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Liberia Elections and Political Transition (LEPT): Pause and Reflect Project Review

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LIBERIA ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL TRANSITION (LEPT): PAUSE AND REFLECT PROJECT REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS

BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
BSEM	Building Sustainable Elections Management
CDC	Congress for Democratic Change
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CJPS	Center for Justice and Peace Studies
COP	Chief of Party
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Civic and Voter Education
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DG	Democracy & Governance
ECC	Elections Coordinating Committee
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GoL	Government of Liberia
GRTL	Get Ready to Lead
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IPCC	Inter-Party Consultative Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
LASS	Liberia Administration and System Strengthening
LEAP	Liberia Electoral Access and Participation
LEON	Liberia Election Observation Network
LSA	Liberia Strategic Analysis
LWM	Liberia Women's Manifesto
NAYMOTE	National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Electoral Commission
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PRR	Provisional Registration Roll
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SI	Social Impact
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SOW	Statement of Work
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	UN Mission in Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

USAID's funding for the Liberia Elections and Political Transition (LEPT) activity has dedicated assistance to Liberia's electoral system from January 2015 through December 2019. LEPT improves the electoral process through two objectives: 1) to strengthen the National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Liberia to manage the electoral cycle, and 2) to increase the capacity of Liberian civil society to engage in election processes through election monitoring, civic and voter education, and greater leadership and political skills for female political candidates and advocates for women's issues. The NEC capacity building and electoral assistance component under LEPT's first objective is implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), while the civil society strengthening activities under the second objective are led by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

PROJECT REVIEW PURPOSE AND REVIEW QUESTIONS

The purpose of this project review is to assess progress and achievements, discuss weaknesses and how certain obstacles to success have been addressed, look at coordination of LEPT and other election assistance activities, and provide actionable recommendations to ensure effective program delivery ahead of the October 10, 2017 presidential and legislative elections. This report and its findings are based on a review of relevant project and background documents, thirty key informant interviews (KIIs) with partners and stakeholders, and discussions during three "pause and reflect" sessions with partners and select stakeholders during the week of July 31, 2017.

The project review of LEPT seeks to answer five review questions:

1. Program Achievements: Assess the success of the program in achieving its objectives to date;
2. Obstacles and Strategies for Managing Them: Identify any obstacles to implementation and evaluate how effectively the program is responding to these challenges;
3. Weaknesses: Identify deficiencies in performance to date;
4. Coordination: Assess coordination between LEPT and other election programming;
5. Recommendations: Provide specific, actionable recommendations for the remainder of the activity.

EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

EVALUATION DESIGN

This report and its findings are based on a review of relevant project and background documents, KIIs with activity partners and stakeholders, and discussions during three "pause and reflect" sessions with project partners and select stakeholders during the week of July 31, 2017. Documents reviewed included the LEPT agreement, Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), annual, quarterly, and weekly reports, as well as other relevant publication on the political and electoral situation in Liberia. KIIs were conducted with 30 individuals, based on a series of semi-structured and open-ended questions based following the five guiding questions for this review. Key informants included project implementing staff, NEC officials, donor representatives, including USAID, civil society representatives, and election observers. Interviews were conducted during two visits to Liberia in July 2017.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations apply when interpreting the data and findings in this report:

- The short timeframe for the review, which means all monitoring data was self-reported by the LEPT implementing partners and could not be independently verified.
- Insights and analyses presented by respondents in KIIs reflect the individual informant's perception of achievements and weaknesses rather than an objective truth. Perceptions among different stakeholders of the same project element may vary significantly. Wherever possible, the report attempts to reflect those differing perceptions for every key finding.
- Even though a wide range of informants were interviewed during the three weeks in country, not all project stakeholders are equally represented due to time constraints and respondents' incompatible schedules. IFES' and NDI's Liberian civil society implementing partners were harder to reach and schedule and are not as well represented in the sampling as desired.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

I. PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

The Big Picture: Election Preparations on Track

Overall election preparations are on track, as demonstrated by a generally positive assessment of the electoral context in Liberia by key informants, election observers, and the media:

- **Registration of voters and candidates have been successfully conducted**, with 2.18 million Liberians registered to vote and 966 candidates approved to run for president and 73 seats in parliament.
- **Most Liberians are confident that NEC will conduct open and credible elections.** NEC is regarded as being impartial by a majority of Liberians and all project stakeholders believe that NEC is doing its best in preparing for genuinely free and fair elections.
- **Political parties have been largely supportive of NEC, compliant with commitments to conduct peaceful election campaigns, and abide by the electoral laws** and legal dispute resolution channels.
- **There is genuinely open democratic debate** in the country in the run-up to the elections, and most experts think that the **potential for political violence is low.**

Activity Relevance

LEPT interventions were generally well targeted and addressed several deficiencies identified during previous elections and in various assessments of NEC's capacity to manage the election cycle. These include transparency in voter registration; providing clear, sufficient, and timely voter education; clear public communication; building stronger relationships with political parties while holding them to strict standards of conduct; and improving participation of women as voters and candidates in elections.

Implementation Achievements

IFES

Sound technical advice and guidance given by IFES to NEC was highly appreciated by NEC officials and helped the Commission to stay broadly on track with its electoral preparations.

The strong relationship IFES forged with NEC and the UNDP election assistance project allowed IFES to positively weigh in on many NEC decisions and activities and to ensure that the two major donor-funded election assistance projects are complementary.

LEPT-IFES was highly responsive to NEC's needs, filled NEC's funding gaps, and assisted in variety of ways that were not originally planned. This gap filling function has been a critical contribution to allow NEC to fulfill its mandate in the absence of sufficient and timely GoL election funding.

Review and amendment of regulations. LEPT-IFES provided critical support to NEC in reviewing and revising key election regulations regarding voter registration, campaign finance, polling and counting, electoral districting, and the organization of a referendum ahead of the 2017 election cycle.

IFES upgraded NEC's data center with hardware, technical expertise, and capacity building support for NEC IT staff to increase its capacity for recording, processing, and analyzing of voter registration data and printing updated voter rolls.

IFES helped improve the knowledge and skills of NEC technical and managerial staff in various areas of electoral process management following the BRIDGE¹ methodology: strategic and financial planning, civic and voter education, election logistics and warehouse management, and the role of media during elections.

LEPT-IFES enabled NEC to integrate gender and concerns of persons with disabilities (PWD) in the electoral process through the deployment of technical experts on gender and disability inclusion and the review and revision of NEC's internal processes and election staff training manuals.

NEC's communication capacity was improved by the project, in particular its internet and social media presence, and regular, nationally broadcast radio programming.

IFES helped NEC to improve its stakeholder engagement with political parties through the Inter-Party Consultative Committee (IPCC) and more regular and proactive information sharing on key NEC decisions and challenges with political parties.

IFES provided relevant hardware and critical communications infrastructure for NEC Magistrate offices in the counties. This included office equipment, generators to ensure the supply of electricity, and internet connections.

IFES has given significant support to NEC's civic and voter education (CVE) section by providing funding for printing CVE materials and giving sub-grants to 27 civil society organizations (CSOs) to conduct CVE activities countrywide. While this was a positive contribution overall, the lateness of CVE materials and sub-grant approval and distribution hindered effectiveness.

NDI

NDI's CSO strengthening and engagement activities demonstrated a significant degree of flexibility and responsiveness to changes in context and unforeseen circumstances and, thus, ensured that activities remained relevant, notably with respect to civic and voter education activities and by adding a women's leadership component.

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) established itself as a credible and critical observer of the electoral process in Liberia with guidance and financial support from NDI, as a sub-grantee of LEPT.

NDI boosted civic and voter education through support to five CSOs partners in 60 districts in six counties through radio programming and more innovative methodologies such as community

¹ Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) is a series of standardized tools and modular training sessions to train election professionals on specific technical issues. The modules have been jointly developed by major election assistance organizations including UNDP and IFES.

dialogue meetings, street theater, sports events, and sessions at workplaces, markets and other public places.

NDI promoted the involvement of women in the electoral process through its women's leadership training program for 138 women activists, political managers, and candidates and formulated of a Women's Policy Platform to ensure women's concerns are heard during the election campaign.

2. OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THEM

NEC has full responsibility to manage the 2017 elections, where **limited NEC capacity** means that imperfect internal processes sometimes **impact the effectiveness and coherence of LEPT activities**. IFES is respectful of NEC's primacy and seeks to influence NEC informally, but ultimately, IFES is often limited in the implementation of its activities by NEC's decisions.

Limited and late GoL funding for NEC affects the NEC elections' preparations calendar. LEPT has addressed this by often stepping in to fill funding gaps for activities that are critical for sound election preparations.

NEC-produced CVE material production delays affected program implementation by LEPT partners for voter registration and exhibition of the provisional registration roll (PRR).

Political dynamics among women's CSOs were a challenge for completing, adopting, and rolling out a Liberia's Women Policy Platform, which was in the end only possible by discontinuing the collaboration with some Women CSO leaders who tried to exert greater control of the process.

3. WEAKNESSES

Implementation Weaknesses

Delays in program delivery were one of the key weaknesses, specifically procurement of commodities for NEC by IFES and sub-grants for IFES' CSO partners.

NEC's external communication has remained weak, and IFES' assistance to NEC's communications section has not always had the desired effect, although NEC's ability to regularly and credibly communicate with key stakeholders and the electorate improved in the months before this review was conducted.

Tensions between LEPT implementing partners and the lack of a joint project vision within the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes (CEPPS) consortium have at times affected the management and implementation of LEPT, notably with respect to civic and voter education.

Reactiveness and lack of strategic vision is reflected in the absence of a clear capacity building strategy for the NEC, including how longer-term NEC capacity building and shorter-term electoral assistance to prepare for the 2017 elections complement each other. Since NEC capacity building activities are poorly articulated, there is no clear evidence that NEC's medium to longer term capacity was successfully strengthened as a result of LEPT.

LEPT has a weak monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework due to weak and generic indicators that do not capture genuine overall progress and the absence of indicators for certain activities.

The scale and reach of CVE activities is uncertain. CVE activities are implemented by a wide range of CSOs supported by IFES and NDI using varied approaches. There is no common understanding of the

advantages, disadvantages, and effectiveness of these various efforts. All data that suggest LEPT CVE activities reached more than \$1 million individuals are based on self-reported data.

Underlying Tensions

There is a tension inherent in the activity design between supporting NEC in all its efforts and supporting civil society to play the role of checks and balances to NEC. The tension between these two different visions has caused friction between LEPT implementing partners and a lack of a joint vision.

LEPT struggles continuously with the **tension between supporting NEC in all its needs for preparing for the 2017 elections and the original project goal – to build NEC’s longer-term capacity** to more autonomously manage the election cycle.

Another tension is between those election stakeholders who **focus on the quality of outcomes and those who focus on the quality of the processes to achieve the outcomes**, which at times leads to widely varying perceptions of how effective LEPT activities are and how well election preparations are going.

4. COORDINATION

Coordination between implementing partners has not always been smooth and requires continued attention to ensure all project partners maximize their contributions to LEPT’s outcomes.

Coordination between IFES, NEC, and UNDP has been strong.

Coordination among donors and between donors and NEC/election stakeholders focuses on information sharing rather than genuine joint planning (between donors). There are a multitude of multilateral and bilateral meetings that take up stakeholders’ time.

There is a large number of election observation coordination missions that will require close coordination in the weeks before the elections, during the elections, and its aftermath.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ease or resolve some of the activity weaknesses and tensions, the following actions are recommended:

- **Keep up the current flexible, responsive assistance to NEC** until after inauguration day.
- Continue to **build trust among LEPT implementing partners and reaffirm joint goals** for LEPT and **ensure the activity speaks with one voice.**
- **Focus on outcomes and less on processes** since processes are imperfect. However, review and improve the M&E framework to be able to track both processes and outcomes more closely.
- **Conduct regular joint planning sessions between key election donors and implementing partners** instead of simply sharing information.
- **Conduct an in-depth study of the reach and impact of CVE efforts**, including NEC’s reach via social media and its website.
- **Reevaluate the frequency and quality of LEPT reporting** since there is frequent reporting, but stakeholders still do not feel well informed at times.
- **Develop a stronger capacity building approach for NEC** for 2018 and 2019.
- Consider a **more sustainable, less cyclical approach to assistance for CSOs for election observation and civic and voter education.**

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The October 10, 2017 presidential and legislative elections will mark another milestone in Liberia's post-war recovery with the end of president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's constitutional two-term mandate and the first transfer of power from one elected president to another. Despite the generally positive experience of the 2005 and 2011 elections and the seal of approval of international election observation missions, there are lingering doubts among opposition supporters as to the fairness of President Johnson Sirleaf's victory in both elections. Democratic culture is not well rooted in Liberian society yet, and elections remain moments of heightened tension that could spark violence and have the potential to either strengthen or weaken the country's democratic institutions in the years to come.

Liberians generally are quite skeptical of the electoral process and commonly assume that the electoral process may not be entirely free and fair.² Many Liberians, in particular supporters of George Weah and the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), suggest that the 2005 run-off elections were swung in favor of President Johnson Sirleaf with help from the international community. The CDC boycott of the second round in the 2011 elections also played to a similar theme. In this context, if the 2017 elections are not credibly run, widespread suspicion of the country's elites and international actors manipulating political processes could grow, undermine the effectiveness of future governments, and even escalate to violence. It might contribute to further voter apathy and disillusionment with the country's political leaders and lead to greater populism and non-democratic ways of seizing power in the future.

