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The Board of Commissioners (BoC) of the National Elections Commission (NEC or Commission) expresses deep gratitude to the Government of Liberia (GoL), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union (EU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Governments of Sweden and Canada, and Irish Aid for providing the financial, technical and logistical support that facilitated the development of this 2018-2024 Strategic Plan.

The BoC also extends its appreciation to the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, and all senior and technical staff members of the NEC for their tireless efforts in contributing to the development of this plan.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Commission is pleased with the development of this 2018-2024 Strategic Plan. This plan continues our approach of setting out key short and long-term priorities and targets and developing plans of action to achieve them. From time to time, the Commission analyzes its environment to identify the best opportunities to effectively achieve its mandate, and one reason why the NEC has thrived over the past fourteen years is that it has been guided by electoral cycle based strategic plans. This strategic plan succeeds the 2012-2018 plan which was concluded at the end of June 2018.

The 2018-2024 strategic planning process was participatory. It involved the concerted efforts of relevant stakeholders, all of whom can take ownership of this roadmap for the next six years. Obviously, the plan builds upon the work undertaken over the past six years to envision our strategic direction for the years ahead. This document also reflects a consensus on the realignment of the major areas where we believe the NEC must focus its attention and build on the significant progress already made in meeting the goals for improved service and innovation. In this plan, key objectives are harmonized with related broad strategies that we expect to pursue over the next six years. It outlines desired results and sets out how we will measure progress towards outcomes.

The NEC has evolved as a credible electoral management body, living up to its mandate of contributing to the consolidation and strengthening of Liberia's democracy through the consistent and effective delivery of free, fair and credible elections at national and local levels. The last few elections have taught us many valuable lessons for the administration of future elections in Liberia. For instance, in the midst of the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease, the Commission surmounted enormous challenges and successfully conducted the 2014 Special Senatorial Election. Additionally, the 2017 General Elections presented its own set of challenges especially considering the anxiety that characterized the electoral process, given that it was the first time since 1944 that executive authority was being transferred from one elected president to another. Thus, we have adopted new measures to improve planning and delivery of elections in Liberia based on our experiences and recommendations from our partners and electoral stakeholders.

The next six-year electoral cycle promises to be even more challenging, particularly in the wake of the pending national census and the resulting potential electoral constituency delimitation. Moreover, the NEC plans to incorporate relevant technology in elections administration.

Like the one preceding it, the 2018-2024 strategic plan catalogues several of the key challenges we anticipate and how we intend to overcome them. It describes what we believe are the key operational, legislative, and technological trends that will influence the NEC's performance

during this period, and it also highlights the improvements that will be required in our organization and operations to respond to these trends. Accordingly, our realigned strategy is built on a two-pronged approach:

- ❖ Internally, we are committed to continuing to value and develop our people and their professional skills, thereby engendering a culture of excellence, fairness, respect and collaboration, with the aim of continuing to be a credible and professional organization.
- ❖ Externally, we have reaffirmed our commitment to the people of Liberia for the conduct of impartial and independent elections and the promotion of public awareness of electoral matters. This will help foster public confidence and increase participation in future electoral processes. At the same time, we are committed to engaging professionally and transparently with our stakeholders; striving to understand and anticipate their needs; build long-term relationships and foster effective communication. Besides, the issues of gender equality and the participation of minority groups in the electoral process remain an integral part of our strategic focus.

I trust that our ability to adapt and respond to potential challenges over the next six years will be bolstered by our strategic plan, which aims at maximizing the National Elections Commission's capacity to improve its performance in administering future electoral processes in Liberia. Hence, this strategic plan will be a key reference for us as we continue to strengthen the NEC as a modern, professional, and innovative electoral management body, providing improved electoral services to the Liberian people.



Jerome G. Korkoya, J. D
CHAIRMAN

ACRONYMS

BoC	Board of Commissioners
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRC	Constitution Review Committee
CRM	Compliance and Risk Management
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Civic and Voter Education
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	Electoral Management Body
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FRR	Final Registration Roll
GC	Governance Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
LASS	Liberia Administrative Systems Strengthening
LD	Liberian Dollar
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEC	National Elections Commission
NIR	National Identification Registry
OMR	Optical Mark Recognition
PAPD	Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PRC	Progress Review Committee
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018-2024 Strategic Plan (Plan) of the National Elections Commission (NEC or Commission) of Liberia roadmaps the Commission’s strategic direction for the next six years. The plan describes the approaches the NEC would take to achieve its mission, meet the demands of its stakeholders, exploit opportunities for improved service delivery, and respond to challenges.

The Commission undertook broad-based consultations, comprising internal discussions and external engagements that ensured participation of key stakeholders. A conference was organized to document lessons learned from the 2017 General Elections, and outline recommendations for future planning. The strategic plan development process was overseen by a technical committee that supervised desk review, and organized a planning workshop in Buchanan. Prior to the workshop, two stakeholders’ consultative forums were organized with the leaders of political parties and high-level, national and international stakeholders, respectively. The strategic plan is also informed by recommendations from the Governance Commission (GC) 2017 Annual Governance Report and recommendations from various observers’ missions.

Under this new strategic plan, the central functions of the Commission remain unchanged – to deliver free, fair and credible elections. Nonetheless, many new priority areas have been identified to engender new dynamism in elections management in Liberia. There is call to work at enhancing public confidence in the work of the Commission. The Commission aspires to introduce voter registration by biometric identification, conduct constituency delimitation, based on the ensuing census data; strengthen campaign finance monitoring, and enhance staff welfare program.

The strategic plan proposes measures to align with government priorities and remain responsive to the general body politics. It contains a cost-effective and financially sustainable strategy, and advances interventions that are acceptable to Liberia’s unique social norms and demographic reality.

The NEC reiterates that its mandate does not include the implementation of national civic education. Rather, it is required to focus on provision of elections education to sensitize and mobilize Liberians to understand their democratic rights and participate in all aspects of the electoral process. Nonetheless, the Commission will collaborate with relevant governmental agencies, civil society actors or political parties, which may be better suited to fulfill the full responsibility of national civic education.

This new strategic plan lays out a mammoth electoral agenda for the Commission. To achieve these feats, the NEC plans to work in concert with stakeholders to implement key actions, as well as leverage strong partnerships to foster its agenda. Overall, the strategic plan is built on

five pillars, elaborated into goals, strategic actions, objectives, expected outcomes and indicators. By the end of the strategic plan period, the Commission aims to achieve some very remarkable results. Some of these results include, but not limited to: coherent elections laws that are in agreement with applicable national and international legal instruments; positive public opinion about the work of the Commission; broad participation of women and other special-need groups in the electoral process. Other outcomes include enhanced citizens understanding of elections and their democratic rights; general acceptance of elections results; and sustained peace and stability.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The July 2018-June 2024 Strategic Plan of the National Elections Commission of Liberia documents the Commission’s strategic direction for the next six years. The Plan identifies and describes the approaches the NEC would take to achieve its mission, meet the demands of its stakeholders, exploit opportunities for improved service delivery, and respond to challenges. Similar to the 2012-2018 Strategic Plan, this 2018-2024 Strategic Plan hinges on five strategic pillars, supported by corresponding goals, actions and specific objectives. These define the performance parameters to which the Commission has committed itself for the next electoral cycle.

1.1 Overview of the 2016-2018 Revised Strategic Plan

The Commission, on the basis of its six-year electoral cycle, regularly redefines its direction and priorities to align with changing realities. In doing so, it sets priority actions and activities for achieving its goals and objectives. This approach informed the decision to revise the 2012-2018 Strategic Plan, thereby enabling the Commission to realign its priorities to guide the direction and operations of the Commission between July 2016 and June 2018, including the 2017 General Elections process.

The revised plan, as articulated in the statements of vision and mission, as well as the expressed core values, blended futuristic thinking, objective analysis and evaluation of goals and strategic objectives. It set ambitious goals in five strategic pillars, namely: Legal Framework, Electoral Stakeholders Engagement, Civic and Voter Education and Public Information, Institutional Strengthening and Election Operations. With the overarching goal “to contribute to the consolidation and nurturing of Liberia’s nascent democracy through the consistent and effective delivery of free, fair and credible elections at national and local levels”, each of the five strategic pillars was elaborated with relevant goals, strategic actions, objectives, expected outcomes and indicators for tracking performance.

The Commission achieved many of the results targeted in the revised strategic plan. However, there were also some implementation challenges documented in the post-election lessons learned conference. Besides, stakeholders in the electoral process conducted independent assessments of the process and documented findings and made recommendations to the Commission. Together, these assessment reports, coupled with other lessons learned and results from environmental scanning, laid the basis for the Commission to set new priorities for the next six years.

