally crucial. SARCS will ensure that its volunteers and staff are well-trained and/or refreshed in these essential skills to address these needs. Hence, the need to enhanced NS readiness by ensuring to cover any gaps for those critical axis of intervention.



In preparation for the upcoming elections, SARCS plans to implement Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) strategies to ensure their operations are sensitive and responsive to the diverse demographics of the communities they serve. Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities that often arise during election periods, SARCS is committed to enhancing its PGI capabilities by training staff and



volunteers in gender-sensitive approaches and protection principles. This focused training will emphasize recognizing and addressing the distinct needs of various demographic groups, including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, who may be disproportionately affected during times of unrest or political turmoil.

Furthermore, SARCS aims to integrate inclusive practices throughout all aspects of their election preparedness strategy, from community engagement to resource deployment. This comprehensive approach includes ensuring that communication and information are accessible to all, offering psychosocial support tailored to the needs of different groups, and implementing robust protection measures to shield vulnerable populations from potential harm.

By prioritizing PGI, SARCS not only enhances its readiness to provide equitable and effective humanitarian assistance but also fosters a safer and more inclusive environment throughout the electoral process. This commitment will enable SARCS to better meet the needs of all community members, thereby improving the overall effectiveness and acceptance of their operations during the elections.



Migration And Displacement

This sector is considered in the current projected scenario. SARCS is preparing to address specific needs related to migration and displacement through the provision of the Restoring Family Links (RFL) program. Elections often result in population movements due to unrest or violence, which can lead to family separations. Recognizing this potential risk, SARCS is enhancing its RFL services to quickly and efficiently address cases of separation. The program focuses on locating individuals, restoring contact between separated family members, and facilitating reunifications when possible.

SARCS is also preparing to provide psychological support to affected individuals and disseminate information on safe practices and available services to migrants and displaced persons. This includes distributing crucial information to ensure personal safety and access to essential services amidst the turmoil that can accompany elections. By addressing anticipated gaps in mental health support and information accessibility, SARCS aims to enhance the resilience of affected communities.

Additionally, SARCS is increasing its coordination with local authorities and other humanitarian organizations to ensure a comprehensive response to the needs of displaced populations. This enhanced coordination helps to bridge gaps in emergency response and recovery, ensuring that efforts are well-integrated and that resources reach those most in need efficiently. Through these efforts, SARCS aims to mitigate the impact of election-related displacement and ensure that affected individuals receive timely assistance and support, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations exposed to the risks of unrest and disorder.



Community Engagement And Accountability

In anticipation of the upcoming elections, SARCS is prioritizing Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) to ensure that its interventions are both effective and attuned to the specific needs and expectations of the communities it serves. Recognizing that elections often heighten tensions and can disrupt community dynamics, SARCS has identified a critical need to bolster trust and improve communication channels between itself and the communities. This involves addressing the gap in understanding and acceptance of SARCS's role during crises, which is vital for ensuring both access to affected areas and the safety of volunteers and aid recipients.

To bridge these gaps, SARCS is intensifying its community outreach efforts. These programs are specifically designed to educate the public about SARCS's role and services, while actively seeking feedback from community members. This feedback is crucial for refining operational plans and making them more responsive to local needs. By engaging directly with the communities through organized meetings and interactive sessions, SARCS aims to clear up any misconceptions and build a foundation of trust that facilitates smoother operations during the elections.

Furthermore, SARCS is enhancing its transparency and accountability mechanisms. The organization is expanding the use of social media and community meetings to ensure that communication remains open and accessible. These tools are not just for disseminating information but are also crucial for gathering real-time feedback and addressing any concerns that may arise. This strategic approach allows SARCS to gain insights into local dynamics, adapt to evolving situations, and respect local customs and concerns, ultimately improving the effectiveness and community acceptance of their election-related operations. Through these concerted efforts, SARCS is better positioned to manage the challenges posed by the electoral context, ensuring timely and effective support to those in need.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation



The overall objective of this operation is for the National Society to strategically position itself to effectively address the humanitarian needs that may arise from potential pre-election and post-election violence over the next two months. The operation will focus on first aid, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), community engagement and risk communication, and protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI).

Emphasis will be placed on major metropolitan areas, townships, and rural regions, which have historically been hotspots for election-related violence and service delivery protests. This comprehensive approach includes close collaboration with various partners and stakeholders, extensive training of volunteers, strategic prepositioning of supplies, and seamless integration into the national coordination frameworks led by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC). Through these coordinated efforts, the Society aims to respond promptly and efficiently to any emergencies, ensuring community safety and maintaining stability during the critical election period.