Even though the 2005 and 2011 elections were generally well run within the confines of a resource-poor post-conflict context, this can partly be explained by the significant international involvement and considerable material, operational, and logistical assistance by UNMIL, international donors, and experts. This support has been significantly scaled down for the 2017 elections, and the NEC is fully in charge of managing the elections with international donors and actors playing a secondary and supporting role. Therefore, there will be even greater focus on and scrutiny of the NEC's management of the electoral process. The stakes are high for LEPT to succeed and effectively assist the NEC in fulfilling its mandate.

USAID'S ELECTION ASSISTANCE

USAID is providing comprehensive programming to support Liberia's NEC and CSOs in the run-up to the 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections through LEPT, a \$17 million cooperative agreement with the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes (CEPPS).

The LEPT implementation period is from January 2015 through December 2019. Its primary purpose is twofold: to strengthen the NEC to manage the whole cycle leading up to, during, and after the October 2017 parliamentary and presidential elections, and to increase the capacity of Liberian civil society to engage in election processes by improving the ability of CSOs to effectively monitor the preparations and conduct of elections, contribute to civic and voter education (CVE), and prepare Liberian women to take on a greater leadership role in public life and elected institutions.

² In the 2015 USAID LEAP survey, 47% of respondents said that they think that vote buying is common - ("most people" or "almost everyone" does it) and 49% of respondents suggested that "trucking" voters to polling stations is "very common" or "somewhat common." USAID, Liberia Electoral Access and Participation (LEAP) Survey 2015, 16 July 2015, 18.

LEPT has two objectives. The first is to increase the capacity of the NEC to manage the full election cycle. This is implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The second objective is to promote meaningful CSO engagement in the election process. This is implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

LEPT is designed to contribute to the overall USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objective One (DOI), which focuses on “more effective, accountable, and inclusive governance” with a broad Democracy and Governance (DG) portfolio with Intermediate Result 1.3 specifically addressing “Strengthened capacity to implement election processes.”

PROJECT REVIEW PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

USAID/Liberia’s Office of Democracy and Governance requested the Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA) activity to conduct a project review of LEPT considering the impending elections and because a significant portion of LEPT activities (CSO strengthening, CVE, women’s leadership) will come to an end in mid-2018, just after a full mid-term evaluation is due.

Project reviews, or “pause and reflect” exercises, are relatively new tools USAID Project Managers are encouraged to use to improve learning, ensure relevance and progress, and adapt to changing circumstances as needed.³ A “pause and reflect” exercise is defined as a “component of learning and adaptive management, the act of taking time to think critically about ongoing activities and processes and to plan for the best way forward.”⁴ The project review was not a full-fledged evaluation of the LEPT activity, but it was a formal exercise during which implementers, collaborators, and stakeholders were encouraged to be self-reflective and to assess progress, strengths, and weaknesses of implementation to date to ensure the activities remain relevant and contribute to the organization of credible elections.

The project review of LEPT seeks to answer five questions:

1. Program Achievements: Assess the success of the program in achieving its objectives to date;
2. Obstacles and Strategies for Managing Them: Identify any obstacles to implementation and evaluate how effectively the program is responding to these challenges;
3. Weaknesses: Identify deficiencies in performance to date;
4. Coordination: Assess coordination between LEPT and other election programming (USAID-funded and otherwise);
5. Recommendations: Provide to specific, actionable recommendations for the remainder of the activity based on the project review findings.

³ USAID. *ADS Chapter 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy*. Washington, DC. Partial revision 12 July 2017, 79-80; 151.

⁴ USAID ADS Chapter 201, 151.

PROJECT REVIEW DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

The project review relied on two main sources of information:

- Review of relevant project documents: Activity agreement and statement of work, Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), workplans, M&E tracking sheets, annual, quarterly, and weekly reports, as well as publicly available sources. These included news articles, assessments, and studies on the political and electoral context in Liberia.
- Key informant interviews: Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 30 individuals⁵, including LEPT implementing staff, NEC officials, donor representatives, civil society representatives, and election observers. These interviews were conducted during two visits to Liberia in July 2017.

KIIs were conducted as semi-structured questions following the themes of the review: project achievements and weaknesses; obstacles and approaches to overcome them; coordination among election implementers and donors; as well as questions related to the broader electoral context and the status of election observation. Specific questions were adjusted to the recipient's particular role in the election process. Senior implementing staff were interviewed twice to follow up on specific issues and themes that arose in the process.

The relatively short timeframe for the project review and the reliance on information gleaned from KIIs and self-reported project data meant that there are limitations to the data and insights presented.

First, the only quantitative data consulted during the project review was self-reported monitoring and evaluation data by the implementing partners and their civil society partners (where relevant) on the numbers of individuals trained and estimates of recipients of CVE efforts. It was not possible to independently verify the monitoring data for accuracy within the scope of the project review.

Second, the reliance on KIIs meant that most insights presented reflect individuals' perceptions of processes and success and deficiencies of LEPT. While information was triangulated where possible (between activity documents and KIIs; between different key informants), various stakeholders depending on their organizational affiliation and role do not necessarily agree on why certain things happened and their impact on LEPT implementation. This review sought to represent these different perceptions as accurately as possible. It does not present any objective "truth" of LEPT's achievements, strengths, and weaknesses.

Third, while attempts were made to interview a representative range of stakeholders, the short timeframe, the timing during the (European, North American) "summer" vacation season and close to the elections meant that not all potential KII respondents were available, and interviews could not always be sequenced as desired. Liberian civil society partners were generally harder to schedule, and only a limited number of the CSOs that implement a significant part of LEPT, notably CVE activities, could be interviewed. A few critical stakeholders including senior IFES and USAID personnel could only be interviewed toward the end of the KII period due to travel, even though their thoughts and insights would have been beneficial to inform and shape certain lines of questioning.

⁵ The 30 respondents break down as follows: IFES: 4; NDI: 2; NEC: 6; civil society: 7; donors and other stakeholders (UNMIL, election observers): 10.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section sets out the findings of the project review with relation to each of the review questions. Conclusions based on the findings are reported for each category of question.

I. PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

THE BIG PICTURE: ELECTION PREPARATIONS ON TRACK

Many respondents in KIs felt it important to point out that, in their assessment, preparations for the October 10 elections are largely on track. This feeling that election preparations are going more or less according to plan has grown stronger since the start of the project review period in early July thanks to NEC reaching critical electoral timeline milestones.

Successful Registration. The fact that 2.18 million Liberians registered to vote – 49 percent of whom are women – is seen as a significant accomplishment and demonstrated that the NEC’s national registration exercise, despite certain shortcomings in the process including defective cameras and registration forms, was successful. Even though critics suggested that this figure fell short of the target of 2.5 million registrants suggested by NEC itself,⁶ election stakeholders consider 2.18 million a solid number, representing between 80 and 85 percent of all eligible Liberian voters.⁷ Similarly, they felt that the nomination of candidates was successful as shown by the 966 registered candidates for president, vice-president, and 73 parliamentary seats, including 154 women (16 percent of all candidates). Even though the share of female candidates fell short of the 30 percent voluntary target set in the 2014 Elections law, this is seen as an improvement compared to the 2011 elections, which had 9 percent women candidates. The NEC had to make slight adjustments to the electoral calendar by pushing back the voter ID replacement period by one week. The date for the start of the campaign period was observed as planned, and all subsequent dates appear to be on track (as of early August). Some observers have also noted improved public communications and outreach by the NEC during July and early August 2017.

Relative Confidence in the NEC. Most recent analyses and studies were optimistic about the prospect for open, peaceful, and credible elections. NDI’s long-term observer mission concluded in its pre-election assessment that, “All Liberians with whom the delegation met expressed a resolute commitment to nonviolence and peaceful elections...they expressed general confidence in the NEC’s commitment to running credible elections.” The delegation of observers went on to state, “The October 2017 elections will be conducted within an open political environment. The NEC is regarded by most electoral stakeholders as an independent and impartial institution.”⁸ This matches earlier survey data that indicated that Liberians, despite some skepticism about the electoral process, overall have confidence in the NEC.

⁶ Johnston, Thomas T. NEC Targets 2.5 Million Voters. *Daily Observer* (online). December 21, 2016. Available at: <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/nec-targets-2-5-million-voters/> (accessed August 10, 2017).

⁷ Analysis by key informants from IFES and the NEC. The number of 2.18 million registered voters suggests that almost 300,000 Liberians were added to the voter lists as compared to the 1.90m voters on the 2014 voter roll. This includes 108,000 Liberians who turned 18 in the past year. NEC statistics for 2017 can be found here: http://necliberia.org/pg_img/Summary%20of%20Voter%20Registrants.pdf (accessed Aug. 10, 2017); statistics for 2014 are here: http://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/VRUREPORT_2014_Final1.pdf (accessed Aug. 10, 2017).

⁸ NDI. *Statement of the NDI Pre-election Assessment mission to Liberia’s 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections*. Monrovia, February 20-24, 2017.

The 2015 LEAP survey commissioned by USAID found that a large majority of Liberians had quite positive views of the NEC and its voter education efforts as well as the conduct of the 2014 senatorial elections.⁹

Political Party Compliance. The fact that challenges to the candidate nomination broadly followed legal channels was seen as further proof of orderly and peaceful election preparations. Political parties have repeatedly and publicly reaffirmed their commitment in the September 23, 2016 Ganta Resolution on a violence-free election¹⁰ and the Farmington River Declaration of June 4, 2017, in which 20 of the major political parties pledged before the assembled heads of state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to conduct elections peacefully and to pursue legal channels for all electoral challenges.¹¹

Low Potential for Violence and Political Openness. The potential for violence during the electoral process is seen as low and, if it did occur, limited to localized incidents. There is no indication that individuals or old networks of armed actors are preparing to mobilize around the elections.¹² Even though Liberians are generally not impressed with the performance of the current government and their elected representatives,¹³ there seems to be genuine civic culture of open political debate taking hold at least in Monrovia with Liberians of all walks of life freely discussing the elections, the chances for various presidential candidates and tickets on radio and in the streets.

While it is hard to assess LEPT's direct contribution to this favorable electoral context, several key informants credit the activity with improving the capacity of the NEC by offering strategic advice to the Commission, assisting NEC leadership with making sound technical decisions, and addressing important gaps within NEC's financial, human, and technical resources. Similarly, LEPT's support for civil society strengthened CSOs' ability to critically engage the electoral process and remind NEC and political parties of their responsibilities. LEPT has made a critical contribution to boosting the participation of female candidates and making women's policy concerns heard in the 2017 elections. The following sections will discuss LEPT's contributions in greater detail.

ACTIVITY RELEVANCE

The LEPT interventions appear relevant and address a number of deficiencies recorded by election observation missions in 2011 and needs assessments conducted subsequently.

Key gaps identified during the 2011 elections relate to operational gaps and NECs ability to:

- Provide materials and field well-trained and knowledgeable election officials across all polling stations on election day;
- Ensure that all vote counting and tallying procedures are clearly understood;
- Provide clear and easy-to-comprehend voter education materials, clean and update voter rolls, and make final voter rolls available to parties and observers;

⁹ Sixty-eight percent of respondents thought the NEC's management of the 2014 Senatorial Elections was "very good" or "fairly good" and 77 percent felt that the NEC's voter education efforts were "very good" or "fairly good." USAID. *LEAP Survey*. 2015, 15-16.

¹⁰ The declaration of available on the NEC website:

http://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/Resolution%20of%20Political%20Parties.pdf (accessed August 10, 2017).

¹¹ Brooks, Cholo. 20 Political Parties Make Commitment to ECOWAS Leaders, Sign Declaration for Peaceful 2017 Election. Global News Network Liberia (online). 6 June 2017, available at <http://gnnliberia.com/2017/06/06/20-political-parties-make-commitment-ecowas-leaders-sign-declaration-peaceful-2017-election/> (accessed August 10, 2017).

¹² Democracy International Inc. *Liberia Conflict Vulnerability Assessment – Final Report (External)*. USAID: Monrovia. May 2016.

¹³ Sixty-five percent of respondents in a large-scale but non-representative mobile phone survey suggested that they were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the performance of current lawmakers. Naymote Partners for Democratic Development. *Mobile Phone Survey Report: Citizens Attitudes Towards Current Lawmakers in Liberia*. Monrovia, May 22, 2017.

- Communicate clearly and frequently throughout the pre-electoral and election processes with the political parties and the broader electorate;
- Enforce the code of conduct for political parties more strictly;
- Strengthen electoral dispute resolution mechanisms; and
- Ensure an increase in the participation of women as candidates and voters in elections.

Transparency in voter registration, providing clear, sufficient, and timely voter education, clear public communication, and building stronger relationships with political parties while holding them to strict standards of conduct were considered to be particularly relevant for instilling trust in the electoral system and preventing tensions and contest of election results.¹⁴

Similar challenges and priorities were raised in the 2012 NEC/UNDP Capacity and Needs Assessment report,¹⁵ the 2015 USAID/IFES Electoral Process Diagnostic,¹⁶ and in the revised NEC Strategic Plan 2012-2018.¹⁷

LEPT program design explicitly addresses the NEC’s institutional capacity to manage the electoral cycle with a specific focus on institutional capacity building, communications, managing relationships with stakeholders, civic and voter education, and the promotion of female participation in the electoral process.

Key informants felt that LEPT was well targeted and covered the appropriate technical areas of support to the electoral process, as well as in its assistance to CSOs and its targeting of women and underrepresented groups to gain greater access to the electoral process. IFES’ interventions are also closely coordinated with the UNDP Elections Project and largely complementary to IBI/LASS’ NEC institutional capacity building activities. Respondents pointed only to one area where international assistance could have invested more: support for electoral dispute resolution and NEC’s legal department in dealing with the significant number of expected legal challenges. In early August 2017, the NEC’s legal division, with three full time staff, was still dealing with approximately 40 challenges to candidate nominations.¹⁸ Various stakeholders pointed out that there are inconsistencies between various regulations on electoral disputes, as well as between the relatively long periods for dealing with electoral challenges, as compared to the tighter election calendar that needed to be reconciled in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION ACHIEVEMENTS

LEPT implemented a large number of activities over the past 2.5 years, as shown in Annex IV. It was slow to start in 2015 and focused largely on lessons learned and assessment activities. The pace of activities accelerated in 2016 as the elections approached and NEC’s needs for organizing free and fair elections became priorities for the NEC. This section discusses the most important achievements cited by key informants. It is not a comprehensive discussion of all activities realized.

