



**Republic of Liberia
National Elections Commission (NEC)**

MONITORING & EVALUATION POLICY



June 2016

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Acronyms

BoC	Board of Commissioners
CRM	Compliance and Risk Management
IBI-LASS	International Business Initiative – Liberia Administrative and Systems Strengthening Program
IFES	International Federation for Electoral Systems
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEC	National Elections Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VRU	Voters' Roll Update

Foreword

The National Elections Commission (NEC) of Liberia envisions being “*a credible electoral authority managing public elections for the Liberian people in line with the Laws of Liberia and international best practices.*” This policy is an affirmation of our commitment to develop and maintain a comprehensive Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation system. Such system will help us learn from what we do, and remain responsive to present-day realities of “*managing for results.*”

The NEC established the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Section in June 2013 based on the Commission’s resolve to address issues of quality control and operational effectiveness at all levels of the NEC. The initial expectation of the newly established M&E Section was to be the conduit through which the Commission regularly plans, collects and analyzes performance information; communicates results and promotes learning. Ultimately, the goal of the M&E Section is to coordinate efforts to define the success of the Commission by measuring, in a more effective way, the contributions made by each department, section or unit to the achievement of the overall mandate of the NEC.

The development of this policy will go a long way in shaping the M&E efforts from a fragmented approach to a more methodical approach to document the usefulness of programs and processes. Additionally, this policy will hasten the quest to transition from traditional monitoring of inputs, activities and outputs to a more robust, result-oriented monitoring and evaluation regime that will improve performance across the spectrum of the NEC. One way to achieve this is to provide performance-based results to stakeholders. This will help to improve public perception of the NEC.

Meanwhile, let me use this occasion to extend the Commission’s thanks and appreciation to the Government of Liberia and our technical partners, particularly IBI-LASS, IFES, and UNDP, for their support to the M&E efforts of the NEC. I also appreciate, with profound gratitude, the commitment, insightful contributions and dedication of the devoted staff of the NEC who provided valuable information that informed this policy.

Finally, it is my conclusion that this policy does consider the interest of the NEC as a professional institution, tasked with the responsibility of providing the space for regular, peaceful democratic elections in Liberia. As such, the Commission will provide the leadership and take the necessary actions in ensuring that the standards set herein are upheld, knowing that this will further strengthen the existing professional and technical capabilities of the NEC as we prepare to embark on future electoral processes.



Jerome G. Korkoya, J. D.
CHAIRMAN

I. Introduction

I.1 Background

Since the creation of the current seven-member Board of Commissioners (BoC) in 2004, it took the National Elections Commission (NEC) nearly a decade to formalize its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. This was realized through a decision to establish an M&E Section in June 2013, with the appointment of a Director. Since then, the NEC has collaborated with the International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to support staff capacity building and secure needed logistics. Also, the Section has since coordinated various M&E activities in the NEC. These include, but are not limited to: spot monitoring of key elections activities such as the Voters' Roll Update (VRU); assets tracking; follow up with civic and voters' educators and gender mobilizers; evaluation of temporary staff training, spot check at magisterial offices; monitoring of elections administration, holding of lessons learned conferences, etc.

However, these efforts have been fragmented, as there is no approved policy framework that clearly elaborates the mandate and scope, roles and responsibilities, etc. for M&E. Furthermore, there is limited use of standardized tools and protocols for M&E. Also, there is unclear mechanism to consistently feedback M&E findings into management decision-making processes. Because of these challenges, there is limited evidence of experiential learning and adaptation. Also, it is unclear how the NEC plans to strengthen and sustain its M&E system. These concerns, therefore, have occasioned the need to develop an M&E Policy for the NEC.

I.2 Purpose of the M&E Policy

The M&E policy serves different, but interdependent, purposes, which essentially reinforce one another. Primarily, the policy provides a framework that defines the mandate and scope of M&E in the NEC. Besides, the policy articulates the procedures and processes for M&E, outlines the roles

and responsibilities of key stakeholders, and highlights the commitments of the NEC to sustain the development of M&E.

I.2.1 Goal and objectives of the M&E Policy

The goal of the M&E policy is to promote evidence-based management decisions making. The NEC will achieve this goal through the following objectives:

- a. To monitor and evaluate results of NEC activities
- b. To promote accountability for resources used against objectives of the NEC
- c. To enhance a system to feedback M&E findings into decision-making, and disseminate results and lessons learned by the NEC
- d. To promote experiential learning for continued improvements of policies, strategies, and program management in the NEC.

I.3 Guiding principles

The NEC upholds four guiding principles, which define the good-practice, norms and quality standards for making sure M&E practices and procedures are technically sound and contextually relevant.

I.3.1 *Simplicity*

Formal M&E is relatively new in the NEC. Staff members possess varying M&E capacities; so, team-wide efforts will be made to promote the use of simple tools and processes. This will encourage utilization of M&E plans, provide an incentive for end-users' compliance, and promote effectiveness of staff in carrying out their M&E responsibilities.

