

ANNEX

of the Commission Decision on the individual measure in favour of Liberia to be financed from the 11th EDF

Action Document for Support to the Liberian Electoral cycle

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	LIBERIA - Support to the Liberian Electoral cycle CRIS N°2013/025-071		
Total cost	Total estimated cost: EUR 10 769 000 Total amount of EDF contribution: EUR 10 000 000. This action is co-financed in joint co-financing by: - UNDP: USD 1 000 000		
Method of implementation	Project Approach Indirect management with an international organisation (UNDP)		
DAC-code	<i>15151, Elections</i>	Sector	Elections

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives

The Action's overall objective is to enhance the democratisation process in Liberia with emphasis on improving electoral institutions and processes. The specific objective is to increase ability of the National Elections Commission (NEC) and the other electoral stakeholders to conduct their core activities in an impartial, transparent and sustainable manner, particularly ahead of the 2017 Presidential elections. The proposed programme will consist of four components: (1) Enhance professionalism and strengthen capacity of electoral administrators at all levels (2) Support NEC and core electoral stakeholders to plan and carry out scheduled electoral processes within the electoral cycle 2015-2017; (3) Election specific support and (4) Support donor coordination.

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Country context

2.2.1.1. Economic and social situation and poverty analysis

Although Liberia has enjoyed relative peace and stability since the end of the war in 2003, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world with one of the lowest levels of human development (ranking 174 out of 186 countries), weak state capacity, and a high level of dependence on international donors. The foreseen drawdown of the UN Mission to Liberia (UNMIL) represents an important milestone in the transition to peace, as it will expose the resilience of Liberian society to maintain peace after ten years of post-war reconstruction. It will be an enormous challenge for the government to gradually take over the functions of UNMIL in such a way as to avoid major security gaps that could upset the fragile situation, and provide services across the territory.

Economic growth has averaged 7.6% over the past seven years and the country has attracted 16 billion EUR in foreign direct investment commitments, in particular in the iron ore, forestry, rubber and oil palm sector. The economic growth has helped reduce extreme poverty between 2007 and 2013, but the overall incidence of poverty remains high; 56% in 2013. Poverty continues to be mostly prevalent in rural areas, although the urban poverty was at 55.5% in 2013. Primary education enrolment has improved since the end of the war, and stood at 87.7% in 2010. Enrolment in secondary education has also improved. Despite this, quality remains poor and only a limited number of students have necessary skills to continue to higher level education or vocational training. Although there has been improved enrolment of girls, there continues to be an imbalance in education access for girls. Liberia is ranked 143 of 148 countries on the 2012 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Gender Inequality Index*; women are not only discriminated in terms of access to education and employment opportunities, but gender based violence remains a grave vestige from the war.

With high levels of poverty and income inequality, there is a wide perception among many Liberians that only few are benefitting from the economic growth. Concession agreements that are bringing in needed foreign investment have often been granted without following the law or consulting communities, whose livelihood depends on the same land, exacerbating the perception of injustice and increasing tensions. Land ownership, right to land and use of land remains a tense issue. Underemployment is a critical issue with 78% of the labour force holding only “vulnerable employment”, including a large, urbanized youth population.

Governance, justice and public institutions remain weak. There has nevertheless been progress in the reform of the civil service and public financial management reform, although much still needs to be achieved in the fight against corruption and to improve transparency and accountability. There is nevertheless a strong political will and commitment to enhance governance reform and maintain peace in Liberia. Liberia has shown regular progress since 2006 in governance indicators. Liberia’s ratings are above the African average for voice and accountability and political stability, but much remains to be done to improve the rule of law. Transparency International’s 2012 (2011) Corruption Perception Index ranks Liberia 75 (91) out of the 176 (183) countries and territories assessed. In 2005, the country was ranked 137 out of the 158 surveyed.

2.2.1.2. National development policy

The long term national vision is expressed in the 'Liberia Rising 2030' which aims for Liberia to reach middle income status by 2030. The National Development Plan, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), aims to implement this vision in the period 2012-2018. The plan has two key objectives: (1) to create wealth and (2) to increase inclusiveness for a more equal and just society. In order to achieve these two overarching objectives, the plan sets key priorities under five pillars, which are consistent with identified current challenges for Liberia: (1) Peace, security and rule of law, (2) Infrastructure and economic transformation, (3) Human development, (4) Governance and Public Institutions.