USAID Objective 1: More Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Governance

CEPPS Objective 1.1 (IFES): NEC demonstrates increased institutional capacity to perform essential functions related to elections

¹⁴ The Carter Center. *National Elections in Liberia*. Atlanta, GA: 2011, 54-57; Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA). *EISA Technical Assessment and Election Observer Mission Report: Liberia*. Johannesburg, South Africa: 2012, 77-79.

¹⁵ Getange, Kennedy Tsoy. *Capacity + Needs Assessment Report, NEC and UNDP*, Monrovia, June 2012.

¹⁶ IFES. *Electoral Process Diagnostic of Liberia’s National Elections Commission*. USAID, Monrovia 2015.

¹⁷ NEC. *NEC Strategic Plan June 2016 – June 2018*. Monrovia, 2016, 12-14.

¹⁸ UNDP agreed to support the hiring of additional temporary legal staff during the election period.

Intermediate Result 1.1.1 (IFES): Enhanced capacity of electoral officials to manage elections

Intermediate Result 1.1.2 (IFES): NEC develops and implements strengthened electoral process

Responsiveness to NEC’s Needs in Preparing for the 2017 Elections. The LEPT project has been flexible and responsive to context to adjust to changes in needs. Even though the project was designed with longer-term capacity building in mind as laid out in objective 1 (“NEC demonstrates increased institutional capacity to perform essential functions related to elections”), many LEPT activities were less focused on the long-term, but rather contributed to the shorter-term goal of preparing for the 2017 elections through support for NEC’s operations. Program activities related to NEC shifted to supporting support to ongoing electoral processes at the request of the GOL and NEC in mid-2016, resulting in IFES stepping in to fill critical gaps in NEC’s budget and capacity. Due to the GoL’s unwillingness to fully finance the elections budget in a timely manner, this additional assistance from IFES, in NEC’s own assessment, enabled NEC to conduct most necessary activities more or less according to the election preparations timeline. IFES’ and USAID’s flexibility in meeting the NEC’s needs and filling gaps in its budget was highlighted by NEC senior staff as critical contributions in the fast-moving context of the pre-election period. They praised LEPT’s flexibility and speed in approving short-term support requests and compared it favorably to the longer decision-making by UNDP and the European Union (EU). This shift in focus from long-term capacity building to shorter-term support for preparing the 2017 elections was reasonable given the importance of the October 2017 elections as a critical milestone in the further consolidation of democracy in Liberia at the end of President Johnson Sirleaf’s second term.

These short-term requests related to the funding of planning and outreach activities and the hiring of additional expertise that fell within the technical areas of focus – communications, NEC outreach, even though they were not necessarily aimed at long-term capacity building. They contributed to boosting NEC’s capacity to run the 2017 elections, often by using external and temporary expertise to fill gaps in NEC’s own capacity and human resources. This was, for example, the case at some points for the communications (website design and social media use); gender and disability inclusion; and graphical design of voter registration forms and ballots. While these were successful and critical components, the extent to which they contributed to building NEC’s longer-term capacity remains questionable (and could not be assessed here). Their medium-term impact would be a valuable question to explore in a post-2017 midterm evaluation.

Sound Technical Assistance. IFES’ technical assistance to the NEC is clearly appreciated by NEC’s senior technical officials and has helped NEC in minor and major ways to stay on course for organizing technically sound and credible elections. IFES’ technical assistance is reflected in formal technical input on NEC manuals and training materials, in informal advice and input on many of NEC’s internal decisions, and in reviewing procurement specifications. The impact of informal technical advice on election preparations is hard to gauge, not always visible, and does not seem to be formally reported by IFES. However, senior NEC officials suggest that IFES’ technical assistance bolsters their decisions and arguments with the NEC Board of Commissioners and helps them make sound decisions and stay broadly on track against their timeline. One example of this type of support has been the role of the IFES graphic design consultant, who helped draft specifications, reviewed, revised, and tested NEC’s Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) forms, and assisted NEC in designing new voter identification cards and the ballots for Election Day. The graphic designer was informally consulted by tender committee members on the technical soundness of bids.

Strong Relationship with NEC and UNDP. IFES’ technical advice is effective because it is respected within NEC. IFES has managed to build and maintain close relationships with key senior technical staff within the Commission. IFES’ COP or senior NEC leadership (NEC Chairman) and technical staff (Directors) are in daily contact with key senior directors at the NEC to work on strategic or tactical initiatives and offer technical guidance. IFES provided technical guidance and financial support (together

with UNDP and LASS) for NEC to review its strategic plan (in 2015) and update it to guide the process to the 2017 elections. IFES has provided advice to NEC in developing operational plans for NEC departments for NEC's Gender, CVE, and Communications sections. A Gender Mainstreaming Policy, was developed between the NEC's Gender Director and an IFES gender consultant in April and May 2017 and subsequently approved by the NEC Board of Commissioners. The IFES Senior Election Communications Advisor worked with the NEC Communications section in developing a communication strategy for the elections in May and June 2016, which was then integrated into NEC's strategic plan. IFES also provided significant technical input and reviewed NEC's CVE plan in late 2016.

Review and Amendment of Regulations. IFES provided critical support to NEC in reviewing and revising key election regulations regarding voter registration, campaign finance, polling and counting, electoral districting, dispute resolution, and the organization of a referendum. An IFES legal expert worked with NEC on the review, and IFES assisted NEC in organizing two review workshops with NEC Commissioners and senior technical staff to review and approve the revisions. The revisions of the regulations helped to iron out contradiction and inconsistencies in the election processes.

Communications: Internet, Social Media, and Radio Programming. Communicating to the electorate and key stakeholders the objectives, technical aspects, and timelines of the election process is an essential function for election officials. In the past, NEC has been criticized by stakeholders and observers for insufficient strategic communication with key stakeholders and the public. More recent criticism centered around lapses in communication during the registration and provisional registration role (PRR) exhibition periods. Most observers concede that NEC's communications have improved in recent months due to IFES assistance. In light of the weakness of NEC's communication section, IFES relied largely on expatriate expertise, first to revamp NEC's website and build a social media presence (Facebook, Twitter) in 2016, and then to manage, continuously update, and communicate through those media in 2017. Although it is unclear how important and effective the use of the web and social media are for NEC's outreach to the public, as of July 2017, its website, Facebook page, and Twitter account were up and running and regularly updated. As of August 14, 2017, the NEC Facebook site had almost 1,300 followers; its Twitter feed had 209 followers. Stakeholders also mentioned IFES' support for NEC's radio programming, in particular its radio show, "Elections and You," broadcast live weekly nationwide on the Liberian Broadcast System's radio called ELBC, and the quarterly newsletter, "The Ballot." The program allows the NEC to communicate directly with citizens across the country.

Upgrading of NEC Data Center. LEPT provided critical support to NEC's data processing capacity by supporting its data center with hardware and technical expertise. IFES' prior support provided NEC with the infrastructure and technical skills to produce gender disaggregated data for elections, which is an important step to track female participation in elections in the future. Under LEPT, the collection of gender disaggregated data was successfully piloted by NEC with IFES' support during the December 2015 by-elections for a vacant seat in the House of Representatives in Lofa County, building on the earlier capacity building efforts and helping to refine the processes. During LEPT, IFES also deployed an IT expert to assess the capacity of NEC's data center's server, and IFES subsequently procured additional hardware to upgrade NEC's servers' processing capacity. Although the hardware arrived later than planned, it enhanced NEC's ability to analyze voter registration data and to print the updated voter rolls.

BRIDGE Trainings for NEC. Trainings for NEC technical and managerial staff in various areas of electoral process management following the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) methodology were one critical contribution to strengthening NEC's elections management capacity. LEPT trained NEC headquarters and magisterial staff offices (magistrates or assistant magistrates) on strategic and financial planning, civic and voter education, election logistics and warehouse management, and the role of media during elections. These trainings were co-funded with UNDP. Before the BRIDGE

trainings, IFES conducted a training-of-trainers course for 14 NEC staff to serve as certified BRIDGE training facilitators. Building this expertise within NEC helped to boost its training department and reduced costs for international facilitators during technical training. Unfortunately, the BRIDGE training methodology does not include rigorous pre-and post-testing to track increases in knowledge. Therefore, it is hard to assess the outcomes and longer-term effect of the training on NEC officials' capacity.

Integrating Gender and Concerns of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Process. LEPT deployed significant efforts to increase NEC's capacity to address the needs of women and persons with disabilities (PWD) and to increase their participation in the electoral process. IFES consultants and technical staff, alongside UNDP consultants, worked with NEC to develop a revised Gender Mainstreaming Policy and a corresponding Gender Implementation Plan for NEC's Gender Unit and discussed ways of integrating it into existing election preparation processes with NEC Commissioners, Gender Unit and Gender Task Force, and other technical staff. At the time of this report, the outcomes of this support could not be assessed. IFES' PWD expert worked with NEC to develop NEC's first Disability Inclusion Guidelines and Implementation Plan as a resource for the NEC to systematically address barriers faced by persons with disabilities at all steps of the electoral process. IFES' technical support included a review of NEC's human resources and administrative policies and recommendations for how to integrate the interests of PWD in NEC's own internal processes. PWD concerns were then systematically integrated in NEC's Voter Registration Manual and in training materials for poll workers and other elections officials. Gender and PWD considerations were also shared with a broader range of electoral stakeholders. IFES supported the holding of six regional consultations with civil society groups, media, and NEC officials on the needs of PWD and women in the electoral process. IFES also supported a roundtable discussion by NEC's Political Affairs division with political parties on how best to provide access to political processes for PWD.

Support for Magistrate Offices. Although not planned in the original program description, IFES procured essential office and other equipment, as well as office furnishings for the 19 Magistrate Offices across the country. This included the provision of generators to ensure Magistrate Offices can function independently of the availability of electricity from the grid during the critical election period therefore hopefully avoiding electricity blackouts. The main intention in the original program description was to focus on improving communications and coordination between NEC and the Magistrate Offices, which IFES addressed by providing internet connections to all Magistrate Offices for easier communication by email. According to NEC, LEPT's support to the Magistrate Office will allow them to run more efficiently during the election period and meet a real need that NEC would not have been able to meet with its own resources. The effectiveness of this assistance for the daily operation of Magistrate Offices could not be independently verified since there was not sufficient time during this project review to visit the NEC offices in the counties.

CEPPS Objective 1.2 (IFES): NEC develops, maintains, and manages key relationships

Intermediate Result 1.2.1 (IFES): Improved NEC collaboration with Political Parties
IPCC and Stakeholder Meetings

NEC's Political Party Engagement. Most of NEC's stakeholder engagement efforts focused on political parties. LEPT support for NEC's Political Affairs division in its outreach activities to political parties has been appreciated by NEC. IFES is credited with having provided critical funding and nudging for NEC to reach out to political parties at critical times.

IFES facilitated the finalizing of the memorandum of understanding that lays out the principles for the functioning of the main coordinating body between the NEC and political parties, the Inter-Party Consultative Committee (IPCC), as well as a meeting that led to a formal commitment by political parties

to peaceful elections and for pursuing challenges through formal channels. Attempts to formalize the IPCC by establishing an IPCC secretariat were unsuccessful due to skepticism by political parties toward that initiative. IFES also supported a forum during which NEC updated political parties on revisions to electoral laws and regulations for the 2017 elections and printed and distributed the revised Electoral Code to the parties.

NEC's engagement of political parties seems to be often infrequent and does not necessarily follow a formal schedule. Critics contend that meetings by the IPCC have been too infrequent (only every other month on average) to be effective. NEC officials concede that the meetings do not follow the regular agreed-upon schedule, but suggest that this is due to the difficulty in getting senior representatives of political parties to attend regular and frequent meetings. As a result, NEC prefers ad hoc and informal communication channels with key political party representatives and convenes parties only for major strategic announcements. NEC feels that parties are well informed mainly through regular informal contact. They point to the collaborative spirit and the muted criticism by political parties even during recent challenges to the registration and voter roll exhibition exercises and lapses in the electoral calendar as indications of the effectiveness of its outreach activities. They cite that, while the CDC filed complaints early in the registration process with embassies and UNMIL, other political parties reprimanded CDC representatives for taking those complaints outside the IPCC forum and urged them to deal with all future grievances through the IPCC or through informal contacts between NEC and the main political parties, which NEC confirms has been happening.

IFES has been urging NEC officials to formalize communication with political parties but accepts that NEC has its own way of managing those relationships, and that political parties' collaborative stance seems to validate this approach. All key stakeholders seemed to agree that more frequent and formal IPCC meetings are needed in the run-up to election day.

Intermediate Result 1.2.2 (IFES): Strengthened development and delivery of voter education

Civic and Voter Education for traditionally marginalized groups. IFES provided significant support to NEC's CVE section. The result of that assistance was somewhat ambiguous. On one hand, NEC's CVE for its voter registration exercise was running behind schedule, and materials were distributed at the last minute. IFES' CSO partners only received their sub-grants after the registration period. Coordination between NEC, IFES, NDI, and civil society partners was not always smooth during that period. CVE materials for the exhibition of the PRR arrived late. On the other hand, NEC officials point to the ultimate success of the voter registration exercise with 2.18 million registered voters, approximately 300,000 more than during the senatorial elections of 2014. Despite the hitches in getting voter education materials out and CSOs deployed across the country, most eligible Liberians got the message and traveled to the registration centers to get their voter ID cards. NEC suggests that all those who had not found their names in the PRR or who found problems with their registered information or photos were contacted and encouraged to get their cards replaced during the replacement period. Ultimately, they will be allowed to vote since they are part of the voter roll.