Operation strategy rationale

SARCS' strategy for navigating the electoral period of the 2024 general elections is built on a foundation of comprehensive safety and community support before, during and after the election date. The trust and acceptance garnered through NS longstanding presence in communities through our volunteers significantly enhance our access to all targeted locations. Considering the risk analysis provided in previous sections and the needs, SARCS actions are triggered and organized as follows:

1) **READINESS:** Official communications from the government and the Independent Electoral Commission regarding election dates and campaigning periods also trigger specific readiness activities. Security reports from local and national agencies inform the SARCS of emerging threats, enabling timely and targeted interventions. This comprehensive historical awareness supports the development of robust response strategies to manage and mitigate the impacts of electoral violence and unrest effectively.

Pre-election Phase: Following the DREF approval, this phase prioritizes comprehensive training for 250 volunteers in crucial areas such as emergency first aid and psychological first aid, with additional enhancement from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). A key component of this phase involves also the development and dissemination of messages that promote peace and unity and support the access. These messages are part of NS anticipatory actions designed to mitigate the potential for violence. We also focus on rigorous planning, procurement of necessary equipment, and simulation exercises, ensuring that our teams are fully prepared for deployment.

Coordination with Authorities: SARCS is actively engage in the National Joint Coordination Meeting on the National and Provincial Elections, coordinated by the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). This collaboration is vital for aligning our operational plans with national safety strategies and for integrating SARCS into the broader emergency management framework. The institutional engagement will continue and involve all the relevant actors such as civil protection, security and local authorities etc. The community local representatives will also be engaged and informed on NS actions in a continuous basis. Both Government and Communities will be engaged through relevant and trusted applicable channels to ensure safe access and trusted collaboration.

2) **Early actions:** In anticipation of the upcoming elections, SARCS seeks to implement Election Preparedness operations. This preemptive mobilization of resources stems from an understanding of the unique challenges and tensions that can arise during election cycles. In such situations, there is heightened demand for emergency services like first aid, psychosocial support, community engagement and accountability (CEA), Protection of Gender and Inclusion (PGI). SARCS seeks to strengthen its capacity and preparedness initiatives through increased capacity building on Safer Access and First Aid. More prepositioned stock for first aid kits and medical supplies is crucial. These actions are not just a response mechanism but a proactive preparedness strategy aimed at mitigating potential risks and ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable communities and the volunteers pre, during, and post-election.

3) **Immediate response** following the alerts received of violence and protest or unrests to ensure delivery of immediate first aid, PSS and evacuations as the main priorities. Based on scenario, this might be required during:

Two Days Before Polling Day: Our local election preparedness teams, including the National Response Team and provincial response teams, are activated, particularly in high-risk areas. This readiness allows us to swiftly address any incidents that may arise.

Polling Day: Volunteers are stationed at key polling stations, especially in high-risk areas, to provide first aid and support while actively promoting messages of peace and unity. The established trust and visibility of SARCS facilitate this access, enabling our volunteers to effectively maintain the safety and well-being of voters and staff.

In addition, this operation is launched to respond to ongoing eruptions of demonstrations in North West, KZN and Mpumalanga among a few. Ongoing political disputes may lead to escalated disputes should the results be contested. A comprehensive risk assessment of the current socio-political landscape is conducted to identify potential hotspots for election-related disturbances. Historical data on past elections and politically motivated events is crucial for the National Society's planning and response strategies during election periods.

4) **Post-election Phase:** NS involvement continues even after the polls close, as SARCS will monitor developments and hold regular



coordination meetings to adapt to any new challenges promptly. SARCS will revise the above proposed plan in case the current scenario of potential unrest/violence is witnessed with significant injuries and violence. The revision will be aimed to adjust the planning for the post voting days potential development situation and the period of the proclamation. Current planning could not efficiently include it given that the development of the situation relies on the rallies and election phase.

The community's acceptance of SARCS, earned through years of dedicated service and visible presence during crises, enhances our capability to access targeted locations effectively. This trust allows us to execute NS mission effectively, ensuring our readiness plans are robust and well-received by the communities we serve. Through these efforts, SARCS is committed to supporting a peaceful electoral process, providing essential humanitarian assistance as needed, and reinforcing the democratic foundations of our society. As the election date approaches, SARCS remains vigilant and prepared to adapt our strategies to ensure the safety and stability of the communities during this critical period.

Targeting Strategy

Who will be targeted through this operation?