The Government of Liberia has shown a high level of commitment and ownership in implementing the AfT, but remains hampered by the institutional capacity to coordinate and follow-up on implementation. In recent years, Liberia has adopted a number of good quality sector policies, strategies and work plans in a number of sectors. However, there is not always coherence between the AfT and these sector plans, in particular as regards funding priorities and indicators.

After the first year of its implementation the credibility of the AfT has been affected by cash shortfalls in the FY12/13 and FY13/14 national budgets, leading to the low execution of the investment budget and a reported overall ‘completion rate’ of interventions in the five pillar of 58%. The Government of Liberia needs to continue and is working on public financial management reforms, improve budget management and strengthen the coordination & monitoring mechanism, as well as continue the reforms that will deepen democracy and good governance. Progress is also being made by Liberia on the New Deal process, where Liberia is one of the pilot countries. This will hopefully bring further alignment with the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs).

2.2.2. Sector context: policies and challenges

The NEC conducted the 2005 and 2011 Presidential and Legislative elections under the Electoral Reform Law (2004) with i.a. the support of the European Union, EU member States (notably Sweden), the United Nations Development Programme UNDP and United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and other members of the international community. Liberia's 2011 presidential and legislative elections were an important milestone in the political evolution of post conflict Liberia and were widely recognised as an opportunity to consolidate peace and speed up Liberia's political and economic recovery. While the election were considered to live up to international standards, transparent and credible, there were technical deficiencies, and the opposition boycott of the second round showed that the political environment remained tense and national reconciliation far from concluded.

Right after the 2011 elections NEC developed the six years (2012-2017) strategic plan which presented the NEC's strategic objectives for the period and established a rational agenda and commitments to make the Commission more responsive, effective and efficient electoral institution. NEC has identified five key strategic areas, as follows: (i) improving the electoral legal framework by reviewing electoral laws and guidelines, reviewing voter registration requirements and reviewing the complaint management mechanism; (ii) strengthening the political party system and enhancing public confidence in elections and strengthening the capacity of political parties; (iii) improving public participation in elections through the development and implementation of a civic and voter education strategy; (iv) strengthening the institutional capacity of the NEC; and, (v) delivering free, fair and credible elections through voter registration and updating and reviewing boundaries where needed.

In follow up to the implementation of the NEC strategic plan, in early 2013, the NEC, supported by UNDP, initiated an electoral legal reform process which has provided the opportunity for an on-going unprecedented dialogue between key stakeholders including the NEC, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), political parties, the general Liberian public and international partners. It has also established a collaborative working relationship between the NEC and the two legislative elections committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

An electoral reform bill was recently approved by the Legislature. The major amendments to the law provide the NEC with greater autonomy in appointing its staff, improves the process for party registration and complaints mechanisms, as well as sets the level for political party registration fees and also promotes greater gender balance by setting a 30% minimum gender representation of candidates. Other important changes in the law include explicit inclusion of voter education into the mandate of the NEC, and trucking of voters and use of state funds for campaigns as electoral offenses. Amendments to the law introduce a significant change for the administration of elections in Liberia therefore careful and continue implementation and harmonisation of the new provisions are required.

A Constitutional Review process is under way and, if implemented, will likely have implications for the conduct of the 2017 elections. The Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) operates with an ambitious timeline aimed at delivering a new/revised constitution before the 2017 general elections with a referendum to be conducted in 2015. Since this process is extremely important from the electoral standpoint, the NEC should coordinate with the CRC and the Legislature to ensure that discussions on the conduct of constitutional referendum adequately and timely taken.