IFES provided a lot of gap filling support to NEC, paying for materials and campaigns for the December 2015 House or Representatives by-election in Lofa County, conducting reflection and planning sessions with NEC's CVE section and stakeholders, assisting with CVE material design, and printing a large number of NEC's CVE materials for the registration exercise.

USAID Objective 2: Promote meaningful CSO engagement in the election process.

Responsiveness to Context and Civil Society's Needs. Across the specific objectives and intermediate results under objective 2, NDI's CSO strengthening and engagement activities demonstrated a significant degree of flexibility and responsiveness to changes in context and unforeseen circumstances. USAID has been flexible to accommodate these changes. For example, when NEC distributed CVE materials for the registration exercise late, NDI and its CVE partners found creative ways to still go ahead with their outreach activities (further detailed below under "Civic and Voter Education"). When USAID realized that the activity lacked a specific component to address women's involvement in the electoral process, additional funding was added, and NDI rallied quickly to implement the women's leadership and women's manifesto components (further detailed below under "Promoting the Involvement of Women") within a tight timeframe.

CEPPS Objective 2.1: CSOs deliver country-wide CVE around critical electoral issues and events.

Intermediate Result 2.1.1 (NDI): CSOs design and implement strategic, community-based voter education campaigns to reach citizens most marginalized from the election process.

Intermediate Result 2.1.2 (NDI): CSOs promote dialogue and engage broad audiences on election issues through radio programs.

Civic and Voter Education for traditionally marginalized groups. NDI supported five CSOs, as discussed in more detail below, to provide civic and voter education in 60 districts in six counties. The funds invested in CVE activities were limited, with \$160,000 for the five organizations. In order to make a difference and avoid duplication with the more generic voter education efforts by NEC, IFES, and UNDP, NDI took a different approach and focused on groups and communities that might not be reached by those efforts. In terms of approach, part of the NDI-sponsored CVE efforts seek to engage voters around specific issues in the electoral process. CSOs specifically targeted first-time voters, women, and rural communities.

Each of the five CSO partners covered different counties and used different approaches to reach voters. The Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS) used consultative meetings, community dialogue sessions, street theaters, and radio programs in Bong and Margibi counties. The Liberia Labor Congress engaged in worker-to-worker discussions among staff of major companies throughout Liberia and used music and football to encourage youth and first-time voters to register to vote in eight counties. NAYMOTE used door-to-door canvassing, a call-center, radio talk shows, and bussing young volunteers to engage youth and first-time voters in four counties. The South-Eastern Women Development Association engaged female voters through a series of community meetings, radio dramas, radio talk shows, and door-to-door visits in three counties of southeastern Liberia. In addition, the Association of Liberia Community Radio produced and broadcast talk shows on topics relevant to the electoral calendar aimed at mobilizing voters for voter registration across all 15 counties. Radio programs were accompanied by four public forums and a door-to-door voter registration campaign to address the low number of women registering to vote during the registration period. According to reports by the CSO partners, these CVE efforts reached approximately 383,000 people, although this figure could not be independently verified.

CVE activities for the voter registration exercise suffered from the late delivery of official CVE materials by NEC, which meant that NDI's CSO partners had to improvise the messaging. There were significant miscommunications around the distribution of voter registration materials before voter registration and before the PRR exhibition. NDI felt that NEC's planning kept changing, and there was a lack of clear communication about when materials would be available and how they could be accessed. NEC's desire to control all CVE messaging and the requirement it imposed on all CSOs in the counties to register with Magistrate Offices were additional challenges for CSO partners.

NDI's CVE programming seemed well thought out and responsive to situational changes. It benefited from the fact that NDI made a deliberate choice to work with well-established national CSOs that had existing capacity to take on and scale up relatively quickly CVE interventions in their areas of operation. Most actors involved felt that the funds available to and invested by NDI in CVE were limited, which limited the potential scale of activities. Some of the approaches used by CSOs were time and staff-intensive such as community dialogue sessions, market and door-to-door campaigns, but necessary to reach groups, in particular women or first-time voters in rural areas, who do not necessarily have access to the radio.

CEPPS Objective 2.2: CSOs engage in effective oversight of key electoral processes.

Intermediate Result 2.2.1 (NDI): CSOs monitor, analyze, and report on electoral processes.

Intermediate Result 2.2.2 (NDI): CSOs engage the NEC and state institutions in order to advocate for improvements to the electoral process.

ECC Credibility and Actions. The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) has been established as a credible and critical observer of the electoral process in Liberia able to continuously monitor, collect, and analyze data, and report on the respect of rules and regulations and integrity of processes. The ECC is a network of Liberian CSOs that has organized domestic election observations since the 2011 elections, during which it fielded approximately 2,000 domestic observers. The ECC already had significant experience at the start of LEPT and received support from USAID and NDI under previous activities.

The ECC benefits from strong leadership of its Executive Director, who has decades of experience as a civil society and peacebuilding activist in Liberia. ECC received significant support from NDI in planning its domestic observation strategy and introducing innovative new technology to collect election observation information in real-time via SMS messages sent by observers from their mobile phones. NDI trained and advised the ECC on reviewing electoral laws and regulations in late 2016 to lay a solid legal foundation for their subsequent election observation activities. The ECC has since fielded 89 observers during the voter registration and PRR exhibition periods and observed party primaries. Their carefully crafted and legally sound statements provided sound commentary on the electoral process and constructive advice. The ECC issued four public statements during the voter registration period, and it was the only source of credible information on the progress of the voter registration exercise.

ECC member organization leadership was not available for interviews during the project review. Therefore, the true capacity of the ECC could not be independently assessed. However, the ECC appears highly effective for two reasons. First, the personality and experience of its Executive Director; and second, the significant involvement of NDI through continued advice, coaching, and material support. One civil society member commented on the fact that the Executive Director often takes decisions on his own and that decision-making within the ECC is not necessarily collective. The Executive Director also seems to work mainly out of NDI's offices rather than the nominal ECC secretariat at the National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE) office. This makes the ECC a credible and effective player in the election process, but may not be effective in terms of a longer-term capacity building and sustainability strategy.

CEPPS Objective 2.3: CSOs and public actors engage in increasing women's political participation.

Promoting the Involvement of Women in the Electoral Process. A late but critical addition to NDI's programming was a focused effort to promote women's engagement with the electoral process not only as passive recipients of voter education campaigns, but as active participants either as candidates or

as advocates for issues that matter most to women. LEPT Agreement Modification 3 provided additional funds for NDI to train female leaders to get involved in the electoral process and for women's group to develop a women's specific policy platform that candidates and elected officials could be held accountable to.

The Get Ready to Lead (GRTL) program component selected 138 women for an intensive leadership training program consisting of a general, one-week "boot camp" and follow-on master classes on specific topics related to female leadership, advocacy, policy formulation, and managing an electoral campaign for smaller groups of GRTL graduates depending on their interests. Eighty-six of the training graduates were aspirants, of whom almost 60 became candidates. This means that roughly one third of female candidates in the October election went through the GRTL training program and have been exposed to new skills to run a successful election campaign.

The second component focused on supporting women's organizations and activists to develop strategies to increase female participation in elections and political life. The most prominent component of that effort was the Liberia Women's Policy Platform (LWPP), a policy platform that puts forward the particular interests and demands of women for Liberia's elected officials. NDI convened and facilitated a process between 11 women's organizations¹⁹ to develop this LWPP. Even though the process struggled with the politics between women's organizations in Liberia, the manifesto has been endorsed by key female civil society and political leaders (including President Johnson Sirleaf) and is being shared with CSOs, political parties, candidates, communities, and leaders across counties.

The impact of these efforts to boost female participation and make women's interests heard throughout the electoral process are hard to assess at this stage, but at the very least, they seem to have given voice and channels of communicating women's interests to leaders and policymakers, built the skills of a small but significant cadre of current and future female political leaders, and set them up for competing in the elections and playing leadership roles beyond that.

2. OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THEM

The Primacy of NEC in Running the Elections. This is the first general election in Liberia during which NEC is fully and unequivocally in charge of managing the entire electoral process, with international donors and implementers playing a secondary, supporting role.

The 2005 presidential and legislative elections were mainly run by UNMIL, and the 2011 elections still saw a large involvement by international consultants and experts and relied on UNMIL logistics. NEC officials are fully in charge of their workplan and timetable in 2017. International partners such as IFES attempt to work closely with NEC by contributing technical guidance, expertise, and funding for critical gaps. They have to maintain good and productive working relationship with key NEC officials to remain effective but do not control the process. This means IFES often runs up against obstacles in project implementation due to NEC's limited capacity, insufficient planning, and last-minute mentality. The failure of the GOL to provide timely disbursement of funding to NEC for critical election preparation activities, low staff capacity in some departments, and a lack of motivation by NEC staff who were recruited to their posts for reasons

¹⁹ Participating organizations included Young Women's Christian Association, West African Network for Peacebuilding, Women's NGO Secretariat for Liberia, Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, Liberia Women Media Action Committee, National Rural Women of Liberia, West Africa Women Peace Network, Voice for the Voiceless, Liberian Women's Alliance, Forum for African Women Educationalists, and Liberian Coalition of Political Party Women in Liberia.

other than their competence, were the most obvious challenges that implementing partners had to contend with.

IFES staff have addressed these obstacles in different ways. In most instances, they advised NEC at various levels and with various individuals behind the scenes, but ultimately felt unable to impose any specific action. In other instances, where more technical questions are concerned, IFES brought in external expertise to carry out NEC's work. This was the case with respect to NEC's website and social media presence, which is largely run by IFES since NEC's communication section does not have sufficient capacity to do so.

Given the importance of maintaining a good and trusted working relationship with NEC, IFES' approach seems to be reasonable but reactive and has led to delays in program implementation in various areas, which sometimes has a knock-on effect for other partners, for example when CVE materials were distributed at the last minute for voter registration and exhibition. Critics have suggested that IFES has lacked imagination in trying to influence NEC, although it is not entirely clear what the alternative to IFES' approach would look like. Critics also felt that IFES' lack of openly communicating about the obstacles and changing timelines made for a frustrating experience that resulted in only knowing problems once they had caused delays.

Limited and Late GoL Funding for NEC. One challenge for NEC has been the receipt of timely and sufficient funding from the GoL. The GoL appropriations process is slow and cumbersome, and the GoL seems to face genuine funding shortfalls. For NEC to effectively prepare for the elections, funding must be available in a timely fashion, in accordance with the electoral timetable. This is often not the case. In those situations, NEC has usually approached IFES, USAID, UNDP, and EU to help fill funding gaps and redirect activity funds for urgent needs. President Johnson Sirleaf personally advocated with international ambassadors and donors to show flexibility in their support to address those funding gaps. IFES has been highly responsive to those requests and has greatly contributed to keeping the electoral process on track.

CVE Material Delays for CSOs. NDI's CSO partners' voter education campaigns were particularly affected by the late procurement and delivery and confusing distribution of NEC's CVE materials for voter registration and PRR exhibition. They found ways of working around those challenges with the CSOs while respecting NEC's desire for organizations to only distribute official NEC materials instead of creating their own materials. Workarounds included a reliance on NEC training manuals to train CSOs on the voter registration procedures and on using content during outreach activities that did not rely on the distribution of flyers and posters.

Political Dynamics among Women's CSOs. NDI faced challenges during the development of the Liberia Women's Policy Platform stemming from the political dynamics between Liberia's established women's CSOs. A document entitled Liberia Women's Manifesto was developed for the 2005 election by some of the leading women's activists at the time. The document was never widely distributed but offered for sale and through the Ministry of Gender. The groups and individuals leading the process at the time tried to influence and claim copyright of the new LWM developed by NDI and the 11 women CSOs. This created dissension between the female CSO leaders and led to an unfortunate rift in the coalition of CSOs supporting the process. Even though NDI and its CSO partners went so far as to seek the intervention by President Johnson Sirleaf, they had no choice but to sideline the uncooperative CSOs and their leaders.

3. WEAKNESSES

IMPLEMENTATION WEAKNESSES

Delays in Program Delivery. One of the key weaknesses of the program were numerous delays in program delivery. Delays were due to lateness of GOL distributing funding to NEC and in its own planning and preparation. However, there were also delays in key program activities that had knock-on effects on other activities and partners. This was true for the timeliness and effectiveness of the CVE component. Many of the delays in voter education for the registration period stem back to NEC, which was six weeks late in the start of CVE activities for registration, due to late finalization of specifications and designs for CVE materials and late procurement and delivery of printed posters and pamphlets. IFES was heavily involved in the procurement process, and partners felt insufficiently informed about the delays and shifting timelines. It is unclear why CVE materials for the exhibition period were late even though the lessons from the previous registration exercise had been that CVE materials needed to be available to CSOs well in advance. Furthermore, IFES' took several months to process sub-grant agreements with its 27 CSO partners for voter education, which meant that those CSOs only received sub-grants in March and April 2017 and missed the registration period. Although the sub-grant agreement process requires many clearances, and there may have been delays on all sides, the longest delays appeared with IFES' internal processes which should have been anticipated. All these delays impacted NDI and CSO partner implementation, which was originally designed to work closely with the IFES CSOs and made for more rushed, incomplete, and less extensive CVE efforts than desired.