1.2 Achievements

In line with the expected results outlined in the NEC 2016-2018 Revised Strategic Plan, the Commission made numerous achievements. Key among these are the following:

- ❖ Worked with electoral stakeholders and the Legislature and reformed the electoral laws, thereby harmonizing some conflicting provisions in the New Elections Law and also strengthening electoral guidelines/regulations and codes of conduct.
- ❖ Successfully organized and conducted the 2017 General Elections, registering 2.18 million voters and recording a voter turnout of 75.2%. The successful conduct of the elections has contributed to the sustenance of peace and stability in the country.
- ❖ With the support of partners, the Commission strengthened its management system by updating management policies, processes and procedures. Key partners for these endeavors included the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Liberia Administrative Systems Strengthening (LASS) program, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- ❖ Increased stakeholders' understanding of the electoral laws and guidelines and enhanced cooperation between the Commission and electoral stakeholders thereby increasing the participation of stakeholders in the electoral process.
- ❖ Increased efforts to mainstream gender by tailoring activities that promote women's participation, as well as enhance the participation of other disadvantaged groups.

1.3 Strategic Plan Development Process

Developing the Commission's new six-year strategic plan involved series of broad-based, internal and external consultations. As a precursor to the strategic planning process, the Commission organized a conference on lessons learned from the 2017 General Elections. The conference documented achievements and challenges encountered, identified key lessons learned, and generated recommendations from various departments/sections to inform future planning.

Following the lessons learned conference, the Commission took steps to kick off the strategic planning process. First, a technical committee was established to drive the process. The committee then supervised a desk review exercise whereby heads of departments, sections and units assessed the achievements made in terms of completion of the two-year (2016-2018) Revised Strategic Plan.

The desk review exercise happened concomitantly with the engagement of external stakeholders. There were two stakeholders' consultations involving political parties on one hand, and high-level stakeholders (national and international partners) on the other. In this regard, a two-day post-election assessment forum was held for political parties in Ganta, Nimba County. At that forum, executives of political parties documented their recommendations after deliberating on the 2017 electoral process. Also, the NEC organized a one-day forum for donors and other policy-making stakeholders at the Commission's headquarters. At that forum, participants assessed the electoral process and proffered recommendations. Additionally, the NEC received elections observation reports as well as the 2017 Annual Governance Report released by the Governance Commission (GC). Analyses from these reports have provided relevant contents for the new strategic plan.

Those exercises eventually culminated into a four-day strategic planning workshop involving executives, managerial and technical staff of the Commission as well as technical partners. At the workshop, which took place in Buchanan, participants synthesized all the relevant information and extensively deliberated on the new direction and priority actions. This laid the basis for developing a comprehensive framework for the NEC 2018-2024 Strategic Plan. After the workshop, technical staff of the Commission held departmental working sessions to develop operational plans that outline activities, timeline and estimate costs for the strategic plan.

CHAPTER 2: THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION

In this chapter, the Commission’s mandate, legal framework and organizational structure are discussed. The chapter explores the historical and institutional contexts of the NEC, setting a clear vintage point from which the Commission elaborates its strategic direction for the coming years.

2.1 NEC Legal Mandate

The NEC is an autonomous public commission established under article 89 of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia. The Commission is mandated to, among other things, conduct elections and democracy education; plan and conduct elections for all elective public officers; organize national referenda; administer and enforce all laws relative to the conduct of elections and regulate political parties throughout the Republic of Liberia.¹

The NEC mandate emphasizes the need to organize and conduct elections that reflect the truest collective will of the Liberian people. Although funded by the government, the Commission is independent of the government; in that, it ought to take decisions and implement actions without the influences of any person, group of persons or authority. It is accountable to the people of Liberia through the executive and legislative branches of the government. In the execution of its mandate, the Commission has established an institutional culture, in the interest of transparency and accountability. This is why it partners with all electoral stakeholders, including political parties and civil society organizations (CSO), as well as the international community in ensuring free, fair and credible elections.

2.2 Organizational Structure

The NEC is under the direction and management of seven commissioners, appointed by the President of Liberia who also appoints one of them as chair and another as co-chair. Each of the other five members is called “commissioner”. All of the appointments are subject to the consent of the Senate. Each commissioner serves a tenure of seven years and may be reappointed.²

The seven-member team constitutes a Board of Commissioners (BoC), which provides policy direction and oversight (administrative and political) for the work of the Commission. The BoC works through a secretariat to implement the policies and programs it formulates. The

¹The full extent of the mandate of the Commission, detailing its powers and duties, is documented under Section 2.9 of the New Elections Law of 1986 as amended in 2003, 2004 and 2014

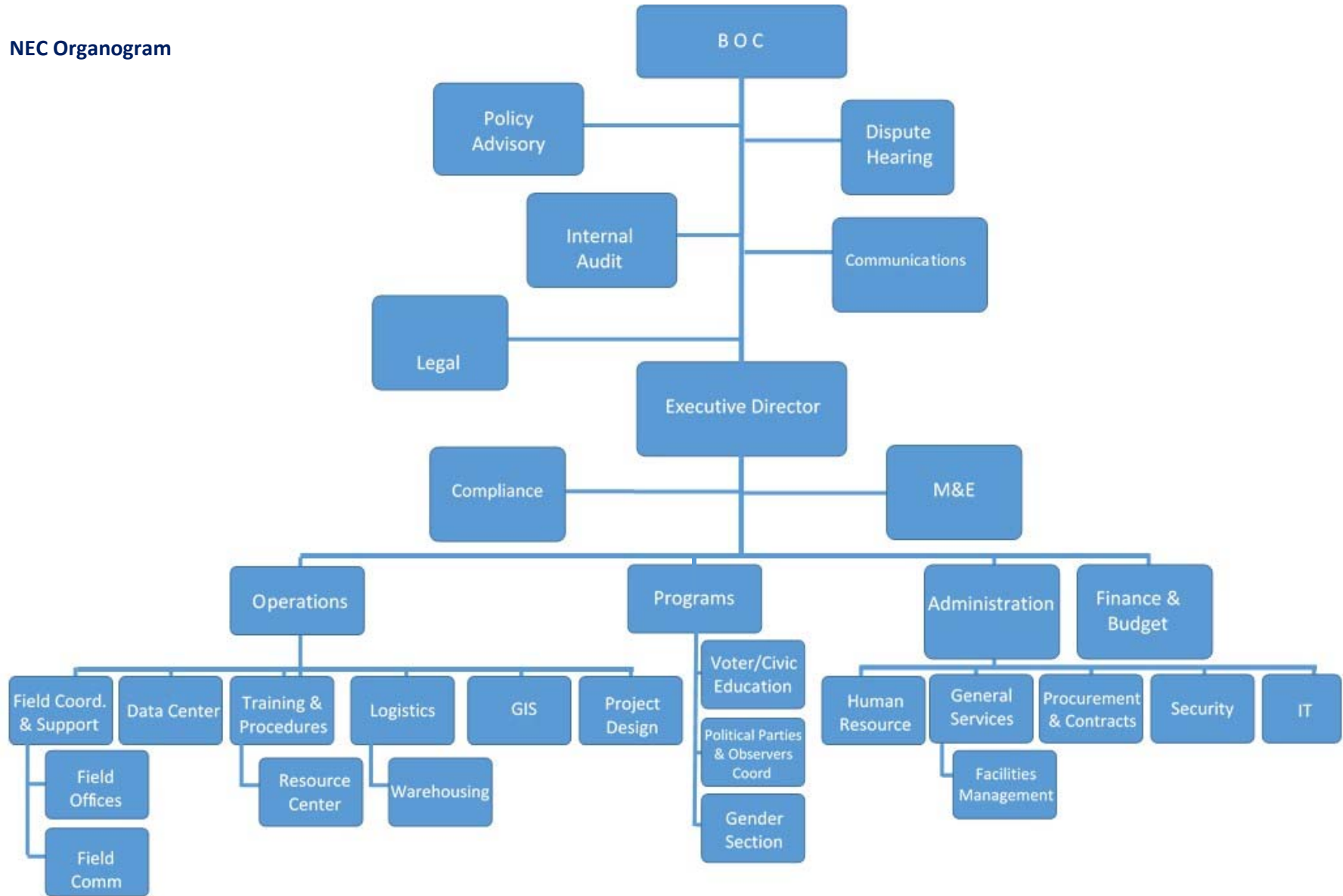
²National Elections Commission (2016), *The New Elections Law: Amendments of 2003, 2004 and 2014*, codified by the Ministry of Justice, Government of Liberia, p16

secretariat is headed by an executive director, who is assisted by three principal deputies for the departments of administration, operations and programs.