Capacity Building

The NEC has improved significantly over the last years of which the positive observer reports of the last elections give witness. However, the 2011 elections also showed that NEC was still affected by operational and institutional weaknesses which must be overcome to create more independent, professional and transparent election management body. The NEC, as a relatively young institution, is faced with a number of challenges documented in a series of reports (UNDP and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) 2012 needs assessment reports). Those include lack of capacity of the electoral administration both at headquarter level and magisterial/field level, insufficient collaboration with key electoral stakeholders such as CSOs and political parties as well as

lack of the internal administrative policies and procedures. Election-specific deficiencies including the NEC's procurement, human resources and finance sectors still requires substantive attention in the form of capacity enhancement and technical support. Full focus should be given to improvement of the NEC complaint adjudication mechanisms and enhancement of communication strategy with external stakeholders such as political parties and CSOs. Beyond election-specific needs, however, the NEC would benefit from longer-term professionalization as an institution to ensure that it builds the sustainable all-level internal capacity over time to administer elections in Liberia.

Voter registration

The amendment of the proposed electoral law revising the population threshold for constituencies and the delimitation of those constituencies, are required for the 2017 voter registration process. At the same time, there are preparatory steps that the NEC can take with respect to voter registration to facilitate the process such as procurement of voter registration materials, training of Voter Registration staff and logistics. Should the NEC decide to proceed with adopting a biometric voter registration system in Liberia, proper studies will need to be carried out taking into account sustainability of the process and ensuring that the infrastructural issues (electricity and capacity of the magisterial offices), as well as the outstanding issue of administrative and constituency delimitation, are resolved.

Women participation

The 2011 elections provided an opportunity to re-elect the first female President to a second term in office and it offered a chance to build on the gains made by 2005 elections through the possibility presented for increasing the numbers of women elected to the Legislature. However, Liberian women did not succeed in expanding their numbers in the Legislature. In fact, the elections saw a decline in the overall representation of women, from 9 representatives out of a total of 64 in the 52nd Legislature, to 8 representatives out of a total of 73 in the 53rd Legislature. A total of 15 out of 30 seats were contested in the Senate in 2011, resulting in a reduction in the number of female senators from 5 to 4. Furthermore, preliminary data from the 2014 update of the voter registration for the Senatorial elections indicated that only 37% of registered voters were women compared with the 2011 voter registration process where registered women were 49%. This correlates with the 2008 Population Census which gives the female population 49%.

Lack of civic and voter education programs for women, absence of enthusiastic and energetic women's groups, the absence of the properly functioning national institutions and weak political parties are potential challenges that prevent women from electoral participation. The NEC has put in place a policy to more effectively mainstream gender in the electoral process. The NEC gender section, established recently, oversees the implementation of the gender mandate. However, limited financial and human capacity precludes from the implementation of the gender mainstreaming task and in promoting women participation in elections. Strong advocacy and unanimity are required amongst civil society groups and political parties, and the NEC can coordinate this work for further promotion of women participation in elections. In the gender mainstreaming efforts, political parties should be encouraged to introduce affirmative measures in their policies and party structures to ensure that party lists and governing bodies have at least 30% from each gender, as specified in the recent reformed electoral law.

Election security

In a fragile, post-conflict environment as Liberia, the electoral process is a core element of establishing a democratic and stable country. The NEC's role in this regard is to, on the one hand, support and promote structures and institutions that reduce the tensions in society and, on the other hand, to promote a secure setting for the peaceful conduct of election. In 2012, the United Nations and the Government agreed on a three-year timeline for the next phase of UNMIL's military gradual drawdown. UNMIL's drawdown has proceeded peacefully since 2012, and joint planning between the Government and UNMIL remained constructive. But implementation has been inadequate, as national authorities have not allocated adequate resources to the military component. The current number of the LNP is slightly over 4,500 police personnel and may reach 5,000 by the end of the year. However,

given the current situation of the State budget, which has been steadily declining over the past three years, it is a challenge for the LNP to be able to assume full responsibility for implementing security in the country before the 2017 elections.

Support to the establishment of a regular election security coordination mechanism that meets regularly and includes all relevant national security sector institutions and the UN is paramount. The NEC should coordinate the allocation of funds for election security in the budgets of law enforcement bodies. In the 2011 the deployment of LNP during elections was financed by the Justice and Security Trust Fund.