Similarly, there were errors in the printing of forms for the registration process. While NEC bears ultimate responsibility, IFES was closely involved in the process, and stakeholders point out errors might have been avoided if procurement had started earlier and appropriate technical assistance had been provided.

Communications. Even though IFES has contributed to NEC's ability to better communicate with the public, the results were not visible across all communication functions, and there was some trial and error in getting to reasonably well functioning communications within NEC. Despite significant attention given by IFES to NEC's external communication, the various lapses in communication around the voter registration and PRR exhibition exercises exposed weaknesses in NEC's ability to communicate with critical stakeholders and the wider public. It raised questions about the effectiveness of LEPT's efforts to boost NEC's communications capacity. The NEC seemed slow and reactive in communicating about technical problems with voter registration and during the exhibition period. It did not always speak with one voice, and the explanations were not detailed enough to erase public doubts about the integrity of electoral preparations.

NEC's communications section has few skilled staff, according to NEC key informants, and suffered from a leadership vacuum after the resignation of NEC's Communications Director in October 2016. Even though there was an acting communications director, his ability and influence within NEC was limited. NEC's communications efforts were also continuously limited by skepticism among senior leadership of NEC as to the usefulness of regular, open, and transparent communication. According to NEC senior officials, NEC's chairman and key commissioners are deeply skeptical of Liberia's press, political parties, and civil society and are hesitant to share information about NEC's internal processes and challenges for fear of information being distorted and used against the Commission.

Against this backdrop of weak staff capacity in NEC's communications section and the lack of senior leadership on communications, IFES' efforts to build NEC's communication capacity were not continuous and sustained, which led to IFES largely replacing NEC staff in communications rather than building NEC capacity. IFES realized in 2016 that it had to add significant external expertise to boost NEC's ability to communicate with the public in preparing for the 2017 elections. As a result, IFES hired an additional

senior communications advisor and a social media officer, who contributed significantly to NEC's improved sharing of information with the public by mid-2017. This was a reasonable approach given the constraints, even though it was not the original intention of LEPT. It meant that LEPT may not have built lasting communications capacity within NEC. Most of the recent improvements in NEC's communications – more frequent press conferences, public pronouncements about progress in the electoral preparations, and the web and social media presence – seem to have come thanks to NEC's recruitment of an energetic and knowledgeable new Communications Director in May and IFES staff's direct technical interventions. In addition, LEPT is designed to ensure NEC's web and social media presence, although it might be worth looking into whether the significant investment of resources into internet and mobile communications are justified in the low-tech context of Liberia, where few people have access to the internet and social media.

NEC's Stakeholder Engagement. Even though NEC's outreach to critical stakeholders in the election process has been reasonably successful, albeit informal with respect to political parties, its efforts to reach out and regularly engage civil society and the media were limited. The perception that civil society is opposed to NEC's goals and an impediment to its work is still prevalent within the Commission and NEC officials, hence they see little value added of further outreach to CSO actors. The regular and continuous engagement of journalists and media outlets had also been neglected until the arrival of NEC's new Communications Director in May, who understands the importance of NEC controlling its messaging and regularly communicating with news outlets, which started to happen more regularly in early August 2017.

Tensions between LEPT Implementing Partners and Lack of Joint Project Vision. There have been tensions between the two CEPPS partners, IFES and NDI, and breakdowns in communication have affected implementation, notably around voter education, voter registration, and PRR exhibition exercises. As will be further discussed below, these tensions can be contributed to the lack of a joint LEPT vision and acknowledgement that both objectives and all components contribute to the same overarching goal: helping NEC organize free, fair, and credible elections.

Reactiveness and Lack of Strategic Vision for Project Implementation. Several of the weaknesses cited have their origin in the original design of LEPT. Even though the activities overall are relevant to the context of Liberia and where it is in its post-conflict reconstruction and democratization process, the design suffers from some ambiguity and tension between the competing goals of long-term capacity building and immediate assistance for election preparations and a lack of specificity in some critical areas.

One prominent criticism of LEPT, specifically of activities under Objective 1, is that it has been too reactive. Even though flexibility and responsiveness to NEC's needs are beneficial, it has not been part of a strategic vision for the five-year activity, but more a de facto adjustment to realities. The original LEPT documents commit verbally to the goal of NEC capacity building, but it does not spell out a clear five-year capacity building strategy or a detailed theory of change that links activities to desired outcomes and the broader objectives. The only component that is clearly specified and links interventions to outcomes is the component focused on increasing women's participation in elections (added in September 2016 and sketched out in detail in Modification 3). This lack of longer-term capacity building vision is also reflected in the near-absence of strong indicators that would allow project managers and donors to track whether NEC capacity is gradually increasing (further detailed below under Weak M&E Framework).

Ideally, LEPT would have spelled out a five-year capacity building strategy with annual targets or milestones that demonstrate that the capacity of key NEC departments is getting stronger, while at the same time taking into account the 18-month election preparation cycle and a more reactive technical assistance components during that period.

Uncertain Results of Capacity Building. In light of the absence of a clear capacity building vision and strategy, there is limited evidence that NEC capacity in areas critical to election preparations and election cycle management has significantly improved over the past two and half years. NEC officials believe strongly that the Commission’s capacity to act more independently has grown since the 2011 elections, and they point to the BRIDGE training as contributing to capacity building. However, most NEC senior technical staff acknowledged capacity building has been slow and, at best, uneven. They point out that under previous projects and during prior election cycles, “IFES and UNDP were doing everything for NEC,” and that has changed under LEPT. Yet, they still feel that LEPT replaces and directly implements NEC responsibilities rather than build NEC capacity to do so itself. For example, with respect to graphic/ballot design and communications, NEC concedes that this was in part due to low staff capacity in some sections. They still feel that a longer-term vision for capacity building under LEPT should have involved more and longer training and certification for technical staff. They voiced concerns about the high costs for bringing in external consultants compared to their added value and compared to the costs of training up NEC staff through other approaches such as courses, study trips abroad, and tutoring. NEC officials concede that they would also have to ensure that NEC staff who receive training commit to staying with NEC in the long-term so that the investment pays off for donors and the NEC. Some NEC staff feel that USAID and IFES policies requiring control over all LEPT spending may not allow for genuine capacity building.

Weak M&E Framework. LEPT is engaged in a multitude of activities, and the outcomes of these activities are not immediately obvious to donors and stakeholders, which is in large part due to a weak M&E framework and indicators that lack specification. It is hard for outsiders to assess what LEPT has and has not achieved to date beyond self-reported achievements by the CEPPS partners. Most LEPT indicators are at the output level and are often very broad and lump together a range of activities. For example, under CEPPS Objective I.1, “NEC demonstrates enhanced institutional capacity to perform essential functions related to election administration,” one of the main indicators is, “Number of election officials trained with USG assistance.” Each month, a generic figure is reported on how many NEC officials were trained with IFES/CEPPS assistance. There are many different types of trainings conducted under Objective I.1, and without a more detailed breakdown of trainings and indicators that measure changes in practice as a consequence of the training, it is hard to assess the relevance and effectiveness of training interventions and their contribution to building NEC’s capacity. Indicator I.1.1.1, “Score of NEC management capacity based on Election Process Diagnosis assessment tool,” is more promising as a capacity building indicator. However, it is a multi-component indicator, and its administration is onerous, so data on it only gets collected three times throughout the activity’s cycle which does not allow project managers to track progress very closely. Another indicator that could fall under the capacity building category is related to learning by the trainees (I.1.1.4 - “Percentage of election officials demonstrating an increase in knowledge”), but it seems to lack agreed-upon quality standards. Often the percentage of trained participants who demonstrate better knowledge given in quarterly reports seem low. Explanations for why that is the case are rarely given.

IFES also conducted various other activities under Objective I.1 such as graphic design and communications support to the NEC, as well as the procurement of hardware for NEC’s data center and Magisterial Offices. None of these activities and their outputs and outcomes seem to be captured by any indicator in the PMP.

Scale of CVE Activities. CEPPS partners and their CSO partners report that they reached relatively large numbers of individuals with their CVE activities. These numbers are self-reported by the CSO partners and combine numbers from a wide range of activities including radio programming, community meetings, community dialogue sessions, community theater, door-to-door sensitization, and small sessions in local markets. CSO reports do not provide real evidence of the number of individuals reached, and

according to CSO leaders, seems to be based on rough estimates reported by field teams. There does not appear to be a clear methodology for each of the different CVE methods of how to count the individuals reached. The numbers reported – over 1 million individuals reached so far in FY17 – are far greater than what the implementing partners originally estimated. A more rigorous methodology to assess CVE efforts for future CVE programming would help reconcile the difference of opinion about whether delays in delivering CVE materials compromised voter education efforts for registration and that better and more timely CVE might have led to even higher numbers of registered voters.

ANALYSIS: THREE UNDERLYING TENSIONS

Some of the weaknesses in implementation and tensions among implementation partners, as well as some differences in opinion about the how successful LEPT has been, has stemmed from underlying deeper, conceptual contradictions that may not have been fully recognized by key actors. There are three main tensions that have contributed to misunderstandings.

Support to NEC vs. Checks and Balances to NEC. This first tension is built into LEPT and reflected by the two objectives. The first objective focuses on building NEC’s capacity and on supporting NEC in ways that needed to get it ready to organize credible elections. The second objective focuses on building civil society’s capacity to develop checks and balances to NEC by observing and commenting on the election preparation process to add an element of public accountability. Given that both objectives are implemented by different organizations, this tension leads to different views of the purpose of LEPT. For example, since senior NEC officials are generally skeptical of civil society and external scrutiny, NDI’s interventions have not always been perceived as constructive by the NEC, and NEC officials mentioned that they have not always felt well-informed about NDI’s activities. This created frictions between the CEPPS partners. This was magnified before and during voter registration, when NEC felt that NDI-supported CSOs were trying to operate independently of NEC and were seen as “refusing” to cooperate with Magisterial Offices in the counties. NDI and its CSO partners felt that NEC was trying to exercise undue control over the CVE process and not appreciative of the additional support NEC’s CVE efforts got from those CSOs.

Since LEPT has one goal – organizing free, fair, and credible elections – to which both objectives and implementing partners contribute in different ways, it should be possible to reconcile these tensions and work more harmoniously toward achieving the joint goal.

Preparing for Elections vs. Long-Term Capacity Building. The original program description suggests that LEPT is a capacity-building activity: strengthening the capacity of NEC to manage the electoral cycle under Objective 1 and the capacity of CSOs to engage in the electoral process under Objective 2. Although the program description mentions that flexibility is required in implementing the activity to be responsive to changes in the context and to respond to NEC’s and other election stakeholders’ needs, the activity documents focus on enabling NEC to conduct election preparations with more autonomy.

However, LEPT has been implemented much more like a traditional election assistance activity for Objective 1 being responsive to NEC’s needs, filling important gaps, and complementing or even replacing NEC capacity. While LEPT may have started out in 2015 with activities that are more typically aimed at capacity building – reviews of laws and regulations, BRIDGE training, and strategic planning – it soon shifted to become more reactive to the needs of the day. This made sense given that an electoral preparation cycle for a major election is approximately 18 months, which meant NEC had to shift into election preparation mode by early 2016. Not only is it hard to build capacity while key milestones in the election calendar need to be met, external scrutiny of NEC and implementing partners also meant that assistance shifted to focus on helping NEC to develop detailed plans and achieving milestones rather than training or systems building to improve its operational capacity in the long term. While this reactivity to the needs

of the day was useful for NEC and contributed to better election preparations, it seemed in contradiction to the original objective and seemed to lack a clear direction at times. It would have been desirable to take NEC's different needs during the five-year project period more explicitly into account, by combining a medium/long-term capacity building strategy with a more responsive election preparation assistance activity for the election period from mid-2016 to early 2018.

Outcomes vs. Process. The final tension is between those election stakeholders such as NEC and IFES who focus on the quality of outcomes and those who focus on the quality of the processes to achieve the outcomes, such as international donors.

NEC officials admit that their internal processes are at times messy and do not lead straight to the outcome. They suggest that NEC is a complex organization, that it deals with low staff capacity, poorly applied rules and processes, and political dynamics that all make it seem disorganized at times. They suggest that they are focused on key milestones in the election preparation process and on critical outcomes that have all been achieved so far. They specifically cite the voter registration process, which was imperfect, as well as the CVE efforts before and during the voter registration exercise, but still led to a sound outcome. IFES largely holds the same view and believe that they are doing their best to work with those messy processes, nudge and influence NEC where possible, but without imposing their view or challenging NEC too much to maintain a close working relationship with key NEC staff. NEC staff feel strongly that external observers focus and criticize its imperfect process too much while not giving the Commission sufficient credit for achieving certain milestones and outcomes.

International donors espouse the opposite view. They see unsystematic processes and worry that those processes might lead to unsystematic outcomes. They have invested significant amounts of money in the NEC and the elections and want to see evidence that NEC has the capacity to organize credible elections. The only metrics available are whether NEC follows certain processes and hits smaller targets in a timely fashion, for example the timely delivery of voter education materials. If NEC misses smaller targets, concerns are prompted whether missing smaller targets will lead to missing bigger milestones, undermining the whole electoral process.

Both views are legitimate from the point of view of each actor and their institutional interests. They may never be fully reconciled, but it would be helpful for each side to acknowledge these differences and reflect on how to address them for the remainder of LEPT and in future activity designs.

4. COORDINATION

Coordination of complex activities are always a challenge due to different organizational mandates and priorities. There are many formal coordination structures for LEPT at different levels – among donors, between donors and the NEC and election stakeholders, and between the implementing partners. However, according to key informants who regularly participate in coordination meetings, the substance of what is covered in those forums does not always meet the needs of the participants and contribute to smooth and effective coordination.