Due to the nature of work carried out by certain sections and units within the structure of the NEC, they do not work under any of the three principal departments. They work as stand-alone units and report directly to the BoC either through the executive director or the office of the chair. Sections and units in this category include Legal Affairs, Dispute Hearing, Internal Audit, Compliance and Risk Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Policy Advisory, Budget and Finance, and Communications. These units together with the three departments constitute the secretariat.

The details of the structure of the NEC are laid out in the organogram, overleaf.

NEC Organogram



2.3 Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders of the NEC are the Liberian people who have the stake in deciding key democratic questions such as the leadership of the country and other election issues necessary for the smooth functioning of the state. There are also other influential stakeholders who have interest in the success of the NEC and a wholesome functioning Liberian society. As shown in the Table 1 below, the stakeholders of the NEC are divided into different categories, with varying roles and expectations.

Table 1: Stakeholders Analysis

STAKEHOLDER	ROLES IN ELECTORAL PROCESS	EXPECTATIONS
❖ Electorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Registering as voters <input type="checkbox"/> Voting during elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Right to freely exercise democratic rights <input type="checkbox"/> Be informed about democratic rights and electoral process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Political parties ❖ Election candidates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Register as legal entities <input type="checkbox"/> Operate in accordance with the laws of Liberia <input type="checkbox"/> Canvass for votes <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure peaceful elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Right to freely exercise democratic rights <input type="checkbox"/> Be informed about democratic rights and electoral process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Judiciary and Legislature ❖ Relevant government ministries, agencies and commissions ❖ Local and traditional leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance legal framework and resolve disputes <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate elections financing <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate elections procurement <input type="checkbox"/> Provide elections security <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate election operations in communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Free, fair and credible elections <input type="checkbox"/> Equitable political participation of citizens <input type="checkbox"/> Strengthened capacity and professionalism of NEC <input type="checkbox"/> Political and economic stability of Liberia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Civil Society Organizations ❖ Community & Faith-Based Organizations ❖ The media ❖ Electoral service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in elections and democracy education <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure peaceful conduct of elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Right to freely exercise civic and political rights <input type="checkbox"/> Be informed about elections and democratic rights <input type="checkbox"/> Economic empowerment
❖ Women, youths, disabled organizations, and other special-need groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Register as voters <input type="checkbox"/> Vote in election <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in elections and exercise democratic rights <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate for equitable inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Free, fair and credible elections <input type="checkbox"/> Equitable political participation
❖ International Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lend technical, financial and political support to the NEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strengthened capacity and professionalism of the NEC <input type="checkbox"/> Free, fair and credible elections <input type="checkbox"/> Political and economic stability of Liberia <input type="checkbox"/> Regional and sub-regional integration

CHAPTER 3: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The electoral environment of Liberia, like all functioning democracies, is driven by a number of contextual forces. These forces need to be managed well in order to sustain the peace, and foster democracy. Key among these contextual factors are political, electoral, socio-economic and demographic considerations.

3.1 Political Context

The uncertainty that marked Liberia's political environment prior to the 2017 General Elections is now history. In 2017, the people of Liberia empowered few of their compatriots through the electoral process to take decisions on their behalf. It is now in the purview of these leaders to take decisions that will sustain the political stability of the country, and not undermine the progress made.

The 2017 General Elections and the resulting political transition is a very important milestone in the democratic process in Liberia. The election and inauguration of a new government marked the first time since 1944 that executive authority was transferred from one elected president to another. The elections took place on the heels of the transfer of security responsibilities from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to Liberian security sector. Just before the 2017 Elections, UNMIL substantially scaled down its peacekeeping operations in Liberia after 15 years of operations. Besides, Liberia's transition from the five-year Agenda for Transformation (AfT) had just ended and the country was in the process of preparing another development plan.³

Since Liberia assumed security responsibilities in 2017, there has been no major security problems. The country's security forces successfully provided security for the 2017 General Elections.

Meanwhile, Liberia remains politically fragmented. At the time of the 2017 General Elections, Liberia had 26 registered political parties. Of that number, 16 parties and one coalition consisting of three constituent parties participated in the 2017 General Elections. This political fragmentation and the acrimonious 'war of words' that characterized the political campaigns have essentially aggravated an already politically polarized situation in the nation. Many people still remain bitter given that their expectations were not met. Therefore, there is a need to reconcile the nation and reduce the current political tension.

The new government has proposed a national development plan, coined "The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)." The plan is "designed to give power to the people, diversify the economy, promote sustainable peace and encourage good

³ Governance Commission, Liberia (2017). *Annual Governance Report, Government of Liberia*, p ix

governance.”⁴ Meanwhile, Liberians wish that the country remains peaceful and stable, even as people face increasing levels of hardship, evidenced by public reactions on various media outlets. In the meantime, the issue of corruption remains on the forefront of national political discourse, even in the first eight months of the new administration. Public anxiety may be heightened if things do not change for the better to improve the lives of ordinary Liberians.

The NEC is aware that care must be taken in handling all of these political situations because the successful implementation of this strategic plan will depend largely on the political stability of the country because democracy can only thrive when there is peace and stability.

3.2 Electoral Context

Liberia’s history is replete with instances where the country suffered the consequences of inadequately managed elections. For instance, the election of 1870 witnessed the forceful removal of President Edward J. Roye from power through a mob action. Besides, circumstances surrounding the 1927 election forced President Charles D. B. King out of power. And the 1985 election which was supposed to transition the country from military rule to democracy was considered by many, including the international community, as not being free, fair and credible. These election challenges, among other governance issues, served as triggers for the 14-year civil conflict that destroyed not only lives and the infrastructure of the nation, but also reversed the growth and development of the country.⁵

Amid these challenges, Liberians remain unperturbed in their belief that democratic governance remains the right path to the stability and development of the country. Consequently, following several years of civil conflict, Liberians returned to the democratic process of governance by agreeing to implement the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which was signed in 2003. The CPA followed the intervention of the international community led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to end the civil war that had run intermittently for fourteen years.

Democratic elections were conducted on October 11, 2005 to end the devastating civil conflict in the country. The 2005 General Elections were organized and conducted by the newly established Liberian Electoral Management Body (EMB) with huge technical, supervisory, advisory and financial support of the international community, led by the Electoral Division of the United Nations.

Since the return to democratic rule in 2005 and, prior the 2017 General Elections, Liberia has had several successful elections: the general elections of 2011, the national referendum of 2011, the special senatorial election of 2014 and fifteen (15) senatorial and representative by-elections. The peaceful conduct of these elections bears testimony of the level of

⁴ The World Bank Group (2018). *Liberia Political and Economic Overview*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview>

⁵ Governance Commission, Liberia (2017). *Annual Governance Report, Government of Liberia*, p.19

improvement in the democratic process. All the same, the current socio-economic situation in the country is a cause for concern, and thus needs to be keenly considered when planning for the administration of elections for the next six years.

3.3 Socio-Economic and Demographic Contexts

Liberia's economy remains under stress and there are uncertainties about recovery in the immediate future. According to the World Bank country report on Liberia (2018), the country's economy is still struggling to recover fully from the effects of multiple shocks in recent years. The report names the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak, collapse of commodity prices, UNMIL drawdown and the perception of risk associated with the political transition in January 2018 as factors that underlie the current dire economic situation of the country.

Though real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2017 is estimated to have recovered up to 2.5% and is projected to rise to 3.0% in 2018, the report stresses that the incipient recovery is driven largely by increased production of gold and iron ore. This may have been stimulated by uptick in the prices of gold and iron ore on the international market. Besides, the report points out that the non-mining sector GDP growth remains very low while the agricultural sector growth remains subdued due to weak recovery in global prices of rubber and palm oil.

