Covid-19 and Elections

How Israel managed the challenge

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Scope

- Defining the Challenge
- Creating the legal framework
- The logistical execution
- The Poll Workers
- The voting process
- The Tallying of the votes
- Fake news
Defining the Challenge

• In the midst of conducting the third elections in a row, the Covid-19 virus has shown up.

• Thousands of eligible voters were put into quarantine.

• The social distancing measures weren’t in effect yet (our luck).

• We had to find solutions on the fly, when the health prohibition kept changing, and we couldn’t change the law.

• We didn’t have all the information – and had to make our adjustments accordingly.
The Legal Framework

• We used a special measure to declare certain area’s as Hospitals so that we could put polling places for the isolated votes there.

• Every voter that was in quarantine could come cast his vote on those polling stations – and only them.

• The health ministry has amended the quarantine order so that voters who were under quarantine was eligible to come, alone, to the special polling stations.
The logistical execution

• Locating the polling places – we received information from the ministry of heath daily and we chose the main cities regarding this information. Some of the placed objected to the placement (NIMBY).

• Planning – total separation

• Voter kits – gloves, mask, 2 envelops, pen – in a separate plastic bag
  • N95 Mask
  • Voting envelope
  • Outer envelope
  • Declaration
Poll workers

• Only Israeli red cross (MADA) workers – certified in managing health problems – because regular poll workers refused to come.

• Same pay as regular poll workers – for less hours.

• Special poll workers training in the morning and a guide to answer questions on the spot – using texting groups.

• Creating a training kit – presentation and online.

• Each polling station had a cop present to keep order with CEC usher.

• Disposing the waste in the end of the day, and destroying it by a medical waste disposal company.
Polling stations

• One or two in population centers – according to number of quarantined voters – with information regarding the spread of quarantined voters.

Lesson: need more places, even at the same parking place – the voting takes a long time. We added some during the day.

• Shortened voting hours.

  lesson: need more time – we had to lengthen the hours.

• The polling stations has been but in outdoor parking of government offices, stadiums and Israeli red cross stations – far from regular polling places.

• we have Erected the tents in the morning (1 hour) but dismantling them was a chore because we found no company willing to do so.

• If the weather was stormy, we had to make alterations to the tents – more massive and more expansive.
The voting process

- Line – two meters apart – outside
- Identification before a dedicated poll worker – outside
- Flowchart for the voter
- Voting in a separate tent – observed by the other poll-workers
Voting process and participation

• Only one poll worker that was in isolation gear – had direct contact with the voters - and his job was to identify the voter – with his government ID and allow him or her to vote and keep that the voter is wearing protective gear.

• Requirements – every voter needed to come alone in a car. With no one else with him/her and with a facemask and gloves.

• Voter participation – the voter participation in Israel is somewhat high (comparably), almost 71.5% of eligible voters.

The voter participation of the isolated voters was very high – almost 80% of isolated voters came to the special polling places and voted.
Counting and tallying

• Opening the ballots box after two days (so to give the droplets time to dry) – by a dedicated protected crew (we had no knowledge yet on the contagious effect).

• Verifying the voter didn’t vote twice by matching the ID number on the outer envelope to the registrar.

• Opening the outer envelops and separating them from the voting envelops – to keep the vote secret.

• Counting with a protected crew – that was formed by the committee’s senior staff.

• Observers from the major parties.
Fake news and communications

• A special ad that run on networks and social media on the week prior to elections day – to spared our fear and state the personal responsibility of voters.

• A small video-ad with instructions – in the national networks and social media.

• Online manual.

• Fake news:
  • Forming a special team in HQ – with representatives from the ministry of health, a senior Medical doctor, police and the attorney general to deal with rumors and fake news.
  • Special news bulletins and press releases through-out the day and the week before.
Lesson learned

• The voting process is long – we should have
  • placed more polling stations
  • for longer hours.
  • If the elections were now
    • maybe create early voting procedures (need an amendment of the elections act).
    • Or creating special “vote and drive-through” in giant tents.

• Poll workers – a main problem. Didn’t want to come.
  To work at the polls and observe and to clean up the polling places.

• We have placed 16 special polling stations for almost 6,000 eligible votes.

• And we needed to put body-heat measures and all polling places, so that a voter
  with symptoms will that came to his regular polling station will be referred to the
  special polling places.
Central Elections Committee

Thank You

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