I.3.2 *Team building*

The NEC has established an M&E Section, which oversees all results-related activities. Owing to the magnitude and geographical scope of the NEC's operations,

responsibilities for M&E have to be shared across all functional units and sections by building required technical capacity. Decentralizing M&E requires identifying and training focal persons who will oversee M&E initiatives in the respective areas of assignment. Thus, the policy supports promotion of teamwork in order to harness synergy in the execution of M&E related duties and responsibilities.

1.3.3 Integrity

The NEC commits to ethics and integrity in the generation and usage of its M&E results. In this regard, the Commission will prioritize mechanisms to safeguard data, and reduce possibility of intentional manipulation and other professional malpractices. M&E practices of the Commission will meet accepted good-practice norms and established standards to enhance credibility and transparency.

1.3.4 Responsiveness

To be truly useful, an M&E system must lend itself to continued appraisal and renewal so that it is able to adapt and respond to emerging contextual changes and demands. As the M&E mechanism of the NEC evolves, lessons learned will be used to continually improve the policy, procedures and processes for M&E. However, decisions for such improvements should be systematic, and informed by lessons learned.

2. Definition, Purpose and Mandate of M&E

2.1 Definition

Broadly, monitoring and evaluation encompasses the systematic application of policies, procedures and processes with the aim of improving performance and achieving desired results. Though mutually dependent, monitoring and evaluation are not the same, as each

component fundamentally seeks to answer a different question.

2.1.1 Monitoring

Monitoring is the continuous collection, analysis and use of data with the aim of answering the question, “Are we *doing things right?*” This question mainly seeks to determine whether or not an initiative (for example a project) is on track – an investigation into whether or not things are going according to plan, without necessarily exploring the reason(s) for said success or the lack thereof.

2.1.2 Evaluation

Evaluation, on the other hand, is the periodic collection, analysis and use of data with the aim of answering the question, “Are we *doing the right things.*” This inquiry endeavors to assess the extent to which an initiative is achieving the desired results; and also to determine the reason(s) for such achievements or lack thereof.

2.2 Purpose

M&E serves the following purposes:

2.2.1 Planning

The continued process of thinking ahead to optimize the use of limited resources in order to choose the most viable course of action from competing alternatives.

2.2.2 Performance tracking

Assessment of the extent to which plans are on course, and desired results are realized.

2.2.3 Evidence gathering

Systematic documentation of information to substantiate claims of success or failure.

2.2.4 Experiential learning

The use of evidence from past experiences to inform decision making so that improvements can be made in subsequent undertakings.

2.3 Mandate & scope of M&E

The mandate of M&E is to enhance performance across the NEC, but mainly at the level of the Secretariat – covering all departments. M&E works together with Compliance and Risk Management (CRM) to assess performance of the Board of Commission (BoC) through the evaluation of policies, procedures and processes instituted by the BoC.

The Policy calls for a transition from traditional M&E that focuses on tracking of inputs, activities, outputs (and compliance) to higher level results (outcomes and impacts). Hence, M&E plans will feature higher level indicators that measure the extent to which the NEC policies and programs bring about change in the lives of beneficiaries or end-users of services.

2.3.1 Key functions

M&E has four cardinal functions:

- a. Lead strategic and annual planning for the NEC – support departmental planning, and consolidate various plans into an organizational plan.
- b. Monitor progress on the implementation of various plans, and evaluate achievement of results of all initiatives undertaken by the NEC based on appropriate M&E frameworks.
- c. Document evidence of results, and share lessons with stakeholders.
- d. Strengthen staff capacity in order to build human capital for M&E in the NEC.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for operationalizing the M&E Policy are shared by different stakeholders. While these roles and responsibilities are elaborated to prevent overlapping and duplication, stakeholders have to work in a coordinated manner that ensures synergy.

3.1 Board of Commissioners

Overall, the BoC ensures accountability and oversight for performance of the NEC. As such, the BoC formulates M&E policies, and institutes procedures and processes to promote smooth implementation of M&E endeavors. In its oversight role, the BoC approves all M&E strategies and plans, and ensures resources are available to implement M&E plans and strategies. The BoC commits to active use of M&E findings in management decision making. The BoC is responsible to evaluate the M&E policy.

3.2 M&E Champion

The M&E Champion is a person(s) in position of authority and influence to advocate for an enabling environment in which to discharge M&E functions in the NEC. The Champion(s) also serves a liaison between the M&E Section and the BoC, and may intervene at departmental level to address any bottlenecks affecting the implementation of M&E endeavors in the NEC.

3.3 M&E Section

The M&E Section develops strategies and plans to operationalize the M&E Policy, and coordinates M&E activities across the NEC. The Section is responsible to collect and analyze performance data, and report on the status of M&E strategies and plans. The Section works along with CRM to support the BoC in evaluating the policy to determine the extent to which desired results are achieved.

3.4 M&E Focal Persons

The NEC supports a decentralized approach to M&E, whereby all functional sections and units identify a staff who will serve as an M&E focal person. The NEC will promote opportunities for equal participation of men and women on the M&E team – this will

strengthen the platform for gender equality in M&E activities, and team members will be trained to take gender mainstreaming into account in the discharge of M&E functions.