Moreover, the Bank reports that inflation continued to rise during the year, reaching an all-time high of 24% in June 2018 from 10.8% the same period last year. The world Bank report attributed this largely to a sharp drop in foreign exchange supply (30% - following the drop in the exports and donor inflows), in the face of relatively rigid demand for U.S. dollars and rising global oil prices. The inflationary impact of Liberian Dollars (LD) depreciation is said to be magnified in the context of highly dollarized Liberian economy.⁶

The Bank report further asserts that fiscal deficit increased to 5.2% of GDP in FY 2018 compared to 4.8% of GDP in FY17. This is due to a significant shortfall in revenues and higher than anticipated non-discretionary expenditures. The shortfall in revenues, which the report puts at 20% of the approved budget, is reportedly due to the slower than anticipated economic activities due to prolonged period of political uncertainty, tax waiver policies in the run up to the presidential elections, unresolved court dispute with respect to the collection of petroleum levy and lower than projected donor grants. Public sector wage bill as a percent of GDP overshoot its target by one percentage point to 9.9% of GDP. Overall, the core non-

⁶ The World Bank Group (2018). *Liberia Political and Economic Overview*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview>

discretionary expenditures such as the wage bill and interest payments constituted about 75% of domestic revenues.⁷

These economic realities are subjecting the Liberian people to increasing poverty and suffering. With high cost of living and limited employment opportunities, the welfare of the Liberian people continues to be undermined. According to the 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), over half of the population (50.9%) is living in poverty. Poverty is more than two times higher in rural areas (71.6%) than in urban areas (31.5%) and is overall lower in Monrovia than in the rest of the country. Transfers and remittances, which used to have significant impact on alleviating the suffering of the ordinary Liberian, now have a low impact on poverty in Liberia. For the poorest and most vulnerable households, transfers are neither widely prevalent nor of high enough value to address the needs of the poor.⁸

These harsh economic realities are having profound social implications, particularly on the youths who have limited livelihood opportunities. In addition to incidents of unrest, crime and drug abuse among young people in various communities across Liberia, there are growing numbers of youths graduating from colleges and universities, without access to job to earn income. These are major vexing social issues to be attended, if the current democratic gains are to be sustained.

3.4 SWOT Analysis

In developing this Strategic Plan, the Commission considered the factors that would most likely help or hinder achievement of its mission. This was informed by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Commission, as well as the opportunities and threats that are present in the electoral environment of the Commission. Table 2 demonstrates the outcome of the SWOT analysis.

⁷ The World Bank Group (2018). *Liberia Political and Economic Overview*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview>

⁸ Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services. *Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016*, Ref. LBR_2016_HIES_v01_M. downloaded from www.lisgis.net/hies on October 25, 2018.

Table 2: SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Experienced elections management workforce ❖ Organized electoral structures in 15 counties ❖ Available strategic documents and policies for the operations of the Commission ❖ Ability to inform electorate across the country ❖ Openness to reforms and new concepts, such as gender responsiveness ❖ Available technology infrastructure ❖ Staff willingness and ability to work under difficult circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Inadequate technical skills of staff ❖ Low capacity of temporary staff ❖ Limited capacity building opportunity for staff ❖ Weak asset management systems ❖ Low staff motivation, including lack of welfare and pension scheme ❖ Unmet expectations of relationship between BoC and Secretariat ❖ Weak communication between HQ and field ❖ Delays in the payment of contracted service providers and temporary staff
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Stable political environment for elections ❖ Positive relationship with political parties ❖ Favorable legal framework guaranteeing the right to vote ❖ Available technical support from partners ❖ Strategic partnership with other EMBs ❖ Increased share of GoL contribution to elections financing ❖ Available local and international support for staff capacity building ❖ Available local and international resources to fund electoral programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Risks to political stability ❖ Lapses in justice system are exploited by some actors to undermine the elections and question the integrity of NEC ❖ Irregular climatic condition and inaccessible geographic locations across the country ❖ Low literacy levels of voters ❖ Weak institutional capacity of political parties ❖ Unemployment, poverty and low social capital among citizens ❖ Growing economic uncertainties for government to fully fund electoral activities ❖ Delays in provision of elections funds ❖ Use of private properties for electoral activities

3.5 Critical Assumptions

The SWOT analysis reveals a number of paradoxes. The workforce is considered the nexus of the Commission’s strength, yet they are in want of requisite technical skills to optimize productivity. There is a relatively stable political environment for elections; yet there are risks to stability arising from deepening political conflicts and economic uncertainties. National government underwrites the largest share of elections financing; yet prevailing economic uncertainties may affect government’s funding support for future elections.

Together, these dilemmas reveal three critical conditions that must be met to ensure the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

- ❖ Political and economic stability to foster peace and inclusive participation of citizens
- ❖ Availability of resources from national government to fund electoral activities
- ❖ Retention of a cadre of skilled and highly motivated workforce to implement the plan.

CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Chapter Four articulates the foundation of the 2018-2024 Strategic Plan. The chapter presents the foundational elements of the vision, mission and core values that will guide how the Commission will conduct business to achieve its goals and objectives. The overarching goal of the Commission is to *“contribute to the consolidation and nurturing of Liberia’s nascent democracy through the consistent and effective delivery of free, fair and credible elections at national and local levels.”*

Given the clearly defined mandate of the Commission, its central functions remain unchanged – to deliver free, fair and credible elections. Nonetheless, many new priority areas have been identified under this new strategic plan. These include, but not limited to; enhancement of public confidence in the work of the Commission, constituency delimitation, introduction of voter registration by biometric identification, and improvement of staff welfare. Overall, the operational framework is built on five pillars, elaborated into relevant goals, strategic actions, objectives, expected outcomes and indicators.

4.1 VISION

The NEC will be a credible and responsive electoral authority managing public elections in line with the Laws of Liberia and international best practices.

4.2 MISSION

As an independent electoral management body, created by the constitution, the NEC is committed to strengthening democracy and sustainable peace by regulating activities of political parties and managing free, fair, and transparent elections for the Liberian people.

4.3 CORE VALUES

Table 3: Core Values

VALUES	OUR UNDERSTANDING
Independence	<i>We will take decisions and implement actions without the influences of any person, group of persons or authority.</i>
Professionalism	<i>We strive to be a knowledgeable and skilled electoral workforce that exhibits the right attitude to its responsibility.</i>
Integrity	<i>We are committed to deliver elections based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in the Liberian Constitution, international standards and agreements – managing elections professionally and transparently throughout the electoral cycle.</i>
Impartiality	<i>We stand to ensure equity in dealing with electoral stakeholders and employ uniformity in applying the provisions of the elections law at all levels of elections administration at all times.</i>

4.4 Pillars of the Strategic Plan

The strategic plan embodies opportunities for the Commission to improve its operational processes and management practices over the next electoral cycle. The underlying drive is to optimize operational efficiency and effectiveness. This is key because the Commission is aware of the changing socio-economic and political contexts in which its mandate would be executed. Aside from considering new thematic areas, the strategic plan offers smart collective choices that would convey new dynamism in elections management in Liberia.

To this end, the strategic plan proposes measures to align with government priorities and remain responsive to the general body politics. The plan presents a cost-effective and financially sustainable proposal, and advances interventions that are acceptable to Liberia’s unique social norms and demographic reality. It also seeks to leverage existing technologies for voter registration via biometric identification, promote compliance with applicable laws; and advance environmentally friendly ways to dispose of election materials.

The idea guiding the new strategic plan is informed by the Commission’s understanding of the expectations of the Liberian people – a credible and responsive EMB. This realization comes from analysis of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats available to, or faced by the Commission. The new strategic plan aims to pursue the following strategic goals by undertaking a number of strategic actions and activities under each pillar.

4.4.1 Pillar One: Legal Framework

Liberia’s elections laws were conceived and promulgated under a military regime and modified in a post-conflict era. However, the socio-economic and political contexts of post-conflict Liberia are fast evolving, ushering new realities. Laws ought to respond to the dynamic nature of the societies or the domains which they are meant to impact. These increasing socio-economic and political complexities essentially demand realignment of the elections laws. Hence, the strategic plan seeks to revise the relevant elections laws in order to harmonize all conflicting or incoherent provisions. The aim is to ensure the elections laws are more responsive to the changing environments of the country.

The electoral guidelines are meant to operationalize the elections laws. While these guidelines are formulated by the BoC, and can be changed more easily than the elections laws, they too need to be responsive to the changing situations in the country, particularly the political and electoral domains. There is equally a need to revise these guidelines regularly to ensure their rationality and effectiveness. Thus, Liberia’s existing electoral laws and guidelines need to be re-examined with the view of strengthening them to address current conditions and circumstances and lessons learned from recent past election experiences.

A synthesis of reports from observer missions of the 2017 elections demonstrate the need for amendments of various provisions of the Liberian Constitution. The amendments are necessary to make the elections laws more robust and responsive to evolving contexts and international best practices. While these are laudable recommendations, the Commission has made a strategic choice to design its strategic plan on the basis of existing constitutional provisions. Consequently, instead of pursuing amendments of the Constitution as a strategic action, the strategic plan remains premised on the existing Constitution. This remains the backbone of the legal frame for elections management in Liberia. Nonetheless, being cognizant of these prepositions, the Commission would be open and ready to modify the strategic plan to align with any amendments to relevant provisions of the Constitution. Moreover, the NEC would be willing to support any initiative for amending the Constitution in ways that would improve election administration, such as change of election date⁹ or other articles concerning the conduct of elections.