The operational strategy for SARCS is meticulously designed to assist the most vulnerable communities during the electoral period. This strategy aims to target the most at risk areas within the 9 provinces, based on risk level assessed through the historical events, demographic information, socio-economical vulnerabilities and positioning of the polling stations yet to be completed.

- Geographical target:

Metropolitans, townships, and rural areas within and surrounding key cities countrywide. Emphasis is particularly placed on locations with polling stations, identified as crucial for maintaining voter turnout and as potential flashpoints for conflict. These areas are prioritized due to their high population densities, which not only heightens the risk of election-related disturbances but also amplifies the demand for emergency services, particularly around neighborhoods with voting stations.

Particular emphasis will be placed on locations with polling stations, assembly of campaigns as these are critical points for both voter turnout and potential flashpoints for unrest. The aim is to ensure the safety and well-being of voters, electoral staff, and the general public during the election period.

- Groups prioritized:

SARCS aims to provide crucial support to those most susceptible to be exposed or vulnerable during elections. The primary groups targeted are individuals who are directly involved in the election process at the different phases.

* During the votes, it will be focused on : Voters, Electoral officials and local representatives at polling stations, Volunteers at polling stations, People leaving in the nearby areas of the polling stations. These individuals are at heightened risk during both the voting process and the announcement of results due to potential rallies and public gatherings that can escalate into violence.

* Following the announcement of election results, the risk extends to the general public, including traders and residents, who might be affected by demonstrations or unrest, such as looting, particularly in commercial areas and densely populated communities. The targeting will then consider a filter to priorities and be focusing on low-income residents and particularly migrants and refugees; informal settlements etc;

These groups are often the most affected in times of unrest due to their precarious living conditions, limited access to essential services, and vulnerability to violence and displacement. Migrants and refugees, for example, frequently reside in less secure environments and may encounter substantial barriers in accessing official support due to language and legal constraints. Volunteers will prioritize people with social vulnerabilities as follows: pregnant and lactating women, children, people with disabilities. These groups are often the most affected during times of crisis due to their limited mobility, health requirements, and in some cases, lack of access to immediate shelter and basic services.

The presence of SARCS in these areas aims to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals, including voters, electoral staff, and the general public, throughout the election process. By concentrating efforts in these strategic locations, SARCS not only addresses immediate humanitarian needs but also fosters a broader sense of stability and security during and after the elections.

To effectively reach and assist these vulnerable groups, SARCS plans to adopt a comprehensive approach that includes robust community engagement and partnerships with local organizations that maintain direct connections and trust within these communities. This strategy is further supported by collaborations with migrant and refugee support organizations to ensure that all communications regarding available aid are accessible in multiple languages and formats. Moreover, SARCS leverages mobile units to deliver aid directly to areas where these vulnerable populations are concentrated, ensuring that support reaches those unable to access static first aid stations.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The focus of SARCS is on delivering aid to those most vulnerable during elections. The selection criteria for the targeted population by SARCS in their election preparedness operations is grounded by demographic data, risk assessment, and vulnerability factors specific to the context of national elections. Using the latest census data as a reference, which provides a comprehensive demographic breakdown,



SARCS identifies high-risk localities based on population density, historical incidences of election-related violence, and socio-economic factors. By combining detailed demographic analysis with on-the-ground insights and strategic partnerships, SARCS aims to effectively allocate resources and provide support to those most at risk during the elections, ensuring that their approach is both responsive and inclusive.

To effectively target these vulnerable populations, SARCS utilizes a data-driven approach that includes geographical information systems (GIS) to map areas of highest need and community feedback mechanisms to renew their understanding of local conditions. Partnerships with local community organizations also play a crucial role in identifying and reaching these vulnerable groups, ensuring that aid is not only delivered but is also accessible to those who need it most.

This targeted approach is integral to SARCS' mission of reducing the impact of emergencies and enhancing the resilience of communities during pivotal moments. While the general election calls for a nationwide coverage, SARCS places special emphasis on major metropolitan areas, townships, and rural regions—areas historically known as hotspots for election-related violence and service delivery protests. This focused strategy ensures that SARCS' resources are deployed where they are most needed, maximizing the effectiveness of the intervention and upholding the organization's commitment to supporting those most at risk during these critical times.