Political parties

The relationship between political parties and the NEC has been quite contentious. After 2005 participation in several elections and by-elections, political parties remain quite weak in many cases without proper manifests on political vision and governance. Several major opposition parties expressed reservation about the NEC's impartiality, after appointment of the new board of NEC commissioners in 2013, even though the NEC has been widely commended for handling of the various by-elections and other electoral processes successfully. The frustration and distrust of political parties further deepened following the NEC's petition in February 2014 before the Civil Law Court for the revocation of the registration of 20 political parties due to noncompliance with requirements of the Constitution of Liberia, as well as the guidelines relating to the registration of political parties and independent candidates, including the mandatory submission to the NEC of detailed statements of assets and liabilities.¹ As a result of the petition, the Civil Law Court revoked registrations and accreditation of the 20 political parties.

There is a strong need to promote a dialogue and consensus building on critical issues of legal or administrative reform, to better sensitise parties to the mandate and workings of the NEC and to better sensitise the NEC to the needs and expectations of the political actors. The Inter-Party Consultative Committee (IPCC) is currently the only multi-party platform available to create compromise and find consensus. Considering the contentious and unfortunate political climate of recent decades, the importance of the IPCC is evident and of obvious value not only to the political process but also to the citizens of Liberia who benefit from productive political dialogue. Political parties have recognised the value of the IPCC, in particular as a conflict resolution and prevention mechanism and its suggested to explore options for developing the IPCC into a more independent forum with NEC participation through which political parties can convene, discuss and resolve conflicts. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at formalising the IPCC has been submitted to the NEC, which has not yet been signed.

Youth

Liberia has a considerable youth population with more than 60% under the age of 35. High level of unemployment and livelihood opportunities, as well as illiteracy, make Liberian youth particularly vulnerable. Engagement of the youth into the social life is paramount in order to avoid feeling of politically disempowered and economically abandoned. Youth can therefore both represent an opportunity and a risk.

Election-related violence can in turn undermine democracy by eroding people's faith in the democratic process. It is admitted that election-related violence can be triggered by electoral shortcomings. However, technical shortcomings are usually not the fundamental cause of violence or violent conflict, but merely the spark that ignites political tensions. Factors related to a country's social structure also contribute to possible violence. It was noted that rapidly growing urban areas, which often have large populations living in poor conditions, can contribute to the likelihood of electoral violence in some circumstances. The role of the youth is highlighted in particular with analyses showing that risks of

¹ Article 83(d) and 79(c)(i) of the Constitution and Part II Chapter IV of the Guidelines Relating to the Registration of Political Parties and Independent Candidates.

electoral violence increase in countries with a large youth population, especially when young generation are unemployed and not enrolled in secondary school.

Election Logistics

Limited infrastructure and difficult terrain and weather conditions make logistics one of the most challenging tasks of the NEC. The Constitution stipulates that presidential and legislative elections should be held throughout the country on the second Tuesday of October, when the rainy season is the heaviest. Unless amended through the current constitutional review, the 2017 general elections will be conducted under similarly difficult conditions.

While significantly dependent on UNMIL support in 2005, the NEC has increasingly assumed logistical responsibility for the process. Notably in 2011, UNMIL provided limited logistical assistance only where national capacity was absent. UNMIL's drawdown and loss of assets has diminished the mission's capability to provide significant logistical support in 2014. As a rule in the last years, when election operation comes closer, the NEC officially requests UNMIL to provide logistical support in the distribution and retrieval of election materials and personnel to remote and inaccessible precincts in the southeastern and northwestern regions. For the 2017 general elections, the NEC should be operationally strong and confident enough to find more sustainable, good practices and cost-effective solutions to the challenge of reaching remote areas. NEC should affectively coordinate and advocate for the resource sharing with other government institutions during logistical operation.

2.3. Lessons learnt

The United Nations pooled funding, supported by the EU and other donors, to the NEC has been in place since June 2010 and was instrumental for the credible conduct of the 2011 electoral events. The 2011 election review process with inputs of the lessons learned conference, the institutional assessment provided by UNDP and IFES, a review of the electoral laws, the observer reports (EEM and TCC) and consultations with stakeholders and the international community clearly sees a need to further work with the NEC to enhance the staff ability to implement NEC's mandate.