⁹*Liberian Constitution, 1986 (Article 83 (a))*

In this strategic plan, one priority area recognized by the Commission is the need for renewed investment in elections dispute resolution. That the 2017 elections were attended by unprecedented number of complaints and court cases is clear charge for the Commission to strengthen its elections disputes management. It is uncertain whether or not the numerous court cases or complaints are good indicators that stakeholders duly understand their democratic rights associated with due process and rule of law. Previously, the Commission envisioned to reduce the number of elections related complaints and court cases. But evidence proved otherwise; hence, the Commission now proposes to effectively adjudicate these cases, instead of seeking to reduce them. Thus, there is a call to enhance the professional knowledge and skills of elections magistrates to promote effective elections disputes resolution at magisterial levels.

Table 4 portrays the strategic endeavors for the Legal Framework Pillar. The pillar contains two goals and seven strategic actions. By the end of the strategic plan period, the Commission hopes to achieve two high-level results: coherent elections laws that are in agreement with applicable national and international legal instruments; and better understanding of the elections laws and guidelines among NEC staff and key stakeholders.

Table 4: Legal Framework

LEGAL FRAMEWORK	
GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. To strengthen the Legal Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the new Elections Law • Propose amendments for legislative considerations • Revise existing guidelines • Update NEC regulations based on Supreme Court opinions
2. To enhance stakeholders' understanding of the Legal Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training modules on the revised elections laws and guidelines • Train NEC staff, lawyers, elections magistrates and hearing officers • Upgrade the knowledge of elections magistrates through sponsorship to take relevant legal courses

4.4.2 Pillar Two: Electoral Stakeholders Engagement

The Commission commits to the delivery of elections based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality. Under the Liberia Constitution, all eligible citizens, regardless of property ownership, income or ethnicity, are guaranteed the right to vote in public elections. This means the Liberian people, generally, ought to recognize that the Commission is administering the Elections Law in a free, fair and transparent manner, assuring this right. To take full advantage of their democratic rights, citizens organize themselves into

civil society organizations or political parties, which are key stakeholders with which the Commission engages.

Broadly, the Commission works with a plethora of stakeholders, all of whom have vested interests in the delivery of free, fair and credible elections. These stakeholders include not only national organizations and institutions, but members of the international community. It is of great importance that these stakeholders should have confidence in the Commission and the processes it manages in fulfilling its mandate.

The Commission has made tremendous achievements in ensuring a free, fair and transparent electoral process. Nonetheless, there are still concerns by segments of the population that the elections managed by the NEC may not have been free and fair. While this may be a problem of perception, the situation has the propensity to question the credibility of the Commission, the electoral process and the legitimacy of election results. A government is legitimate when most of the people accept it. When a large portion of the population questions the validity of the process that brings a government into power, the government seems less legitimate. Whether real or perceived, there is a problem of trust in the electoral process and the Commission that manages it. This must be addressed in meaningful ways.

In view of this, the Commission proposes a more rigorous engagement with its stakeholders to clearly establish the responsibilities of each in ensuring free, fair and credible elections are held. This fresh focus will help enhance public confidence in the work of the Commission. The Commission will strengthen collaboration with other stakeholders whose actions also determine if elections are 'free and fair,' and promote participation of minority or special-need groups. The new priorities are to employ more openness or transparency to help stakeholders better understand the work of the Commission and to encourage all stakeholders to fulfill their responsibilities. The Commission desires to undertake a perception survey to shed light on determinants of public perception about the Commission. This will help inform more effective policies and programs to design appropriate public relations campaigns. Such interventions will forge stronger collaboration with stakeholders and also enhance the image of the Commission to the general public.

In this plan, the Commission also commits to ensuring that the electoral process is accessible to all citizens. Key actions will be taken to promote equal participation of women, persons with disabilities, and youth, including outreach to residents of remote communities. Thus, stakeholders' engagement initiatives will be tailored to the needs of specific target groups.

The Electoral Stakeholders' Engagement Pillar outlines three goals and eleven actions. Under this pillar, the Commission envisions positive public opinion about its work; improved

compliance of political parties with the elections laws; and broad participation of women and other special-need groups in the electoral process. The contents of the pillar are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Electoral Stakeholders Engagement

ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT	
GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. To increase public confidence in the work of the Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct public perception survey • Update NEC communications policy • Undertake intensive public relations campaigns
2. To enhance collaboration with electoral stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train political parties and other stakeholders (CSO, media, women’s advocates, observers etc.) on revised elections laws and guidelines • Enhance compliance and enforcement of relevant elections laws • Adopt a NEC policy on special-need groups (youth, persons with a disability, remote communities, illiterate etc.) • Implement tailored interventions for special-need populations, including women and youth
3. To promote gender equality in electoral participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularize the NEC gender policy • Conduct gender awareness training for NEC staff • Mainstream gender in delivery of electoral activities • Work with political parties to ensure fulfilment of the 30% threshold for women candidates

4.4.3 Pillar Three: Elections Education & Public Information

The Commission operates in a unique environment, beclouded in a politically charged atmosphere. This environment is also characterized by high levels of illiteracy among electorate; it is blessed with a buoyant, youthful population; yet overwhelmed by huge infrastructure deficits. Majority of the geography comprises remote, rural communities, where transportation remains an acute challenge owing to bad road conditions. This situation basically affects access to basic social services, including security, education, healthcare, electricity, safe drinking water, etc. These factors present a cocktail of operational challenges that the Commission must surmount in order to fulfil its mandate of delivering free, fair and credible elections. Many Liberians do not understand their civic responsibilities to the state, and a few appreciate the important civic authority they can exercise to effect change through collective citizens’ actions.

The Commission is tasked to inform, educate, and communicate electoral schedules, processes, and decisions with the electorate. This is crucial to increase citizens' awareness, thereby enabling them to fully participate in the electoral processes, and ultimately make informed electoral decisions in the exercise of their democratic rights.

The Commission maintains its traditional civic/voter education agenda that are focused primarily on electoral education, or voter education. These activities have been used to sensitize citizens about key electoral processes in order to mobilize their participation in voter registration and voting. The Commission asserts that general civic education is outside its mandate. A comprehensive nation-wide civic education program requires a dedicated agency to assume full responsibilities to formulate policies and regulate the sector. A revised provision of the new Elections Law further buttresses this position that the Commission is mandated to provide education on elections, referenda and the democratic rights of citizens.¹⁰ However, the Commission remains committed to collaborating with relevant government agencies, civil society actors or political parties, which are better suited to assume the full responsibility for national civic education. This collaboration will ensure that issues pertaining elections and related democratic rights of citizens are addressed in any national civic education initiative.

Another area of renewed concentration is working more closely with minority groups, including persons with disabilities and the unlettered. Also, the Commission plans to improve its outreach to rural communities in order to provide enlightenment about their democratic rights and maximize their participation in electoral activities.

The Commission has limitation in terms of visibility or operational presence across all locations in the country. To compensate for this gap, the Commission often forges partnerships with an array of local and international organizations to assist with delivery of elections education. Sometimes, these partnerships were marred by conflict of interests; and in other cases, some organizations simply lacked the necessary capacities to provide the quality of services required by the Commission.

The Commission will strengthen its partnership with CSOs to deliver elections and democracy education. Measures will be put in place to strengthen the vetting processes for selecting CSOs supporting these activities. In addition to selecting qualified CSOs, it is imperative that the Commission sets up an effective system for monitoring and supervising the work of these organizations.

The Elections Education and Public Information Pillar features three goals and twelve strategic actions, as shown in Table 6. Under this pillar, the Commission envisions the following results:

¹⁰ *New Elections laws of 1986 as amended in 2016, Section 2.9 (y)*

enhanced citizens understanding of elections and their democratic rights; and inclusive participation of all citizens in electoral activities.