Total Targeted Population

Women	10,608	Rural	31%
Girls (under 18)	4,992	Urban	69%
Men	9,792	People with disabilities (estimated)	1%
Boys (under 18)	4,608		
Total targeted population	30,000		

Risk and Security Considerations

Please indicate about potential operation risk for this operations and mitigation actions

Risk	Mitigation action
Risk of delay in launching DREF activities pending signature of the financing agreement.	The NS will receive support from corporates and other stakeholders to be able to implement ongoing Election Preparedness activities whilst the imminent DREF is pending approval.
Reputational risk for SARCS due to the population's lack of knowledge of its mandate, its missions, and RC Fundamental Principles.	Information and sensitization campaigns will be conducted to educate the population about SARCS's mandate, missions, and principles. Training on the code of conduct and against fraud and corruption will also be enhanced for volunteers and staff.
Unavailability of National Society staff and volunteers due to the management of several operations being implemented by SARCS, leading to increased workload.	Strategic human resource management will be applied, including scheduling and rotation of staff and volunteers, recruitment of additional personnel, and potentially hiring temporary staff to manage the increased workload effectively.
Difficulty of access to the targeted population due to the presence of protest movements.	Safer access training will be provided to volunteers with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). This training equips volunteers with the necessary tools to facilitate their access to and acceptance by the community.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation

For SARCS, addressing security and safety concerns during election periods is paramount, especially given the complex socio-political landscape of South Africa. In urban areas, and notably in major cities and townships in the country, the major security risks include multi-type crime and violence stemming from political and civil unrest. This risk escalates during elections due to increased public engagement and heightened tensions. Security threats may encompass demonstrations, both spontaneous and organized, as well as riots, severe repression by authorities, roadblocks set up by vigilante groups, and a potential rise in opportunistic crimes. There has already been a notable increase in service delivery protests across the country since the beginning of the year.



Additionally, specific provinces like KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Mpumalanga (MP) are of particular concern due to ongoing political killings and disputes which could exacerbate security challenges during elections. The looming legal case set to take place at the Constitutional Court between the MK Party and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) further complicates the security landscape, potentially fueling political tensions and unrest.

In response to these challenges, SARCS will appoint a security focal person who will liaise directly with the IFRC Cluster security manager and the ICRC delegation to facilitate real-time exchanges of information regarding security conditions. This role is crucial for maintaining situational awareness and adapting SARCS's operations accordingly. The security manager will also maintain constant communication with branches in high-risk localities, working closely with community authorities to gather intelligence and provide regular updates on the evolving situation. This proactive approach ensures that SARCS can navigate the volatile election environment effectively, prioritizing the safety of both its personnel and the communities it serves.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?

Yes

Planned Intervention



Budget: CHF 87,492

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Indicators

Title	Target
# of people reached with first aid and pre-hospital care by trained RCRC volunteers or staff in a crisis, disaster or conflict	1,000
# of people reached by Psychological First Aid	1,750
# of volunteers trained in First Aid	500
# of first aid kits/bags secured	300

Priority Actions

Readiness and stocks

- Refresher training for 250 volunteers in psychological first aid.
- 250 volunteers trained/refresher in emergency first aid.
- Provision of psychological first aid by trained volunteers.
- Procurement and prepositioning of first aid kits. NS will procurement first aid equipment and kits for emergency first aid. 350 first aid kits refills.
- Printings for alerts and NS mandate to ensure access and protection for the aid team.
- Set-up of surveillance team for the first aid alerts and brief /regular update on risk mapping.
- Set-up of alert and referral system with health centers/hospitals and coordination with relevant actors.

Early actions

- Provision of emergency first aid by volunteers to people in need at the voting stations and during the voting.
- Mobilization of volunteers from 2 days before the elections until two days after period could be extended.
- Setting up stands in high-risk areas to receive people who will need to be rescued.
- Activate the alert coordination system and referral system.

Immediate response for first aid and PFA.

- Respond to first aid alerts as it comes with a setting two days before the votes, the voting day and during the proclamation week.
- PSS to communities and intervention team.
- Referral of cases to health facilities.





Protection, Gender And Inclusion

Budget: CHF 9,721

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Indicators

Title	Target
# of RCRC staff and volunteers trained on Prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding	250
# of RCRC staff and volunteers who have been briefed and signed the Code of Conduct	250
# of people reached by protection, gender and inclusion services	250
# of people trained on implementing the PGI Minimum Standards	250

Priority Actions

Early actions

- Staff and volunteers trained on Prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding.
- Implement inclusive practices in all aspects of SARCS's election preparedness program, including accessible communication, tailored psychosocial support through referrals, and protection measures for vulnerable populations.