Coordination between Implementing Partners. Even though LEPT is nominally implemented by the CEPPS consortium, CEPPS seems to be mainly a funding vehicle rather than a genuine joint implementation mechanism. Even though IFES is nominally the lead organization, both implementing partners operate independently. They do not hold regular coordination meetings, and there have been tensions between the senior representatives of each organization, which has made the meetings and informal coordination less effective. IFES and NDI do not act as if they were representing one and the same project at times,

and a joint LEPT vision seems to get lost in the daily grind of implementation. This tension escalated around the late delivery of voter education materials. The struggle of NDI's CSO partners to get NEC voter education materials for the registration and exhibition exercises led to a breakdown in communication. USAID instituted weekly coordination meetings with IFES and NDI to facilitate their communication. According to the respective COPs, their relationship now is "cordial" and they have drawn some lessons to improve coordination around areas of joint interest, notably CVE, but tensions remain that will need to be continuously addressed.

Activities of assistance between IFES and the Liberia Administration and System Strengthening (LASS) activity, the third USAID-funded election assistance intervention, are relatively clearly delineated (LASS' core institutional capacity building vs. IFES technical capacity building) and both organizations maintain that there is regular coordination. This coordination does not seem particularly close, even though both might benefit from an exchange of approaches and ideas on capacity building.

Coordination with Other Election Support Partners. IFES and UNDP both fund similar activities for the NEC, notably with respect to technical capacity building, support to the NEC's IT infrastructure and database, and civic and voter education. As mentioned above, IFES and UNDP have a close working relationship and coordinate activities closely between themselves and together with NEC against NEC workplans and priorities. Many NEC activities have been co-funded by both. How both actors avoid duplication of effort is not entirely clear. Both implementing organizations are represented in the NEC Election Steering Committee and have close day-to-day working relationships with key NEC staff. In terms of coordination, the IFES-UNDP-NEC relationship is probably the most successful example of coordination, which is critical for successful program implementation.

Coordination among Donors and between Donors and NEC/Election Stakeholders. To avoid duplication and ensure an efficient use of resources, close coordination of externally-funded electoral assistance activities does not only need to happen at the implementation level, but also at the level of donors. As so often in international development contexts, there seem to be a multitude of coordination fora, but many actors still feel like they are not well informed about the performance of their implementing partners and the status of NEC's preparations for October 10.

NEC convenes monthly Election Technical Working Group meetings between the Commission and key election donors and stakeholders, including the main donors USAID, EU, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), as well as the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Key informants viewed the Steering Committee meeting as not particularly useful. It seemed to share some purpose as an information sharing forum by NEC, but lacks substantial discussions. There is an absence of genuine joint planning to make it meaningful. USAID has initiated a separate election donor coordination group to bridge that gap and attempts to coordinate directly with the EU and the Swedish Embassy/SIDA including the sharing of workplans and priorities. The fact that the EU/Sweden/UNDP project follows quite different procedures and must have major decisions approved by the project board, introduces additional constraints to effective coordination.

Due to the feeling that donor and election stakeholder coordination is not meaningful and substantive enough, donors also request a lot of bilateral meetings with individuals in NEC and other stakeholders. Several senior NEC staff suggested that they felt they had to spend a lot of time on those meetings and felt uncomfortable to discuss implementing partners' performance in the absence of the implementing partner.

Election Observation Coordination. The multitude of election observation efforts – two major domestic observation efforts, one run by the ECC, the second one led by the Liberian Election

Observation Network (LEON), supported by The Carter Center – and a multitude of international election observation missions – by NDI, The Carter Center, ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union – means that close coordination of those observation efforts will be required in the lead-up to the elections. USAID and the US Embassy have initiated some form of coordination mechanism to ensure that observers are aware of each other’s plan and coordinate to sufficiently cover all parts of the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the “pause and reflect” exercise fall into three categories – those that relate to activity leadership, management, and oversight; those that concern the design of the activity and the M&E framework; and finally, those that relate to the future of the activity.

ACTIVITY LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND OVERSIGHT

Trust Building. Previous tensions and disagreements between the CEPPS partners and between their local partners (NEC, CSOs) has sown distrust and skepticism between organizations that should work closely together and pull into one direction. The distrust is not to an extent that it would seriously impede activity delivery, but LEPT could be run more smoothly and harmoniously. There is no single effective formula to trust building, but it requires constant attention to clear, open, and frequent communication.

Communication between the CEPPS partners already has improved after a breakdown earlier in the year due to USAID facilitating weekly LEPT meetings. This effort appears productive and should be continued. Additional steps could include:

- Regularly reaffirm the joint project objective. Help NEC organize credible elections, and affirm the validity of both LEPT components/objectives/implementing partners’ contribution to the goal: support to NEC and creating credible civil society actors to hold NEC accountable.
- Focus on joint planning and make sure each organization’s commitment to each other’s work is documented and followed up on.
- There should be a CEPPS approach to NEC and election preparations, not one approach for IFES and another for NDI. This might call for IFES to facilitate a better relationship between NEC and NDI and for both IFES and NDI to help facilitate a better relationship between NEC and the ECC/key CSOs.
- Hold as many meetings as possible as a LEPT consortium and minimize bilateral meetings between USAID and key election actors about the activity without either IFES or NDI present.
- Balance criticism and credit about election preparations. IFES and NEC staff feel that they are constantly being criticized, sometimes publicly in larger meetings, without receiving due credit for achievements, for example for the fact that voter registration was ultimately successful.

Remain Flexible in Programmatic Approaches. For the immediate future and elections period, there is no need to change the LEPT’s flexible approach that responds to NEC’s and CSO’s needs. This will help each group to be prepared for the October 10 election and a potential run-off election. One remaining need that most respondents mentioned is to strengthen NEC’s legal department to deal with electoral disputes. Donors and implementing partners are aware of this gap, and UNDP has already hired two additional staff for NEC’s legal department. However, for the longer-term nature of the remaining two years of LEPT:

- Regularly (quarterly) assess NEC’s short- and medium- to long-term needs with IFES and key NEC officials to tailor support to NEC’s needs.
- Be prepared to support a potential constitutional referendum in 2018 or 2019 if a decision to hold a referendum is taken.

Take into account outcomes and processes. It is difficult for key stakeholders to feel confident about NEC and LEPT achieving its outcomes and objectives if processes seem flawed and delayed. As several NEC officials have suggested, it is important to keep in mind that the fact that if NEC is fully in charge of managing the election preparations, it means less control by donors and external implementing partners of the process. NEC’s planning, decision-making, and implementation of decisions follow their own logic and often lead to last-minute action, but do achieve the desired outcome most of the time. Having a tighter

M&E framework that provides more frequent and more detailed information on critical intermediate steps/outcomes might have helped donors to track intermediate outcomes and have more trust that the activity is on track. In their absence, there is no easy way to put this into practice other than deliberately looking at processes through a systematic lens.

- Conduct detailed LEPT midterm evaluation shortly after inauguration with a focus on outcomes of interventions, evidence of successful capacity building, effectiveness of support to magistrate offices, and effectiveness of different approaches of CVE (suggested as separate study – see below).
- Feed findings from mid-term evaluation into revised activity design for remaining project period.
- See actions below under “Strengthen M&E Framework.”

Exercise Joint Planning among Donors and Partners. It would be ideal for key election donors, notably USAID, EU, UNDP, and SIDA to come together and jointly plan their electoral assistance to avoid any potential duplication right from the start. It seems that efforts are underway by USAID to hold meetings more focused on joint planning rather than information sharing, even though there might be limitations to joint planning due to different approaches to decision-making regarding funding allocations.

- Hold quarterly joint planning meetings between key election donors and implementing agencies to review priorities and planned activities for the quarter to align support to NEC and civil society.

ACTIVITY DESIGN AND M&E

Strengthen M&E Framework and Indicators. LEPT would benefit from a review of its overall design and the relevance of its M&E framework. Given that the elections are in less than eight weeks, it is unrealistic to conduct such a review at this stage of the activity cycle, but it should be part of any future project review and redesign for the remaining implementation period. Strengthening the M&E framework would include ensuring that all key LEPT activities are measured by meaningful indicators both at the outcome and process/output level.

- Conduct LEPT review and redesign workshop after the inauguration with LEPT partners and key NEC officials.
- Determine priorities and outcomes for the remaining implementation period.
- Develop M&E framework with relevant outcome and process indicators that closely track progress.

Conduct an Assessment of Reach and Effectiveness of CVE Approaches. There are numerous actors involved in CVE activities. Given the lack of a common methodology or rigorous measurement of its reach, a more in-depth study and mapping of the different approaches and how they reach different audiences would help to assess the effectiveness of CVE activities under LEPT for this election cycle. This would allow for an evidence-based discussion about responsibilities and comparative advantages of different actors and approaches for a more coherent and focused CVE strategy during future elections.

- Develop TOR for CVE consultancy in consultation with NEC, LEPT partners.
- Recruit consultant to map CVE approaches and conduct voter education survey and radio audience surveys to establish reach and effectiveness of different approaches and methods of dissemination.

Assess Use of Electronic and Social Media. Significant resources were invested in getting NEC’s web and social media communications up and running. It is not clear, though, how important those media are for NEC to communicate with Liberians. Some observers have doubts that they reach many voters beyond a relatively small number of users in Monrovia. Those efforts could be worthwhile for reaching key stakeholders and media outlets in and around Monrovia and enable NEC to set itself up to communicate through electronic media in future elections cycles. However, the value of this significant investment and its effect on NEC’s outreach should be more thoroughly assessed rather than assumed.

- As part of CVE consultancy, assess use and reach of social media and effectiveness of social media as part of NEC communications and outreach strategy.

Strengthen Quality and Assess Frequency of Reporting. CEPPS partners produce a large number of reports – weekly reports, quarterly reports, and exchange information with USAID in weekly meetings and numerous bilateral meetings. Implementing partners perceive this as a heavy reporting burden, especially leading up to the elections. The quality of weekly and monthly reports reviewed varies. There does seem to be some duplication of information and often unnecessary details are reported rather than key achievements toward outcomes. It could be useful for USAID and the CEPPS partners to review all the information that is currently being shared and to refocus on what is essential to avoid unnecessary reporting.

- Together with LEPT partners, develop document of current formal and informal reports, types of information shared, and time spent by implementing partners.
- Assess whether current reporting covers all essential information for effective program oversight and reduce where there is duplication.

FUTURE ACTIVITY DESIGN

Develop Stronger Capacity Building Approach. Given that there are two years left under Objective I, the post-inauguration period should be used for a thorough review of what has been accomplished, what has worked well, where NEC and CSO capacity has genuinely been built, and where it has not. If there is scope for a future redesign of LEPT, a clearer and genuine capacity-building approach for NEC for the remaining two years needs to be articulated. This should include a detailed theory of change that links training, education, knowledge sharing, and coaching interventions to organizational performance by the NEC. Valuable lessons might also be taken on board during such an exercise from LASS/IBI's institutional capacity building approach for NEC's core administrative departments. Any such review and redesign should include the development of a robust M&E framework with meaningful indicators that are closely tied to the capacity building outcomes that the activity aims to achieve.

- As part of the redesign workshop, review current capacity building approach and achievements in collaboration with LASS/IBI capacity building experts.
- Determine capacity building objectives for critical NEC technical departments and develop detailed theories of change for each capacity building initiative.
- Develop sound capacity building outcome and process metrics and indicators to measure progress.

Consider a more sustainable, less cyclical approach to assistance for CSOs for election observation and civic and voter education. In addition, USAID should consider how NDI's CSO partners, most notably the ECC, can be helped during the remaining months to set them up for sustained assistance and continued capacity development in the post-election period, possibly focused on holding elected officials accountable to policy promises made during the campaign. ECC members have criticized the unreliability and cyclical nature of funding, with peaks during election years and deep troughs during non-election years, which make it hard to plan longer term.

- Assess available funding for 2018-2019 against ECC's medium- to long-term needs to stay operational even in non-election years.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: PROJECT REVIEW STATEMENT OF WORK

Project-Specific Technical Direction to Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA) #AID-669-C-16-00002

Liberia Elections and Political Transitions (LEPT) “Pause and Reflect”
Project Review
May – July 2017

A. LEPT Project Review Purpose

USAID/Liberia Office of Democracy and Governance (DG) seeks to conduct a project review, also known as a “Pause and Reflect” exercise, of the Liberia Elections and Political Transitions (LEPT) activity.

LEPT is scheduled to run from January 2015 through December 2019. Due to the upcoming general elections in October 2017, the mid-term evaluation for LEPT is scheduled for early 2018. However, a substantial portion of the LEPT activity will end in mid-2018. Due to the electoral calendar schedule constraints and recent performance issues, USAID seeks to conduct this project review as soon as possible.

B. Background

The strategic goal of the 2013-2017 CDCS is to “strengthen Liberian institutions positioned to drive inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction,” specifically with Development Objective One (DOI): More effective, accountable, and inclusive governance, focused on the DG portfolio.

Under DOI, USAID is providing comprehensive programming to support the Liberian National Elections Commission (NEC), civil society organizations (CSOs), and media outlets in the run-up to the 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections. Through the Liberia Elections and Political Transitions (LEPT) program, a \$16.2 million cooperative agreement with the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes (CEPPS), USAID is supporting two main objectives: (1) increase the capacity of the NEC to manage the full election cycle and (2) promote meaningful CSO engagement in electoral processes. USAID partner the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is working directly with the NEC to develop technical capacity required to effectively manage the electoral cycle as well as enhance key relationships, including with the Inter-Party Consultative Committee and the National Civil Society Council of Liberia. USAID partner the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is working with Liberia’s Election Coordinating Committee (ECC), a coalition of CSOs, to observe electoral processes in Liberia, including planned observation of voter registration exercises, a potential constitutional referendum poll, Election Day in October 2017, a possible run-off election day in November 2017, and post-election dispute resolution processes. NDI is also working with Liberian CSOs to implement strategic community-based voter education campaigns related to both the Constitutional Referendum and the 2017 general election. USAID’s elections-related portfolio, including institutional capacity building and voter education efforts, specifically promotes the inclusion and participation of women and persons with disabilities, as well as other marginalized populations as appropriate.