Table 6: Elections Educations and Public Information

ELECTIONS EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INFORMATION	
GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. To enhance citizens’ understanding of elections and their democratic rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a NEC elections and democracy education policy and operational plan • Conduct extensive elections and democracy education activities to the general public • Organize elections and democracy education initiatives targeting women, persons with disabilities, youth, the illiterates, and residents of remote communities • Engage local and traditional leaders, and advocates of ethnic and religious minorities in promoting elections and democratic rights education
2. To increase voters’ participation in elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with MoE and other agencies to promote voters’ awareness in schools • Promote service providers’ involvement in elections and democracy education campaigns • Promote equal participation of women in the electoral processes (elections education, poll workers, electoral supervisors, gender mobilizers, etc.)
3. To enhance the media’s participation in elections and democracy education campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train media practitioners to support elections and democracy education campaigns • Update NEC policy on publication of electoral information of public interest • Upgrade the NEC website • Disseminate elections and democratic education information on print and electronic media • Publish periodic articles on electoral information of public interest

4.4.4 Pillar Four: Institutional Strengthening

Over the past years, the Commission solicited the support of international partners to improve its operational effectiveness and efficiency. This was done by updating management policies, processes and procedures. Similar investments have been made to improve the Commission’s infrastructure, both at headquarters and magisterial levels, as well as enhance logistics management. Human resources remain the link for integrating the management system; as such, they are indispensable to the proper functioning of the Commission.

As revealed in the SWOT analysis, the Commission recognizes a spectrum of strengths on which it relies to fulfill its mandates. The areas of strength include experienced personnel;

organized structures at magisterial levels; available institutional and policy instruments; gender responsiveness of the Commission, and openness to embrace new technology. On the other hand, the Commission is also beset with weaknesses that gnaw its ability to effectively achieve its objectives. For example, the technical capabilities of the personnel need to be improved. Besides, they also need to be motivated in order to optimize performance. Temporary staff who are recruited to support electoral activities usually have low capacity; and field operations are often affected by inadequate communication between HQ and the field. Payments for contracted service providers and temporary staff are often delayed. At times, lines of responsibility and relationship between the BoC and the Secretariat beckons further clarification to ensure better coordination. In this direction, efforts will be made to better regulate the internal management of the NEC.

Policies and procedures have been developed to improve the management of key administrative functions such as finance, human resource, procurement and logistics, as well as facility management. In this strategic plan period, the Commission hopes to take thoughtful steps to fully operationalize these policies and procedures. More still needs to be done to strengthen information management system, as it relates to information flow and general communication coordination.

While the Commission continues to embrace reforms of its organizational structure and the way of doing business, the strategic plan proffers four new priority areas to guide efforts aimed at institutional strengthening. First, there is need to strengthen internal controls for promoting continued transparency and accountability. Efforts in this area should be directed at repositioning the Compliance and Risk Management, Internal Audit and M&E Units to play the pivotal roles of ensuring checks and balances, and adherence to existing policies.

The second area of focus is to exploit the full potential of the total workforce of the Commission. Towards this purpose, the NEC proposes to undertake performance evaluations in order to boost the productivity of staff. These efforts will strengthen the system for human resources planning, recruitment, deployment and retention so that performance evaluation follows a standard “merit-based approach.” The approach takes into account staff performance, work quality and productivity, as the basis for rewards.

The NEC commits to creating an enabling environment that promotes the general welfare of staff, not just by ensuring a stable work environment, but also working on future security, including pensions. The Commission recognizes that elections financing is the full responsibility of national government. However, looking at global and national economic trends, the NEC shall engage with relevant government ministries and agencies to take advantage of available external resources. This will help to bridge any potential funding gaps affecting its programs. This strategy is in anticipation of growing economic uncertainties that

may affect budgetary support for operations of the Commission. Furthermore, the NEC proposes to monitor campaign spending of political parties and independent candidates during election activities. With little or no institutional experience in this territory, efforts will be geared towards developing an appropriate policy framework and training staff before starting the monitoring activities.

The Institutional Strengthening Pillar outlines four goals and fourteen strategic actions, as detailed in Table 7. By the end of the strategic plan period, the Commission aims to achieve the following results: a proficient elections workforce; enhanced transparency and accountability in elections management; level playing field for all candidates canvassing for public offices; and adequate funding support for elections management.

Table 7: Institutional Strengthening

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING	
GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. To enhance human resource capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct staff performance evaluation • Promote staff professional development in relevant technical areas • Strengthen capacity of the Hearing Office • Institute a staff welfare program and pension scheme
2. To strengthen the management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt compliance and risk management policy • Implement compliance and risk management strategy • Monitor implementation of policies and procedures • Improve efficiency in procurement of elections goods, works and services
3. To improve campaign finance monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt campaign finance monitoring policy and operational plan • Train staff in campaign finance monitoring • Implement campaign finance monitoring strategy
4. To mobilize resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt resource mobilization policy • Establish a mechanism for elections finance mobilization • Implement resource mobilization strategy

4.4.5 Pillar Five: Electoral Operations

Since the return to electoral democracy in 2005, the Commission has successfully managed three general elections, two legislative elections, one referendum and fifteen senatorial and representative by-elections. These achievements have solidified the credentials of the Commission, as it continues *“to contribute to the consolidation and nurturing of Liberia’s nascent democracy through the consistent and effective delivery of free, fair and credible elections at national and local levels.”* In addition to navigating contending legal and political corridors in the execution of its mandate, the Commission has also been challenged by natural threats: bad road conditions and the deadly Ebola Virus Disease that engulfed the nation in 2014.

The 2017 General Elections presented the single most critical test to the credential and capabilities of the Commission for two reasons. These elections were arguably the most fiercely contested elections, with legal disputes of unprecedented magnitude. The Commission planned and delivered these elections with minimum external technical assistance and logistical support from partners. Previous electoral activities had been largely supported by external partners, both in terms of technical assistance and logistics. With the drawdown of UNMIL, the Commission benefited less from the usual level of air and ground logistical support to transport elections materials and personnel across the country. Another area that was harshly tested was the ability of the NEC to engage with relevant government security agencies to ensure a safe and secure atmosphere for the conduct of free and fair elections.

Without negating the need for continued support from key stakeholders, it is evident that the NEC continues to demonstrate growing capabilities in managing elections. The strategic plan seeks to explore new frontiers in elections management in Liberia. Customarily, the Commission used the Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) technology of voter registration. However, the Commission now proposes to migrate to voter registration via biometric identification. Discussions about shifting to biometric technology had been underway, especially for the conduct of the 2017 General Elections. However, the decision was deferred because there was not enough time to plan properly.

In this new electoral cycle, the Commission is poised to plan properly, collaborate with relevant partners and other government agencies to enable seamless transition to voter registration by biometric identification. Biometric technology facilitates unique identification of an individual, and as such can greatly help in preventing multiple or fraudulent registrations. The technology would also enable efficient processing of the voter roll. First, the Commission intends to explore the feasibility of accessing other national databases, including the National Identification Registry (NIR).

Another priority area under consideration is constituency delineation. There remains public dissent about the way and manner in which the Legislature handled the threshold issue in 2011. The decisions of the Legislature played a role to undermine the integrity of the electoral process in the eyes of the international community. This problem must be attended to, as Liberia moves forward to consolidate and deepen her nascent democracy. As the country prepares to conduct a new population and housing census during this electoral cycle, the Commission plans to liaise closely with the Legislature to address the question of the new population threshold, based on data from the planned census. The NEC, by law, is structurally positioned to conduct referendum should the Legislature decide to initiate constitutional reform or to take forward the proposals of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC). The strategic plan also leaves open a window of possibility to conduct local elections should it become a national priority.

The new electoral cycle lays out a mammoth electoral agenda for the Commission. To achieve these feats, the Commission will work in concert with stakeholders to implement key actions, including refurbishing local offices; enhancing warehouse facilities; adopting environment-friendly means of disposing election materials, etc.

The Electoral Operations Pillar has three goals and twelve strategic actions as depicted in Table 8. Through this pillar, the Commission expects to achieve the following results: voter registration by biometric identification; population-based electoral districting; general acceptance of elections results; and sustained peace and stability.