The European Union Election Expert Missions report on the 2011 election, the NEC lessons learnt, NEC Needs Assessment, and the NEC Strategic Plan 2012-2017 concluded that elections have been overall satisfactory according to international standards but alluded also to a number of institutional and the legislative framework weaknesses. Recommendations revealed the importance of the continued implementation of the NEC capacity building programs covering the institutional, management and coordination mechanism setup for both the headquarter and magistrate offices and strengthening of complaints and appeals system. Needs assessment reports also identified inadequate voter education, logistical challenges, lack of consultation with key collaborating national institutions and insufficient communication with key stakeholders including political parties and CSOs.

2.4. Complementary actions

The proposed intervention falls within the EU's draft 11th EDF National Indicative Programme (NIP) for Liberia's focal sector on good governance. Complementary measures will include budget support (state building contract) which will support complementary areas such as rule of law and justice and the capacity of the state to provide security provision to its citizens in the face of UNMIL drawdown. The 11th EDF NIP also foresees continued support to strengthening the General Audit Commission (GAC) and other Liberian Institutions and Non State Actors that could complement certain aspects of the project. The EU is also currently supporting the ongoing decentralisation process and is supporting civil society, including women participation, through the thematic budget lines. A regular Political Dialogue EU-Liberia is also in place.

USAID foresees awarding a five-year (60 month) US-\$18,000,000 cooperative agreement as an associate award through the CEPPS III mechanism to the potential election partner organisations such

as IFES and National Democratic Institute (NDI) and possibly International Republican Institute (IRI). In particular, USAID funds give full support to CSO for election observation.

A close coordination will be established within the Project and Technical Board targeting an effective harmonization of the activities.

As UNMIL drawdowns, it is unclear at this stage whether it will be present in the country at the time of the Presidential elections 2017, the size of the mission or their support to the electoral process. In addition, a special relationship will be developed between the project and other possible international (e.g. UN) and regional actors with a mandate or expertise in electoral assistance (e.g. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, African Union). The EU supports through its West Africa Regional and African programmes the electoral support capacities of both ECOWAS and the AU. International donors and other partners such as Sweden, NDI, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), may also collaborate on substantive activities. It should be taken into consideration that the Government may request for an EU Electoral Observation Mission for the 2017 Presidential and National assembly elections.

2.5. Donor coordination

On the basis of the partnership for electoral assistance EU-UNDP, and with the follow-up and support of the Joint EU-UNDP Task Force on Effective Electoral Assistance, the project will also foster a special relationship with UNMIL, United Nations Police (UNPOL) and other possible UN actors with a mandate or expertise in electoral assistance. International donors and other partners such as IFES, NDI, International IDEA, ECOWAS and AU may collaborate on substantive activities.

An overall **Donor Coordination Mechanism** will be established. A **Project Board (PB)** is the overall authority for the project and is responsible for its initiation, direction, review and eventual closure. It is the highest authority of the project responsible for making on a consensus basis management decisions for the project. Project reviews will be made at regular intervals or as necessary. A Project Board will include the NEC, UNDP, EU as well as UNMIL, IFES and USAID. A **Technical Working group (TWG)** will be formed within the Board, tasked with preparing issues for discussion at the PB and to handle outstanding controversial issues. A **Project Management Unit (PMU)** (*see annex I*) will be the unit dedicated to administering and managing the support funds. The PMU, located at the NEC, will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the project and will serve as a Secretariat to the Project Board.

3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The Action's overall objective is to enhance the democratisation process in Liberia with emphasis on improving electoral institutions and processes. . The specific objective is to increase ability of the NEC and the other electoral stakeholders to conduct their core activities in an impartial, transparent and sustainable manner. To achieve this specific objective, the programme will consist of four components: (1) Enhance professionalism and strengthen capacity of electoral administrators at all levels (2) Support NEC and core electoral stakeholders to plan and carry out scheduled electoral processes within the electoral cycle 2015-2018; (3) Election specific support and (4) Support donor coordination.