USAID is providing assistance to support the long-term institutional development of the NEC via the Liberia Administrative and Systems Strengthening (LASS) program, a \$4 million contract with IBI

International. The LASS program works with the NEC commissioners and offices on specific focus areas, including Strategic Planning, Human Resource Management, Financial Management Systems, Information and Communications Technology Systems, and Procurement, to develop key institutional operational systems, policies, and procedures.

USAID elections activities work in close collaboration with the UNDP Elections Project, funded by a basket fund that includes the EU, IrishAid, and the Embassy Sweden, which provides technical assistance to the NEC. In particular, the LEPT-IFES activities work in close coordination and partnership with UNDP to achieve similar objectives related to the 2017 electoral cycle.

C. Objectives of the LEPT Project Review

The objective of this project review is to conduct a consolidated evaluation of LEPT in advance of the 2017 elections. Specifically, the project review will:

- Assess the success of the program in achieving its objectives to date.
- Identify any obstacles to implementation and evaluate how effectively the program is responding to these challenges
- Identify deficiencies in performance to date
- Assess coordination between LEPT and other election programming (USAID-funded and otherwise).
- Provide to specific, actionable recommendations for the remainder of the activity based on the project review findings

USAID/Liberia constitutes the primary audience for the Project Review deliverables. USAID/Liberia intends to share the final report with LEPT partners and relevant electoral stakeholders.

D. Methodology

LSA will be responsible for the following:

- Recruitment of appropriate consultant to undertake the desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), conduct the partner review sessions, and produce a final report;
- Provision of travel and logistical support (including vehicles) to consultant; and
- Provide support to the consultant to ensure high-quality deliverables.

Per the LSA contract (#AID-669-C-16-00002), technical direction on all phases of the electoral security assessment will be issued by Ahmed Sirleaf, the COR of the Task Order (or Paige Miller in his absence as the Alternate COR), and will be done in close consultation with USAID/Liberia's DG Office.

The LEPT project review will consist of the three components:

- **(I) Desk Review:** The desk study shall offer a thorough review of LEPT activity, and other relevant project, documentation, and identify knowledge gaps about the activity performance and coordination to date. This initial analysis will serve as the foundation for the subsequent key informant interviews, highlighting those issues that require greater analysis

Deliverable: A working draft of a written desk study (5 to 10 pages) to serve as the basis for the final report. LSA and USAID/Liberia/DG will provide input on the draft prior to conducting the KIIs to refine the remainder of the project review.

- **(2) KIs:** KIs shall take place over a period of one week in Monrovia. Fieldwork will utilize six day work weeks to maximize time in country. The consultant will meet with activity implementing partners, sub-grantee partners, and other relevant electoral stakeholders, including: the NEC, civil society, and international donors and partners.

Deliverable: Draft findings and recommendations, and a proposed agenda/framework for conducting up to four partner review sessions with USAID/Liberia/DG, including: (1) review session with CEPPS/IFES; (2) review session with CEPPS/NDI; (3) review session with relevant electoral partners (i.e., LASS, UNDP, NEC); and (4) final review session with USAID/Liberia/DG.

- **(3) Partner Review sessions:** After completion of the KIs, the consultant will convene up to four review sessions with USAID to walk implementing partners and other relevant electoral partners through the project review findings and recommendations.

Deliverable: Final Report, including consolidated findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the desk review, KIs, and review session meetings.

E. Project Review Consultant

A senior evaluation specialist will be responsible for all key deliverables under the assessment. Specific responsibilities shall include: drafting the desk study, conducting KIs, presenting at the review sessions, and completing the final report. Past experience evaluation electoral activities is required.

Timing

The consultant should commence the desk review starting on or around 5 June 2017. The consultant should conclude the key informant interviews by 23 June 2017. The project review sessions should be completed no later than 28 June 2017. The final report, complete with edits from USAID/Liberia, should be delivered to USAID/Liberia no later than 15 July 2017.

Travel

International and internal travel within Liberia is anticipated for the lead consultant.

F. Breakdown of LOE by Task:

Activity	LOE (days)
<i>Pre-departure Planning and Desk Review</i>	
Desk Review	5
Planning Meeting, In-brief with USAID and LEPT	1
Key informant interviews with key stakeholders	5
	Subtotal: 11
<i>Workshop Preparation and Facilitation</i>	
Agenda and workshop materials, i.e. activities, templates	2
Workshop facilitation	2
	Subtotal: 4
<i>Reporting and Dissemination</i>	
Debrief to USAID	1
Report drafting and finalization	4
	Subtotal: 5
	TOTAL: 20

ANNEX II: LIST OF DOCUMENTS AND LITERATURE REVIEWED

Project documents reviewed:

1. Statement of Work
2. LEPT Quarterly and Annual Reports
3. LEPT Deliverables
4. LEPT Agreement
5. LEPT annual work plans
6. LEPT M&E plans/PMPs
7. LEPT weekly reports

Non-project specific documents and literature consulted:

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- Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA). *EISA Technical Assessment and Election Observer Mission Report: Liberia*. Johannesburg, South Africa: 2012.
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- IFES. *Electoral Process Diagnostic of Liberia’s National Elections Commission*. USAID, Monrovia 2015.
- Johnston, Thomas T. *NEC Targets 2.5 Million Voters*. *Daily Observer* (online). December 21, 2016. Available at: <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/nec-targets-2-5-million-voters/> (accessed August 10, 2017).
- Naymote Partners for Democratic Development. *Mobile Phone Survey Report: Citizens Attitudes Towards Current Lawmakers in Liberia*. Monrovia, May 22, 2017.
- NDI. *Statement of the NDI Pre-election Assessment mission to Liberia’s 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections*. Monrovia, February 20-24, 2017.
- NEC. *NEC Strategic Plan June 2016 – June 2018*. Monrovia, 2016.
- NEC. *Final Report of 2017 Voter Registration Statistics*. July 27, 2017. Available at/ http://necliberia.org/pg_img/Summary%20of%20Voter%20Registrants.pdf (accessed Aug. 10, 2017)
- NEC. *Voter Registration Update Statistics (2014) Final Report*. June 30, 2014. Available at: http://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/VRUREPORT_2014_FinalI.pdf (accessed Aug. 10, 2017).
- *Resolution of Registered Political Parties in Liberia, convened in the City of Ganta, Nimba county, September 21-23, 2016*. http://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/Resolution%20of%20Political%20Parties.pdf (accessed August 10, 2017).
- UNDP agreed to support the hiring of additional temporary legal staff during the election period.
- USAID. *ADS Chapter 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy*. Washington, DC. Partial revision 12 July 2017.
- USAID. *Liberia Electoral Access and Participation (LEAP) Survey*. Monrovia, 2015.

ANNEX III: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED

	Key Informant	Title	Affiliation	Date
1	Daniela Karrenstein	Political Affairs Officer	United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)	12-Jul-17
2	Randall Harbour	Deputy Chief, Political Affairs Section	UNMIL	12-Jul-17
3	Sarah Mirembe	Political Affairs Officer	UNMIL	12-Jul-17
4	Jeremy Meadows	Director Democracy & Governance Office	USAID	13-Jul-17
5	Philip S. Pleiwon	Chief of Party	Liberia Administrative and Systems Strengthening (LASS)/IBI International	13-Jul-17
6	Laura Nichols	Senior Resident Director	NDI	14-Jul-17 and 28-Jul-17
7	Courtney Hess	Senior Program Officer	NDI	14-Jul-17
8	George Baratashvili	Chief Technical Adviser, Election Project	UNDP	14-Jul-17
9	Agnieszka Napierala	Programme Manager - Governance and Rule of Law	European Commission/European External Action Service	17-Jul-17
10	Eddie Jarwolo	Executive Director	NAYMOTE	17-Jul-17
11	Emma Togba	Deputy Executive Director/Operations	NEC	25-Jul-17
12	Joseph Yarsiah	Director, Political Affairs	NEC	25-Jul-17
13	Parvinder Singh	Chief of Party	IFES	27-Jul-17 and 31-Jul-17
14	Hayya Ahmed	Senior Election Communications & Reporting Advisor	IFES	27-Jul-17
15	Moses Clarke	Senior Program Officer	IFES	27-Jul-17
16	Lauren Seyfried	Elections & Political Processes Team Leader/AOR	USAID	27-Jul-17
17	Leisel Talery	Director, Gender Section	NEC	28-Jul-17
18	James Wallace	Director of Training	NEC	28-Jul-17
19	Oscar Bloh	Chairman, ECC Steering Committee	Elections Coordination Committee (ECC)	28-Jul-17

	Key Informant	Title	Affiliation	Date
20	Ruth Caesar	National Focal Point	Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET)	31-Jul-17
21	Marayah Fyneah	President	Coalition of Political Parties Women in Liberia (COPPWIL)	31-Jul-17
22	Stefan Coman	Mission Coordinator, International Election Observation Mission	NDI	31-Jul-17
23	Emmanuel Asante Kissi	Election Analyst, International Election Observation Mission	NDI	31-Jul-17
24	Adele Ravida	Legal Analyst, International Election Observation Mission	NDI	31-Jul-17
25	Lamin Lighe	Executive Director	NEC	1-Aug-17
26	Henry Flomo	Director, Communications	NEC	1-Aug-17
27	Senesse Freeman	Director, Civic and Voter Education	NEC	2-Aug-17
28	Frances R. Deigh Greaves	National Chairperson	Voice of the Voiceless/National Civil Society Council of Liberia	3-Aug-17
29	Roseline Toweh	National General Secretary	Young Women's Christian Association of Liberia (YWCA)	3-Aug-17
30	Joseph D Howard	Executive Director	Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)	3-Aug-17

ANNEX IV: LIST OF LEPT ACTIVITIES FROM 2015 THROUGH QUARTER 2 2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
Assessments/learning		
Three-day workshop in collaboration with the NEC on Lessons Learned from the December 20, 2014 Special Senatorial Election from April 6-8, 2015, in Buchanan		2015
CEPPS/IFES conducted an Electoral Processes Diagnostic from May 25-29, 2015		2015
CEPPS/IFES, UNDP and NEC hosted a lessons-learned conference for electoral stakeholders including CSOs and political parties on the 2014 Special Senatorial Elections	UNDP	2015
CEPPS/IFES and NEC jointly assessed the operational capacities of the NEC's 19 Magisterial offices in Quarter 2		2016
CEPPS/IFES monitored voter registration in six of fifteen counties		2017
CEPPS/IFES observed the Lofa County Representative By-Election in Electoral District #1		2017
Capacity building/trainings		
CEPPS/IFES conducted a BRIDGE Train the Facilitator (TtF) training course from May 11-22, 2015 in Monrovia, Liberia		2015
BRIDGE training for NEC staff on Strategic and Financial Planning (October 26 – 29, 2015)	UNDP	2015
BRIDGE training on Civic and Voter Education (December 7 – 11, 2015)	UNDP	2015
Five-day BRIDGE training (with UNDP) supported a five-day BRIDGE Training in Quarter 3 for 27 NEC logisticians (21 men and 6 women) to enhance the capacity of NEC logisticians in the areas of warehouse management and help prepare each of them for the challenges and complexities associated with their work at the Magisterial level	UNDP	2016
A five-day BRIDGE training on Media and Elections was co-organized by CEPPS/IFES and UNDP in Quarter 4 for election officials and stakeholders	UNDP	2016
CEPPS/IFES supported a four-day Mid-term review of the NEC Strategic Plan (2012 – 2018), on April 26 – 29 in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County.	UNDP, IBI/LASS	2016

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
CEPPS/IFES' Media consultant conducted a social media training in Quarter 4 to enhance the NEC's information dissemination strategies to social media users by focusing on methodologies for managing the NEC's Facebook and website pages		2016
CEPPS/IFES organized a five-day BRIDGE training on Electoral Contestants in Q3 FY17		2017
Technical assistance		
CEPPS/IFES' legal expert provided technical support in Quarter 1 to the NEC in the review and amendment of key regulations including voter registration, campaign finance, polling and counting, electoral districting (2015-2016)		2016
CEPPS/IFES organized a two-day workshop in Quarter 1 for NEC Board of Commissioners and senior management to discuss, review and approve revised regulations		2016
Achievement: The NEC, in collaboration with CEPPS/IFES, concluded the revision process of three Voter Registration (VR) regulations in Quarter 3, a critical milestone achievement.		2016
CEPPS/IFES supported the Data Center in Quarter 1 through a project designed to disaggregate voters through gender analysis and ages of voter who participated in the 2014 Special Senatorial Elections		2016
CEPPS/IFES organized a four-day review in Quarter 2 for members of the NEC's BoC and senior management to revise the NEC's regulations concerning Hearings and Procedures, Referendum and Voter Registration		2016
CEPPS/IFES deployed an expert in Quarter 3 to assess and upgrade the Commission's Data Center's Microsoft Server and Microsoft SQL Servers to enhance the organization's ICT capacity		2016