Table 8: Electoral Operations

ELECTORAL OPERATIONS	
GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
1. To develop a voter registration system based on biometric identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct biometric VR feasibility study • Design biometric VR platform • Integrate existing national database infrastructure into biometric VR registry • Conduct VR based on biometric identification
2. To conduct constituency delineation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Legislature to prescribe constituency threshold • Adopt constituency delineation strategy • Rollout delineation of electoral districts
3. To deliver free, fair, credible elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovate magisterial offices and warehouses • Conduct referendum • Conduct general and by-elections • Conduct local elections • Dispose of used election materials

CHAPTER 5: Strategic Framework

PILLAR 1: LEGAL FRAMEWORK						
PILLAR	GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	OWNERSHIP	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	OUTCOME INDICATORS
Legal Framework	1.1 To strengthen the legal framework	1.1.1 Review the new Elections Law	Legal	To harmonize all conflicting provisions in the new Elections Law	Coherent elections laws that align with applicable national and international legal instruments	Number of conflicting provisions of the elections laws/ regulations reconciled
		1.1.2 Propose amendments for legislative considerations	Legal			
		1.1.3 Revise existing guidelines	Legal			
		1.1.4 Update NEC regulations based on Supreme Court opinions	Legal			
	1.2 To increase stakeholders' understanding of the legal framework	1.2.1 Develop training modules on the revised elections laws and guidelines	Operations	To increase awareness among all stakeholders on the revised electoral guidelines/regulations	Better understanding of the electoral guidelines/regulations among stakeholders	Percentage of registered political parties/candidates adhering to the electoral guidelines and regulations
		1.2.2 Train NEC staff, lawyers, elections magistrates and hearing officers	Operations			
		1.2.3 Upgrade the knowledge of elections magistrates through sponsorship to take relevant legal courses	Finance & Budget	To increase the knowledge and skills of 18 magistrates in elections disputes resolution	Increased non-court settlement of elections disputes	Percentage of elections disputes cases settled outside court

PILLAR 2: ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT						
PILLAR	GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	OWNERSHIP	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	OUTCOME INDICATORS
Electoral Stakeholders Engagement	2.1 To increase public confidence in work of the Commission	2.1.1 Conduct public perception surveys	M&E	To enhance the public image of the NEC	Positive public opinion about the work of the NEC	Percentage of citizens who believe the NEC is doing a good Percentage of aspirants who comply with registration procedures Percentage of political parties whose leaders or candidates are women
		2.1.2 Update NEC communications policy	Communications			
		2.1.3 Undertake intensive public relation campaigns	Communications			
	2.2 To enhance collaboration with electoral stakeholders	2.2.1 Train political parties and other stakeholders on revised elections laws and guidelines	Operations	To increase to 75% the proportion of political parties that meet the NEC reporting requirement	Improved compliance of political parties with the elections laws	
		2.2.2 Enhance enforcement of relevant laws	Programs			
		2.2.3 Implement tailored interventions for special-need populations	Programs			
	2.3 To promote gender equality in electoral participation	2.3.1 Popularize the NEC gender policy	Programs	To increase participation of all citizens in electoral activities	Inclusive political participation of women, persons with disabilities and other minority groups	
		2.3.2 Conduct gender awareness training for NEC staff	Programs			
		2.3.3 Mainstream gender in delivery of electoral activities	Programs			
		2.3.4 Work with political parties to ensure fulfilment of the 30% threshold for women candidates	Programs			

PILLAR 3: ELECTIONS EDUCATION & PUBLIC INFORMATION						
PILLAR	GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	OWNERSHIP	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	OUTCOME INDICATORS
Elections Education and Public Information	3.1 To enhance citizens' understanding of elections and their democratic rights	3.1.1 Adopt elections and democracy education policy	Programs	To capture 100% of all of eligible citizens on the voter roll	Enhanced citizens understanding of elections and their democratic rights	Percentage of eligible citizens who register in the VR exercise
		3.1.2 Conduct extensive elections and democracy education activities for the general public	Programs			
		3.1.3 Organize elections and democracy education initiatives for special needs population	Programs			
		3.1.4 Engage local and traditional leaders, and advocates of ethnic and religious minorities in promoting elections and democratic rights	Programs			
	3.2 To increase voters' participation in elections	3.2.1 Work with MoE and other stakeholders to promote voters' awareness for in and out of school youth	Programs	To increase to 80% the share of registered voters that turnout to vote	Enhanced participation all citizens in the electoral process	Percent of applicants who register for the first-time
		3.2.2 Promote service providers involvement in elections and democracy education	Programs			Percentage of temporary staff who are women or persons with disabilities
		3.2.3 Promote equal participation of women in the electoral processes (elections education, poll workers, electoral supervisors, gender mobilizers, etc.)	Programs			

	3.3 To enhance the media's participation in elections and democracy education campaigns	3.3.1 Train media practitioners to support elections and democracy education campaigns	Operations	To increase public awareness on elections and democratic rights		
		3.3.2 Disseminate elections and democracy education information on print and electronic media	Communications			
		3.3.3 Update NEC policy on publication of information of public interest	Communications			
		3.3.4 Upgrade the NEC website	IT			
		3.3.5 Publish periodic articles on information of public interests	Communications			

PILLAR 4: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING						
PILLAR	GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	OWNERSHIP	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	OUTCOME INDICATORS
Institutional Strengthening	4.1 To enhance human resource capacity	4.1.1 Conduct staff performance evaluation	Administration	To improve the technical capacity of NEC staff	Proficient cadre of staff with skills and motivation to deliver electoral services	Number of staff who attend professional development courses
		4.1.2 Promote staff professional development in relevant technical areas	Administration			
		4.1.3 Strengthen capacity of the Hearing Office	Legal			
		4.1.4 Institute staff welfare program and pension scheme	Administration			
	4.2 To strengthen the	4.2.1 Adopt compliance and risk management policy	CRM	To enhance compliance with	Enhanced transparency	Number of sections and units

	management system	4.2.2 Implement compliance and risk management strategy	CRM	available policies of the NEC	and accountability in elections management	complying with available policies
		4.2.3 Monitor implementation of policies	Internal Audit			
		4.2.4 Improve efficiency in procurement of elections goods, works and services	Procurement			
	4.3 To improve campaign finance monitoring	4.3.1 Adopt campaign finance monitoring policy	Programs	To enforce compliance of all political parties/ candidates with the campaign finance law	'Level playing' field for all candidates canvassing for public offices	Number of political parties/candidates who adhere to the campaign finance law
		4.3.2 Train staff in campaign finance monitoring	Operations			
		4.3.3 Implement campaign finance monitoring strategy	Programs			
	4.4 To mobilize resources for financing electoral activities	4.4.1 Adopt resource mobilization policy	Budget & Finance	To secure 20% of elections budget from outside national government budgetary allocations	Adequate funding support for elections management	Percent of elections finance secured outside national budgetary support
		4.4.2 Establish mechanism for additional elections finance mobilization	Budget & Finance			
		4.4.3 Implement resource mobilization strategy	Budget & Finance			

PILLAR 5: ELECTORAL OPERATIONS						
PILLARS	GOALS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	OWNERSHIP	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	OUTCOME INDICATORS
Electoral Operations	5.1 To develop Biometric Voter Registration System and Update Voters' Roll	5.1.1 Update voter roll for 2020 Senatorial Election				
		5.1.2 Conduct biometric VR feasibility study	Data Center	To improve the efficiency of the VR process	High quality of Final Registration Roll data	Percent of FRR records without data quality issues
		5.1.3 Design biometric VR platform	Data Center			
		5.1.4 Integrate existing national database infrastructure into biometric VR registry	Data Center			
		5.1.5 Conduct voter registration based on biometric identification	Operations			
	5.2 To conduct constituency delineation	5.2.1 Liaise with Legislature to prescribe constituency threshold	Legal	To establish electoral districts based on population threshold		
		5.2.2 Adopt constituency delineation strategy	GIS			
		5.2.3 Rollout delineation of electoral districts	GIS			
	5.3 To deliver free, fair, credible elections	5.3.1 Renovate magisterial offices and warehouses	Operations	To implement electoral activities in line with laws of Liberia and international best practices	Sustained peace and stability	Incidents of elections-related violence
		5.3.2 Improve procedures for orderly and well managed polling	Operations			
		5.3.3 Conduct referendums	Operations			
		5.3.4 Conduct special senatorial election	Operations			
		5.3.5 Conduct general elections	Operations			
		5.3.6 Conduct by-elections	Operations			

		5.3.7 Conduct local elections	Operations			
		5.3.8 Dispose of elections materials	Operations			
		5.3.9 Monitor and evaluate all electoral activities	M&E			
		5.3.10 Mid-term review of the Strategic Plan	M&E			

CHAPTER 6: Monitoring & Evaluation

The practice of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is steadily evolving at the Commission, since the system was inaugurated in 2012. An M&E Policy is now in place, and the M&E Section has kicked off to a good start. A laudable progress was made in decentralizing M&E, with the employment of the ‘focus person’ strategy. This approach helped to institutionalize the functions of M&E across all sections and units. The role of the M&E Section in monitoring electoral activities of the 2017 General Elections emphasized the importance of data-driven decision making. For the first time in its history, the Commission undertook a comprehensive monitoring initiative, using electronic devices to provide timeous information on the decision-makers. This stimulated efficiency of management decision-making. Consequently, the management was able to remedy emerging problems or obstacles affecting voter registration and exhibition.