The first and foremost partner and recipient of technical assistance will be the **NEC**. Strong partnership will be developed with a wider range of stakeholders, including the government of Liberia, civil society (including domestic observer groups) and political parties, in particular with regard to confidence-building and public awareness exercises.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The Action's overall strategy aims to improve electoral institutions and processes in Liberia, with a particular focus on women's and youth participation in electoral processes, enhancing the political environment by promoting a political dialogue and leadership, and conflict prevention.

Component one Strengthening the National Electoral Institutions:

Result 1: NEC capacity requirements are identified and needs addressed

Indicative activities: (1) Operational trainings and peer-to-peer missions with focus on election administration, media, CSOs, women group, youth and political parties; (2) Long term capacity development programmes; (3) support to the NEC election resource centre (4) support to the magisterial offices and warehouses; (4) Development of integrated administrative system in NEC.

Result 2: Lessons learnt from the 2014 (see also logframe) elections serve as baseline for future programming and support

Indicative activities: (1) Inclusive Post-elections lessons learned & review exercises following conclusion of the 2014 and 2017 electoral processes

Component two Supporting NEC and core electoral stakeholders in electoral processes:

Result 3: Voter registration is updated and voter registration process is improved

Indicative activities: (1) Provide technical support and guidance for a comprehensive feasibility study on the voter registration system; (2) Technical support for voter registration operations.

Result 4: Women's political participation and leadership is enhanced

Indicative activities: (1) Advocacy and training on gender issues targeting political parties, youth, CSOs and Media; (2) Support NEC for institutional and internal reform targeting gender balanced policies.

Result 5: Political parties' capacity enhanced, political parties are coordinated and conflict prevention measures are in place

Indicative activities: (1) Support the revitalisation of the IPCC; (2) Developing IPCC Policies and Regulations and organisational structure; (3) Support to conflict prevention and inter-party dialogue with active involvement of youth and women.

Result 6: Elections security forces act is in line with international standards

Indicative activities: (1) Support to the establishment of a regular election security coordination mechanism; (2) Technical and financial support to train security forces in election related issues.

Result 7: Civic and voter education

Indicative activities: Support the NEC in developing and implementing a comprehensive civic and voter education programme taking into account the findings and recommendations of the Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVE) Baseline Survey, with the eventual support of CSOs;

Result 8: Support the electoral legal framework and the constitutional review process as it relates to elections and harmonisation of the election law and regulations.

Main activities: Support the NEC, the CRC, the legislature and the Government on the referendum, constitutional reform as it relates to elections, harmonisation of electoral law reform and constitutional review process and developing detailed guidelines and regulations.

Component three

Result 9: Logistics and operational support provided to NEC and core electoral stakeholders contribute to the successful conduct of national elections

Indicative activities: (1) Technical and financial support to the electoral operations – Elections and run-off; 2) Logistics (such as elections material) and communication support to NEC; 3) Support to planning and budgeting exercises; 4) Eventual support to CSOs in electoral observation.

Component four

Result 10: Project set-up and management ensured and Donor coordination mechanisms established and effectively functional

Indicative activities: (1) Technical assistance and project management in support of the NEC and the electoral activities; (2) Donor coordination through the project board.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The project’s main assumptions are that the political context in Liberia will remain conducive to peace and stability, no major armed conflict or socio-political disruption will occur and that the donor community will manage to mobilize enough resources to support Liberia’s electoral cycle 2015-2017. Several risk factors could bear directly on the successful implementation of the elections assistance, mainly relating to the broader political landscape and electoral reform imperatives currently under consideration:

Risk/potential adverse impact	Level	Risk management strategy/measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of capacity of the state to provide security as part of the UNMIL military drawdown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is substantial focus on this issue from almost all donors. EU is foreseeing a state building contract (Budget support) and political dialogue that will contribute to these efforts. Regular election security coordination mechanism (Project's Result 6).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electoral violence triggered by lack of NEC transparency and technical capacity to prepare for elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The presence of the technical team in NEC deployed by the project is critical for conducting smooth electoral operation. The presence and training of qualified national civil observers The eventual monitoring of an Election Expert Mission to encourage increased professionalism of the NEC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electoral violence triggered by Insufficient engagement of youth in electoral processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure youth is engaged in the electoral training and awareness programs Support to CSOs related activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political dialogue in between of the new Board of Commissioners and the political parties deteriorates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of dialogue with political parties may deteriorate political climate but this risk is low. The project will strive to install a culture of assuring that all objective points of critics are treated in a professional manner.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delay in taking decision to conduct referendum on the constitutional amendments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities, including recruitment of staff, and procurement of materials would have to be reshuffled and reallocated at Steering Committee level.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contingency to be provided for in the budget of the delegation agreement (PAGODA).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delay in submission of the 2017 electoral budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will assist in development of the calendar of activities and ensure the budget is timely submitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfall in the national budget leads to reduction in NEC budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will support improved budget planning and lead to more efficient allocation of funds. Complementary actions such as budget support and PFM will also contribute. Continued dialogue with government will also take place.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