With support from the M&E Section, focal persons will lead internal data collection on indicators of interest to their assigned sections, units or magisterial offices.

Also, because focal persons are part of the NEC M&E team, they may be mobilized to undertake other broader M&E activities for the NEC as the need arises. Focal persons will receive the needed training and tools to enable them carry out this role effectively.

3.5 Partners of the NEC

The NEC welcomes the support of partners in the areas of technical capacity building, and provisions of logistics and other resources for strengthening M&E. The Commission commits to transparency in sharing of information with its partners. The NEC seeks to promote technical collaboration with interested partners to undertake joint activities such as surveys, evaluations, field monitoring, etc.

4. M&E Criteria and Minimum Requirements

The NEC subscribes to M&E practices and procedures that are technically sound and ethically correct. The M&E Policy is informed by good-practice values, norms and standards, and conforms to the following principles:

- a. **Do no harm** – the NEC will avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of its actions,
- b. **Gender sensitivity** – the NEC will remain considerate of the special needs and perspectives of men and women in its work,
- c. **Cost effectiveness**– the NEC will continue to find ways to do more with less, and ensure value for money in its M&E undertakings,

- d. **Professionalism** –M&E staff of the NEC will, at all times, exhibit the quality of behavior that exemplifies excellence and competence.

4.1 Monitoring criteria

Monitoring of programs and projects in the NEC complies with planning for performance indicators that are **SMART**:

- a. **Specific** – clearly and directly capturing data relating to the achievement of a particular objective, not another objective.
- b. **Measurable**–containing defined parameters or standards that staff can assess or verify.
- c. **Achievable**– doable within the constraints of time and budget
- d. **Relevant**– results being monitored must make a contribution to overarching priorities, fitting within the goal of the NEC.
- e. **Time-bound**–Monitoring is not open-ended, but allows for changes to be tracked at desired frequency for a set period of time.

4.2 Evaluation criteria

Evaluation in the NEC explores the five standard criteria: *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability*. The extent to which each criterion is assessed in every evaluation, may be modified to ensure it fits the specific nature of the evaluation. All NEC evaluation reports must explicitly state the criteria used in the evaluation.

- a. **Relevance** – assessment of the extent to which the policies, programs or projects align with the NEC’s strategic direction, and are appropriate to the needs of its stakeholders.
- b. **Effectiveness** – assessment of the extent to which the policies, programs or projects are meeting the desired objectives of the NEC.

- c. **Efficiency** – assessment of the extent to which the policies, programs or projects of the NEC are using resources cost-effectively.
- d. **Impact** – assessment of extent to which the policies, programs or projects of the NEC are making a difference - positive, negative; direct, indirect; short, long term effects.
- e. **Sustainability** – assessment of the extent to which the policies, programs or projects of the NEC create an enabling environment that can continue and be maintained after development support is withdrawn.

4.3 Minimum requirements

At minimum, the following requirements must be adhered to throughout all levels of the NEC:

- a. All NEC departments (sections and units) will develop annual work programs (based on the strategic plan or other relevant policy instruments), which will be consolidated into an annual organizational work plan.
- b. All NEC departments (sections and units) will provide quarterly progress updates on the implementation of their work programs.
- c. As applicable, all data collected by the NEC through the implementation of its work programs must be disaggregated by sex.
- d. At the end of each year, all NEC departments (sections and units) will compile an annual performance report, outlining results achieved against the annual work program.
- e. Whether required by donors or not, all NEC departments (sections and unit) will include an M&E strategy for every project or activity, using standardized tools to gather data on agreed indicators.
- f. The NEC M&E plans will be aligned with national performance frameworks such as the national M&E plan or development agenda by incorporating relevant performance indicators on which to generate periodic reports.

- g. The NEC commits to three types of evaluation: *formative* (assessment of the situation before an intervention starts); *mid-term* (mid-course assessment to measure progress), and *summative* (assessment of the achievement of an initiative at its completion). At minimum, every project or activity must have plans for at least one evaluation – in which case a summative evaluation is desired.
- h. The Board of Commissioners will ensure resources are allocated to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of annual work programs. In consultation with the M&E Section, all NEC departments (sections and units) will allocate resources for M&E in every program, project or activity. A standard practice is the use of 5% - 7% of program, project or activity budget to fund associated M&E activities.

5. Use of Information

Unless M&E serves the information needs of intended users, such as in decision-making and programme improvement, there is no point in engaging in M&E. Assessments of the extent to which M&E findings are used by the NEC form part of regular reporting in the NEC.

The Board of Commissioners will organize a knowledge management platform, a committee, to coordinate documentation and sharing of lessons learned, and promote inter-departmental coordination. The committee will follow up with policy makers, and management to gather feedback, and assess the extent to which such findings and lessons learned feedback into decision making.

ADOPTED ON THIS 1st DAY OF July A.D. 2016 UNDER OUR HANDS AND SEAL
OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION (NEC)


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