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
CEPPS/IFES hired a local consultant to develop a new NEC website that has the capacity to respond to the public's growing need for information dissemination. The new website was completed and launched in May 2016		2016
CEPPS/IFES deployed two consultants in the areas of Communication and Media who worked directly with the NEC BoC, Executive Director, and the Communications Department to enhance their work in order to adequately engage stakeholders		2016
CEPPS/IFES developed a communication strategy for NEC that included a revised scope of work for the Communication Department and job descriptions for the staff		2016
CEPPS/IFES provide technical support to the NEC CVE section to organize and conduct a two-day brainstorming workshop with key stakeholders and partners for the CVE outreach campaign strategy		2016
CEPPS/IFES' Communication consultant developed a CVE Campaign Plan to support to NEC's Civic and Voter Education Campaign		2017
CEPPS/IFES' Graphic Design expert provided technical support to the NEC Data center on re-designing the Voter Registration Forms, Optical Mark Recognition Form (OMR) and the new 2017 voter ID cards		2017
CEPPS/IFES deployed two international experts to provide technical support to the NEC gender section on gender mainstreaming and inclusion of Persons with Disability (PWDs), especially women in the electoral process and organized technical briefing sessions for key election officials on strategies for enhancing and facilitating inclusion of PWDs in the elections		2017
CEPPS/IFES selected 31 CBOs for sub-grants to assist NEC in expanding CVE outreach across Liberia		2017
CEPPS/IFES provided technical support to the official launch of the NEC 2017 Civic and Voter Education Campaign		2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
CEPPS/IFES' GIS consultant did an assessment of NEC's GIS unit and provided technical support and guidance to the NEC to identify the locations of 300 additional voter registration centers (2016-2017)		2017
CEPPS/IFES launched a radio campaign to support the NEC in promoting civic and voter education messages		2017
CEPPS/IFES designs and prints NEC's quarterly newsletter "The Ballot"		2017
CEPPS/IFES provided support to the NEC's Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) section to train and deploy 38 monitors to assess activities of the 2017 voter registration process		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the development of a short CVE video for the NEC		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC's Gender section to hold disability workshops		2017
CEPPS/IFES developed Disability Handbook, Disability Inclusive Election Facilitation Guide, Poll workers manual on Disability Inclusion and Guide to Include Women with Disability in elections		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the development of NEC's Gender Implementation Plan		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC's Political Affairs section through the IPCC to convene a roundtable discussion on "Providing Access for Persons with Disabilities in Political Processes"		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the Political Affairs section through the IPCC to convene a workshop on Revised Regulations and Guidelines for Political Parties and Independent Candidates		2017
CEPPS/IFES assisted the NEC in upgrading the equipment at NEC Data Centre to support in developing and saving the Voter Registration Roll and installed a Battery Bank for uninterrupted power supply to the servers		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC's Political Affairs section through the IPCC to convene a workshop on Revised Regulations and Guidelines for Political Parties and Independent Candidates		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported NEC Communication Department to develop a revised Code of Conduct for Media		2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
Financial support		
CEPPS/IFES and USAID/LASS (IBI International) supported the NEC’s “Vision and Planning” Workshop	IBI/LASS	2015
CEPPS/IFES provided financial support in Quarter 1 to the NEC for the conduct of voter education during the Electoral District Number Two Representative By-elections in Lofa County		2015
CEPPS/IFES provided technical and financial support in Quarter 2 for a joint (NEC-CSO) review of civil society organizations’ Code of Conduct		2016
CEPPS/IFES provided financial support to the NEC and political parties to review and approve modified Memorandum of Understanding to guide political parties in the lead up to the 2017 elections.		2016
CEPPS/IFES, in collaboration with UNDP, supported the Commission in conducting four information sessions to inform and discuss with key stakeholders the changes made to the 1986 Elections Law (approved by the Legislature in September 2014)	UNDP	2016
As part of its technical support to enhance the Commission’s information dissemination strategy for major upcoming electoral activities, CEPPS/IFES organized an event for NEC in Quarter 3 to officially launch the 500 days Countdown to the 2017 Presidential and General Elections. During this program, the Commission also launched its refurbished website, new logo, and Facebook and Twitter pages		2016
CEPPS/IFES and UNDP co-organized a one-day launch of the Commission Revised Strategic Plan (2012 – 2018)	UNDP	2016
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC’s Gender section in Quarter 3 to conduct two separate regional consultations to create awareness about the Electoral processes among Persons with Disabilities and encourage them to actively participate in the upcoming elections		2016
CEPPS/IFES sponsored four regional consultation sessions in Quarter 4 on Gender and Disabilities in Elections to encourage them to actively participate in the electoral process		2016

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
CEPPS/IFES, along with UNDP and IBI/LASS, supported the NEC in organizing a four-day Strategic Plan Review Workshop in April 2016	UNDP, IBI/LASS	2016
In July 2016, CEPPS/IFES organized a two-day Consultative Validation Forum for CSOs to review and discuss and agree on the Code of Conduct for CSOs developed by NEC under the theme: <i>“Ensuring Mutual Collaboration for a Robust and Effective Civic and Voter Education process.”</i>		2016
CEPPS/IFES provided financial support in Quarter 4 to the NEC CVE section to organize and conduct a two-day brainstorming workshop with key stakeholders and partners for the CVE outreach campaign strategy		2016
CEPPS/IFES provided support to NEC’s Civic and Voter Education Section in Quarter 4 to organize and conduct a one-day review session of its Operational Plan with stakeholders and partners		2016
CEPPS/IFES and UNDP co-organized a two-day IPCC Forum for Liberia’s 22 registered political parties CEPPS/IFES organized two separate information sharing sessions for NEC election officials and political parties on Electoral Dispute Resolution processes	UNDP	2016 2017
CEPPS/IFES supported NEC in finalizing the designs and printing of large number of CVE materials		2017
CEPPS/IFES provided financial and technical support to the official launch of the NEC 2017 Civic and Voter Education Campaign		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC to organize a four-day Training of Trainers on voter registration for NEC Election Magistrates and Regional Coordinators		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC’s 2017 CVE campaign activities at the County Meet level, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth & Sports to reach out to Liberian youth and the public		2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
IFES		
CEPPS/IFES provided financial support to the NEC's Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) section to train and deploy 38 monitors to assess activities of the 2017 voter registration process		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the development of a short CVE video for the NEC		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC's Gender section to hold disability workshops		2017
CEPPS/IFES supported the NEC's Political Affairs section through the IPCC to convene a roundtable discussion on "Providing Access for Persons with Disabilities in Political Processes"		2017
CEPPS/IFES assisted the NEC in upgrading the office equipment and furniture in the 19 NEC magisterial offices and procured a generator for each magisterial office to ensure that they have an uninterrupted power supply throughout the election period		2017
Sub-awards were given to 27 CSOs for CVE activities		2017
Additional Sub-awards were given to 15 existing CSOs for messaging on peaceful transition		2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
NDI		
<i>Assessments/learning</i>		
CEPPS/NDI researched the most significant CVE knowledge gaps and the CSO landscape for the program's CVE component using information from UNDP's Baseline Survey and USAID-funded Liberia Electoral Access and Participation (LEAP) Survey and hosted CSOs for a presentation by on the results of the LEAP survey		2015
CEPPS/NDI conducted 16 focus group discussions in four counties to gather qualitative data on what motivates citizens to participate in elections and analyzed the results to guide CEPPS/NDI's civil society partners' future voter education campaigns		2016
CEPPS/NDI's pro-bono consultant conducted an assessment to identify entry points for marginalized groups, such as women and youth, to engage with political parties		2016
<i>CSO capacity building/training</i>		
CEPPS/NDI provided technical assistance to the ECC and its member organization serving as sub-grant lead, the National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE), in finalizing their sub-grant award which included finalizing the proposal, budget, budget notes and risk analysis		2015
CEPPS/NDI assisted four potential civil society organizations (CSOs) partners and one potential radio partner to develop sub-grant proposals to conduct targeted voter education and mobilization campaigns ahead of the voter registration period		2016
CEPPS/NDI conducted an incubator training for CSO partners on message development and dissemination as well as on financial reporting, programmatic reporting, and monitoring and evaluation for these groups		2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
NDI		
<i>CSO technical assistance/convening</i>		
<p>CEPPS/NDI held regular informal meetings with women activists to develop strategies to maximize women’s political participation throughout the election cycle. The women have developed three working groups focusing on mobilizing women to register and vote, increasing the number of women who run as candidates and get elected, and developing a national women’s policy agenda</p>		2016
<p>CEPPS/NDI supported its domestic election observation partner, the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), to hold a strategic planning exercise from February 3 to 6, 2016 focusing on the ECC’s internal organizational structure and vision and on developing its strategy for observing the 2017 elections</p>		2016
<p>CEPPS/NDI deployed an information and communications technology (ICT) expert to consult with the EC on an internal contact management tool and an election observation data collection tool; the consultant also helped the ECC to begin outlining an external communications strategy</p>		2016
<p>CEPPS/NDI provided ongoing technical assistance to the ECC to monitor the pre-election period, including their electoral legal framework analysis and observations of party conventions</p>		2016
<p>CEPPS/NDI conducted pro-bono training sessions and provided training manuals and other resources to support NAYMOTE for its Young Political Leadership School</p>		2016
<p>CEPPS/NDI provided continued technical assistance to its elections monitoring coalition, the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) to develop its long-term observation strategy and prepare to observe the voter registration process</p>		2017
<p>CEPPS/NDI assisted the ECC to observe and report on election preparations including press releases such as the statement of October 18, 2016, commenting on the failure of political parties to submit and publish their financial assets and the lack of resolution between NEC and the legislature on setting a new threshold to reapportion districts for the 2017 elections. CEPPS/NDI also assisted the ECC to analyze the electoral legal framework and present its findings to stakeholders.</p>		2017

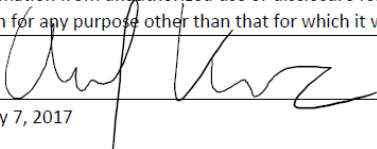
Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
NDI		
CEPPS/NDI worked with women activists from 11 women's organizations to draft a 2017 Liberia Women's Manifesto		2017
CEPPS/NDI helped women activists to conduct surveys, stakeholder outreach, community consultations and host a national conference where 200 women from across Liberia came together to discuss and adopt a common platform of issues important to women in the 2017 elections		2017
CEPPS/NDI recruited and vetted 150 potential women candidates, party activists, campaign managers, and civil society leaders, and launched its Getting Ready to Lead (GRTL) women's leadership program and organized a one-week boot camp graduating 138 women leaders		2017
CEPPS/NDI organized a CVE launch event in Monrovia on February 1 in partnership with four of its sub-grant partners. Members of the sub-grant partners and several women leaders being supported by CEPPS/NDI marched through Monrovia with CVE banners and leaflets		2017
CEPPS/NDI supported the Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR) to produce and broadcast CVE talk shows that aimed to mobilize voters to register in all 15 counties. ALICOR supplemented its radio programs by organizing four public forums and implementing a door-to-door voter registration campaign to address the low number of women registering to vote.		2017
CEPPS/NDI's CSO sub-grant partners conducted a range of CVE activities:		2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS) held a series of consultative meetings, street theaters, and radio programs in Bong and Margibi Counties. 		2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Liberia Labour Congress (LLC) engaged in worker-to-worker discussions with major companies throughout Liberia and used music and football to encourage youth and first-time voters to register to vote in eight counties. 		2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE) used door-to-door canvassing, a call-center, radio talk shows and bussing young volunteers to engage youth and first-time voters in four counties. 		2017

Activity	Co-organized/ funded	Year
NDI		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The South Eastern Women Development Association (SEWODA) targeted women voters through a series of community meetings, radio dramas and talk shows, and door-to-door visits in three southeastern counties. 		2017
<p>The ECC systematically observed the voter registration period by deploying 89 trained observers in all 73 electoral districts. The ECC released three updates on the findings of their observations that also included recommendations for stakeholders. The ECC also deployed observers to monitor the exhibition of the voters list, the claims and objections process, the candidate nomination process, and political party primaries.</p>		2017
<p>CEPPS/NDI held a GRTL Master Series workshop on campaign management from March 28 through 30, 2017, which was attended by 30 GRTL graduates</p>		2017
<p>CEPPS/NDI supported the Liberia Women’s Manifesto (LWM, or manifesto) steering committee in drafting the manifesto including finalizing the executive summary</p>		2017
<p>CEPPS/NDI supported the LWM steering committee to implement its “Get Rid of the Gap” (GRTG) campaign from February 16 to 28, 2017, using the executive draft of the LWM as a voter education tool to engage women on the importance in participating in the electoral process</p>		2017
CSO financial assistance		
<p>CEPPS/NDI supported the National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE) to implement two semesters of the Young Political Leadership School (YPLS) from April 4 to 8, 2016, and August 8 to 12, 2016.</p>		2016
<p>CEPPS/NDI provided sub-grants to a radio partner to broadcast CVE programming and to four CSO partners to conduct voter education campaigns</p> <p>CEPPS/NDI provided a sub-grant to the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) through NAYMOTE, who serves as the financial secretariat, to prepare for and conduct its observation of the 2017 electoral process.</p>		2017

ANNEX V: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Name	Christof Kurz
Title	Senior Evaluation Specialist STTA
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number <i>(contract or other instrument)</i>	L034 – Liberia Strategic Analysis
USAID Project(s) Evaluated <i>(Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</i>	Liberia Elections and Political Transitions (LEPT) USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. AID-669-A-14-00001/Leader Cooperative Agreement No. DFD-A-00-08-00350-00 Implementers: IFES and NDI
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	I worked for IFES from November 1999 till August 2001 as Program Assistant for West and Central Africa. I backstopped electoral assistance projects in the DR Congo, Nigeria, and Ghana at the time. My work at the time (more than 15 years ago) is not related to, fed into, or informed the current LEPT project that I will be evaluating. I had no prior knowledge of the LEPT project before being hired for this evaluation and have not discussed the LEPT project with anyone at IFES.

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	July 7, 2017

U.S. Agency for International Development - Liberia
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Monrovia, Liberia