Women remain underrepresented in political life in Liberia, including within the Legislature, leadership in political parties, senior ranks of the public service and electoral administration. The gender sensitisation needs are arguably the greatest among rural populations. The promotion of women within political parties, which serve as a training ground for future leaders, is an area needing more attention and support. Initiatives to date have also tended to focus on women's role in elections per se (as candidates and voters) rather than adopting a holistic approach that looks at the social, economic and political barriers to greater involvement by women in political life in Liberia.

A number of legal reforms are politically contentious as they will affect who can run for office, number of representatives per region, and how leaders are elected. Such reform always entails political trade-offs and public institutions may often come under fire for being partial in the implementation of their mandates. Given that Liberia is a post-conflict country entering a period of heightened political tensions related to elections and the peace dividend is yet to be felt particularly in the more remote areas of the country, there is a need to be mindful of possible flashpoints for conflict and to develop strategies to deal with these in advance. The project activities will include a conflict sensitiveness assessment of the intervention during its inception phase.

3.5. Stakeholders

Political parties are in need of sustained capacity development which is tailored to the dynamics of the electoral system in Liberia. There is also need to promote dialogue and consensus building between NEC and political parties on critical issues such as legal or administrative reform and mandate and workings of the NEC. The project will support the meetings of the Inter-Party Consultative Committee convened by the NEC and help to re-profile current systems of the IPCC.

Another key stakeholder group in the electoral process is the **civil society**, including women and youth. Civil Society is relatively vibrant in Liberia, comprising of an extensive range of pro-democracy and human rights organizations, trade unions, women's groups, religious organizations, youth and student groups, Diaspora and refugees groups. In 2011, the presence of **domestic observer groups**, perceived as neutral and impartial, enhanced citizens' confidence in the process. However, the lack of resources and poor logistics restrict the work of many of organizations, most of which are based in Monrovia.

The National Police of Liberia (LNP) is in the process of taking over from UNMIL security personnel due to UNMIL's drawdown process. Recruitment and training is on-going but has experienced delays and challenges in planning for UNMIL drawdown. On the quota for female police officers, LNP is on track, but the police force is facing lack of trust from the population, namely because of perceived corruption. LNP is operating under the Ministry of Justice. While other projects cover the security-related elements, it was confirmed the need for more specialised training for police on roles and responsibilities during the electoral cycle.

The **Media** has a key role in the electoral process. Radio is the main source of information in Liberia. The coverage of newspapers and local TV stations is limited and with the exception of community

radio stations, local media barely exists outside Monrovia. The civil war left most of the media with capacity and resource constraints. Several components of the project will include media elements, such as civic education and enhancing women's participation.

The **Government of Liberia** plays a key role in the process, essentially by committing resources from the state budget for NEC's running costs and election preparations. The Government of Liberia has indicated that it will provide the funds to the NEC's recurrent budget during financial years 2015-2017 reflecting its commitment to the elections. If the delays continue in carrying out the electoral reforms necessary for the conduct of the 2017 elections, this risks raising concerns over the commitment among some of the national authorities to the elections.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country, referred to in Article 17 of Annex IV to the Cotonou Agreement.

4.2. Indicative operational implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in sections 3.2. and 4.3. will be carried out, is 48 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement or, where none is concluded, from the adoption of this Action Document, subject to modifications to be agreed by the responsible authorising officer in the relevant agreements. The relevant Committee shall be informed of the extension of the operational implementation period within one month of that extension being granted.