Readiness

- Briefing of 250 volunteers and staff on the code of conduct.
- Coordinate with local authorities and other humanitarian organizations to ensure a comprehensive response to the needs of displaced populations, focusing on protection, gender, and inclusion services.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 10,329

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Indicators

Title	Target
National Society contributing to national coordination mechanisms and national plan for risk communication and community engagement	-
# of staff, volunteers and leadership trained on community engagement and accountability (disaggregated by staff / volunteers /sex)	250
# of community consultation meetings.	6

Priority Actions

Early Action Phase:

- Sensitization of the community on the RC's mandate and the mechanisms put in place, with emphasis on the principles of neutrality and impartiality, through community meetings carried out by 15 teams of 4 volunteers across 8 sessions.
- Engage local representatives at institutional and community level to enhance the messages around the peace, NS presence and mandate during the elections. Key stakeholders, including community leaders, elections officials, security forces representatives, city officials, and health workers officials, nearby health facilities.

Readiness Phase

- Briefing of 250 volunteers on CEA principles
- Preparation of key messages on fostering peace and unity
- Creation of tools for feedback (face-to-face & Kobo)
- Conducting of community meetings for collection of key information using created tools to strengthen CEA
- Ensure an intensive promotion of NS mandate, principles and access through trusted communications channels.





Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 10,207

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Indicators

Title	Target
# and % of volunteers involved in response who are insured	250
# of Lessons Learnt workshop	3
IFRC security training for NS staff and Volunteers	1

Priority Actions

- NS support and monitoring visits.
- Support for volunteer insurance.
- Facilitate the organization of Lessons Learnt Workshop conducted by SARCS.
- IFRC security training for NS staff and Volunteers.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 50,045

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Indicators

Title	Target
# of personnel engaged country wide	300
% of mobilised staff and volunteers that are properly briefed on risk, Safe access and minimum standards	100
Lesson learnt organise and reported	1
% of personnel mobilised that received PFA	100
# Coordination meetings with ICRC and partners	4

Priority Actions

Readiness and immediate response: NS duty of care for staff and volunteers.

- Ensure briefed team is deployed in timely manner. Briefing NS emergency intervention team on Fundamental humanitarian Principles, the use and misuse of the Emblem and emergency coordination, and communication protocols; Promotion of peace, security/safety trainings (safe access, security requirements).

- PSS to volunteers and staff.
- Ensure insurance of volunteers.

Stocks for the mobilized and deployed team.

- Procure and provide visibility supervisors and staff.
- Production of IEC materials on the various messages on social cohesion, role of NS, RCRC principles

General operational support all through the intervention.

- Monitoring of context and risks mapping to be updated regularly.
- Engage, mobilize and sensitized local leaders on the humanitarian principles and NS mandate and logo.
- Ensure coordination with community, local and national Government, and external partners and RCRC movement coordination. Especially ICRC.

- Ensure accountability framework is in place to monitor and report in accordance with the DREF guidelines and IFRC relevant policies.
- Organize and report on the Lessons Learned workshop to be held and support identifying both successful strategies and areas for improvement.



About Support Services

How many staff and volunteers will be involved in this operation. Briefly describe their role.

A total of 35 staff and 250 volunteers will be involved in different roles during this operation. The 13 staff are based at Head Quarters, and they will be responsible in coordinating overall operations and they include programs team, finance/corporate services , supply chain, communications and National Society Development (NSD) in the 5 affected provinces.

If there is procurement, will it be done by National Society or IFRC?

There will be procurement for this operation, and it will be done by the National Society. NS has an active data base of suppliers managed by the National Procurement Committee who are always engaged to provide services and supply relief stock in emergency response within 48 hours of engagement as they are aware that SARCS is involved in providing immediate response during emergencies. This will ensure a timely response during the operation.

How will this operation be monitored?

The IFRC cluster delegation will conduct monitoring visits by engaging SARCS HQ team for joint monitoring visits in order to be able to technically guide response operations. IFRC delegates or representatives will also provide technical support to the National Office team and Provincial Managers. IFRC representatives will conduct field monitoring to see the project implementation and provide feedback on submitted reports (both narrative and financial).

Please briefly explain the National Societies communication strategy for this operation

The IFRC communications team will be supporting the NS during the operations. This will involve the Communications Officer for IFRC and Communications Task Team Lead for the NS who will be responsible in profiling the whole operation especially key interventions and engagements. Such well pro led information and clips will be published and shared with donors, partners and stakeholders.



Contact Information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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[Click here for the reference](#)