Evidence from assessing the performance of the last strategic plan suggests that the Commission needs to give more support to Monitoring and Evaluation. Apart from making more resources available for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of its programs, the Commission needs to enhance a culture of evidence-based decision making. M&E remains an integral part of the Plan, ensuring a continuous process of learning from experience. As indicated in the strategic framework, higher level results and indicators have been integrated into the strategic framework, along with relevant measureable objectives. At departmental levels, main activities, performance targets and timelines will be included in the operational plan, which complements this Strategic Plan.

There were different challenges to realizing the M&E strategy: the inter-departmental Progress Review Committee (PRC) to oversee and monitor the implementation of the strategic plan was not established. As a result, there was limited coordination and leadership to ensure plan implementation, tracking targets and timelines, evaluating progress in the implementation of activities, and resolving implementation challenges. Data collection was erratic, thereby affecting regular reporting.

The PRC needs to be enforced as a matter of urgency. The Committee will ensure periodic review to assess progress of the strategic plan implementation. The Commission has recognized the need to monitor compliance with laws, policies, procedures and guidelines instituted to strengthen its management system. This will require a strong collaboration among M&E, Compliance and Risk Management, and International Audit. With this, compliance and evaluation of policies will be the hall mark of performance monitoring during the life of this strategic plan.

Also, the Commission proposes to undertake national “perception surveys” that will help establish baseline values for several indicators. One important indicator to measure is “nature of public perception about the work of the Commission.” To facilitate implementation of the M&E strategy, a result-based M&E Plan will be developed to capture relevant data on

identified indicators, including reporting frequencies, data sources, data collection methods, etc. Within the scope of this M&E mechanism, there will be a mid-term and final review of the strategic plan.

CHAPTER 7: Indicative Timeline

Goals	Strategic Actions	Timeline (2018 – 2024)						Responsibility
		18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	
PILLAR I: LEGAL FRAMEWORK								
1.1 To strengthen the legal framework	I.1.1 Review the new Elections Law	X	X			X		Legal
	I.1.2 Propose amendments for legislative considerations		X					Legal
	I.1.3 Revise existing guidelines		X	X		X	X	Legal
	I.1.4 Update NEC regulations based on Supreme Court opinions		X	X		X	X	Legal
1.2 To increase stakeholders' understanding of the legal framework	I.2.1 Develop training modules on the revised elections laws and guidelines		X	X		X	X	Operations
	I.2.2 Train NEC staff, lawyers, elections magistrates and hearing officers		X	X		X	X	Operations
	I.2.3 Upgrade knowledge and skills of elections magistrates through sponsorship to take relevant dispute handling courses	X	X		X	X		Finance & Budget
PILLAR II: ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT								
2.1 To increase public confidence in work of the Commission	2.1.1 Conduct public perception surveys	X			X		X	M&E
	2.1.2 Update NEC communications policy	X						Communications
	2.1.3 Undertake intensive public relation campaigns	X	X	X	X	X	X	Communications
2.2 To enhance collaboration with electoral stakeholders	2.2.1 Train political parties and other stakeholders on revised elections laws and guidelines			X		X	X	Operations
	2.2.2 Enhance enforcement of relevant laws	X	X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	2.2.3 Implement tailored interventions for special-need populations	X	X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	2.3.1 Popularize the NEC gender policy	X	X	X	X	X	X	Programs

Goals	Strategic Actions	Timeline (2018 – 2024)						Responsibility
		18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	
2.3 To promote gender equality in electoral participation	2.3.2 Conduct gender awareness training for NEC staff	X	X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	2.3.3 Mainstream gender in delivery of electoral activities	X	X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	2.3.4 Work with political parties to ensure fulfilment of the 30% threshold for women candidates	X	X	X	X	X	X	Programs
PILLAR III: ELECTIONS EDUCATION & PUBLIC INFORMATION								
3.1 To enhance citizens' understanding of elections and their democratic rights	2.3.5 Adopt elections and democracy education policy	X						Programs
	3.1.1 Conduct extensive elections and democracy education activities that are sensitive to the needs of women, persons with disabilities; youth; the illiterates, and residents of remote communities		X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	3.1.2 Organize elections and democracy education initiatives targeting women, persons with disabilities; youth; the illiterates, and residents of remote communities			X	X	X	X	Programs
	3.1.3 Engage local and traditional leaders, and advocates of ethnic and religious minorities in promoting elections and democratic rights		X	X	X	X	X	Programs
3.2 To increase voters' participation in elections	3.2.1 Promote voters' awareness for in and out of school youth		X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	3.2.2 Promote service providers involvement in elections and democracy education		X	X	X	X	X	Programs
	3.2.3 Promote equal participation of women in the electoral processes (elections education, poll workers, electoral supervisors, gender mobilizers, etc.)		X	X	X	X	X	Programs

Goals	Strategic Actions	Timeline (2018 – 2024)						Responsibility
		18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	
3.3 To enhance the media’s participation in elections and democracy education campaigns	3.3.1 Train media practitioners to support elections and democracy education campaigns		X	X		X	X	Operations
	3.3.2 Disseminate elections and democracy education information on print and electronic media		X	X	X	X	X	Communications
	3.3.3 Update NEC policy on publication of information of public interest		X					Communications
	3.3.4 Upgrade the NEC website		X	X				IT
	3.3.5 Publish periodic articles on information of public interests		X	X	X	X	X	Communications
PILLAR IV: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING								
4.1 To enhance human resource capacity	4.1.1 Conduct staff performance evaluation		X	X	X	X	X	Administration
	4.1.2 Promote staff professional development in relevant technical areas	X	X	X	X	X	X	Administration
	4.1.3 Strengthen capacity of the Hearing Office			X	X	X		Legal
	4.1.4 Institute staff welfare program	X	X	X	X	X	X	Administration
4.2 To strengthen the management system	4.1.5 Adopt compliance and risk management policy	X						CRM
	4.2.1 Implement compliance and risk management strategy		X	X	X	X	X	CRM
	4.2.2 Monitor implementation of policies	X	X	X	X	X	X	Internal Audit
	4.2.3 Improve efficiency in procurement of elections goods, works and services	X	X	X	X	X	X	Administration

Goals	Strategic Actions	Timeline (2018 – 2024)						Responsibility
		18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	
4.3 To improve campaign finance monitoring	4.3.1 Adopt campaign finance monitoring policy	X						Programs
	4.3.2 Train staff in campaign finance monitoring	X						Operations
	4.3.3 Implement campaign finance monitoring strategy		X	X	X	X	X	Programs
4.4 To mobilize resources for financing electoral activities	4.4.1 Adopt resource mobilization policy	X						Finance
	4.4.2 Establish mechanism for additional elections finance mobilization	X	X		X			Finance
	4.4.3 Implement resource mobilization strategy	X	X	X	X	X	X	Finance
PILLAR V: ELECTORAL OPERATIONS								
5.1 Develop biometric and online voter registration system	5.1.1 Update voter roll for 2020 Senatorial Elections	X	X					Operations
	5.1.2 Conduct biometric VR feasibility study	X	X					Data Center
	5.1.3 Design biometric VR platform		X	X				Data Center
	5.1.4 Integrate existing national database infrastructure into biometric VR registry			X	X			Data Center
	5.1.5 Conduct VR by biometric identification				X	X		Operations
5.2 To conduct constituency delineation	5.2.1 Liaise with Legislature to prescribe constituency threshold		X					Legal
	5.2.2 Adopt constituency delineation strategy		X					GIS

Goals	Strategic Actions	Timeline (2018 – 2024)						Responsibility
		18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	
	5.2.3 Rollout delineation of electoral districts			X	X			GIS
5.3 To deliver free, fair, credible elections	5.3.1 Renovate magisterial offices and warehouses		X			X		Operations
	5.3.2 Improve procedures for orderly and well managed polling		X			X		Operations
	5.3.3 Conduct referendums		X					Operations
	5.3.4 Conduct special senatorial election	X	X	X	X	X	X	Operations
	5.3.5 Conduction general elections					X		Operations
	5.3.6 Conduct by-election	X	X	X	X	X	X	Operations
	5.3.7 Conduct local elections		X					Operations
	5.3.8 Dispose of elections materials			X			X	Operations
	5.3.9 Monitor and evaluation all electoral activities	X	X	X	X	X	X	M&E
	5.3.10 Mid-term review of the Strategic Plan			X				M&E



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