4.3. Implementation components and modules

4.3.1. Indirect management with an international organisation

This action with the objective of enhancing the democratisation process in Liberia with emphasis on improving electoral institutions and processes will be implemented in indirect management with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in accordance with Article 58(1)(c) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 applicable by virtue of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2015/323. This choice is justified because UNDP has acted as lead donor for elections support during the previous electoral support pooled fund, it has good technical experience and resources to work in the area, as well as good relations with the beneficiary, the Liberian election Commission, NEC, and an important role in other complementary governance interventions in the country, and is able to profit from expertise within the UN system, most particularly from the UN Mission to Liberia. While NEC capacities remain limited, the implementation of the programme through UNDP remains the most appropriate for EU support. The entrusted entity will carry out the following budget-implementation tasks, which account for the major part of the project's activities: setting up a project implementation unit in NEC with international expert staff. UNDP will also procure services (eg. short term trainers), supplies (eg. voter registration materials) and grants to civil society, by the use of UNDP standard procurement and grant award procedures.

The entrusted entity is currently undergoing the ex ante assessment in accordance with Article 61(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 applicable by virtue of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 323/2015. In anticipation of the results of this review, the authorising officer deems that, based on a preliminary evaluation and on the long-standing and problem-free cooperation with this entity, it can be entrusted with budget-implementation tasks under indirect management.

The Commission authorises that the costs incurred by the entrusted entity may be recognised as eligible as of 1/6/2015 because funding for this project had initially been foreseen to start in November

2014, but was delayed due to the Ebola outbreak. However, the postponed 2014 Senatorial elections took place in December, and due to the urgent needs of NEC, UNDP already started its support activities, specifically in terms of lessons' learnt from 2014 Senatorial elections and continuation of voter registration, electoral complaints mechanisms, legal reform and working with political parties.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

Subject to the following, the geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act shall apply.

4.5. Indicative budget

The total estimated costs for the project in Liberia amount is EUR 10 769 000, where the European Development Fund (EDF) will contribute EUR 10 000 000 and UNDP will co-finance USD 1 000 000 (approx. EUR 769 000). This amount excludes the NEC recurrent budget (Government of Liberia contribution), IFES and UNMIL support.

Project Components	UNDP Fund (in EUR)
Components 1: Electoral institutions	1 453 806
Components 2: Electoral Processes	2 022 912
Component 3 Electoral Support	3 252 032
Component 4 Coordination and management of donor support	3 154 250
UNDP administrative costs	686 000
Audit and evaluation	200 000
TOTAL	10.769.000

4.6. Performance monitoring

An indicative logframe including performance indicators for all objectives is included as an annex. It is itself based on the Country's Agenda for Transformation and NEC's 2012-2017 Strategic plan which presented the NEC's strategic objectives for the period. Due to outstanding limitation in the country's and the sector's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and capacities, the project will be subject to UNDP's monitoring and evaluation procedures. In parallel, this project and other EU and donors projects are supporting and will support the improvement of the M&E systems in the country in order to achieve sustainability. Performance monitoring will be subject to the regular review by the Project Board (section 2.4). Follow-up missions to be carried out by the EU-UNDP Joint Task Force will complement the monitoring activities/mechanisms of the project. Field missions by EU should be conducted to the extent possible (proposed 1-2 missions). In addition, results oriented monitoring (ROM) mission possibility should be considered. The EU Delegation in Liberia will be actively involved in the project's coordination mechanisms and supervision of the project.

4.7. Evaluation and audit

Financial transactions and financial statements shall be subject to the auditing procedures laid down in the General Conditions, Art. 16.2.

A copy of the audited financial statements shall be submitted to the European Commission by the Organization. Although only required when mandated by partnership protocols, an evaluation of the Project will be undertaken by UNDP within the project's framework at the end of its period to learn lessons and apply these to possible follow-up on assistance activities.

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An expenditure verification mission, directly managed by the EU, might be deployed during the life or at the end of the project.

4.8. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan for the Action, to be elaborated before the start of implementation.

The measures shall be implemented either (a) by the Commission, and/or (b) by the implementing partner. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, procurement and grant contracts.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.