



Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa

EISA PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT



**THE GAMBIA
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List of Abbreviations

ACDHRS	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
ADS	Africa Democracy Strengthening Programme
AFPRC	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
CPRW	Convention of the Political Rights of Women
CRPD	The Centre for Research and Policy Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCA	Democratic Congress Alliance
DP	Gambia Democratic Party
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
FPTP	First-Past-The-Poll
GDC	Gambia Democratic Congress
GFD	Gambia Federation of the Disabled
GMC	Gambia Muslim Congress
GNA	Gambian National Army
GPP	Gambia People's Party
GPU	Gambia Press Union
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
NCC	National Consultative Committee
NCCE	National Council for Civic Education.
NCP	National Convention Party
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NPP	National People's Party
NUP	National Unity Party
NYC	National Youth Council
PAM	Pre-Election Assessment Mission
PDOIS	People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism
PEMMO	Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation
PIEC	Provincial Independent Electoral Commission
PPP	Protectorate People's Party. It was later changed to People's Progressive Party
PRTD	Programme of Ratification and Transition to Democratic Rule
PURA	Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
PWDs	People with Disabilities
REO	Regional Electoral Officer
RO	Returning Officer
TANGO	The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
TRRC	Truth, Reparations and Reconciliation Process
UDP	United Democratic Party
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UP	Gambia United Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the implementation of its Africa Democracy Strengthening (ADS) Programme and in line with its mission of promoting credible elections, citizen participation and strengthening political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) deployed a two-member Pre-Election Assessment Mission (PAM) to The Gambia from 03 to 09 October 2021.

The PAM was tasked with assessing the pre-election and political context in The Gambia, and to determine whether conditions exist for conducting democratic elections during the presidential elections that are scheduled to take place on 04 December 2021.

The mission also examined the state of preparedness for the elections by key stakeholders such as the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), political parties, Gambia Press Union (GPU), civil society organisations (CSOs) and the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE).

The EISA PAM's assessment is based on international benchmarks for democratic elections provided in the African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance; the AU/OAU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa; the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation; the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO); and The Gambian legal framework for elections.

In fulfilment of its mandate, the mission held consultative meetings with electoral stakeholders in Banjul. EISA wishes to express its gratitude to the stakeholders who met with the assessment team and provided the necessary information for the realisation of the mission's objectives.

The PAM team observed that the media and civic space had opened up compared to the Jammeh era. Interlocutors noted that this, coupled with the associated improved

human rights situation since 2017, had increased opportunities for their involvement in and contribution to democracy in the country.

The PAM team observed that the voter registration process proceeded well despite initial delays. It however noted the case regarding the legality and validity of attestations by the mayor of Banjul, against the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). It further noted the low increase in the number of registered voters at 8.5% over a period of five years compared to the total population of 2,416,664 and a median age of 18 years.

The team also noted that the legal framework is limited in regulating campaign finance as it does not provide for expenditure ceilings for parties and candidates, thus leaving the process open to uncontrolled influence of money. The law also lacks provision for state funding of political parties as well as affirmative provisions to enhance political participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities.

The above shortcomings notwithstanding, the assessment mission noted that the various stakeholders were prepared for the elections and that generally, favourable conditions for holding democratic elections existed.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE 2021 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

2.1. Historical background

The Gambia is the smallest country in West Africa and one of the four former British colonies along the West African Coast.¹ The country is located on both banks of the Gambia River and is surrounded by Senegal on three sides with the fourth side, the western side, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. It became a British protectorate in 1820 and was administered as part of British West Africa. From 1843 to 1866, the country had its own colonial administration, led

¹ The other countries were Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

by a governor, based in Bathurst (Banjul). From 1866 to 1866 control was placed under the colonial governor in Freetown, Sierra Leone. It became a colony of Britain in 1886, after the Berlin Conference.

2.1.1. The First Republic

The country was granted full internal self-government in 1963 and gained independence in February 1965. An attempt to make it a republic in the same year was unsuccessful when a referendum held in November failed to garner the requisite two thirds support in order to pass.² While the nation has held periodic multi-party elections since then, elections in the country predate independence. The first general elections were held in 1960³ although political parties were formed in the early 1950s. Parties emerged then to compete for the limited power made available to the newly enfranchised urbanites by the colonial masters.⁴ During this period there were four main political parties, three of which were colony (urban) based and one protectorate (rural) based⁵. Urban-based parties were the Gambia Democratic Party (DP); the Gambia United Party (UP), and the Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC). The DP was dominant until 1954 when it was replaced by the UP. This position was later taken up by the Protectorate People's Party (PPP) which was the only rural-based political party.

Party politics became particularly intense towards the 1962 elections and political parties adopted several measures in an effort to appeal to voters. The DP and GMC entered into a coalition to form the Gambia Democratic Congress Alliance (DCA) while the PPP made several coalitions along the way. The PPP, in addition, changed its name to People's Progressive Party in order to appeal to the urbanites. Following the elections and victory of PPP in the elections, the party formed an alliance with the DCA. The two parties later invited the UP to join the government coalition, reinforcing its power-sharing strategy and effectively weakening the opposition.⁶ This strategy, coupled with the support of the rural voters who

outnumbered those in the urban areas, as well as co-option of top opposition candidates, saw the PPP emerge as the dominant party in the post-independence period.

The PPP won a majority of seats in the House of Representatives in the 1962 elections. The leader of the party, Dawda Jawara, was appointed prime minister following the attainment of self-governance in 1963. He became the first president of The Gambia following the success of a second republic referendum in April 1970 which made Gambia a republic.

The PPP went on to win all subsequent elections, both presidential and legislative, until 1994 (See Table 1 below). During this period, the hegemony of the party, which spanned three decades, was not threatened, even with the formation of new opposition parties. Most of these parties split from the PPP; these included the National Convention Party (NCP), Gambia People's Party (GPP) and the People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS). Therefore, although regular elections were conducted, the country operated like a one-party state as a result of the PPP political dominance.

2.1.2. Military Coup d'état

The political stability of the first republic in Gambia under Jawara of the PPP was interrupted by two coups d'état. The first was the aborted coup of 1981 led by some elements of the Field Force, a paramilitary police unit which existed before formation of the army, with the help of some civilians. The coup that took place while President Jawara was in Britain was repressed through the support of Senegalese troops. In the aftermath, the two presidents established the SeneGambia Confederation which collapsed eight years later.⁷

The government of Jawara, one of the oldest multi-party democracies in Africa at the time, was toppled through a second coup on 22 July 1994. The bloodless military coup was organised by the Gambian National Army (GNA)

² It was supported by 65.85% of the 93,484 valid votes cast. https://dbpedia.org/page/1965_Gambian_republic_referendum, accessed on 19 October 2021.

³ The first legislative elections were held in 1960. This followed the implementation of a new constitution that formed the House of Representatives. The PPP won with a majority of seats (9), UP (5), DCA (1), and Independents (4) <https://africanelections.tripod.com/gm.html> accessed 19 October 2021

⁴ NYANG, S. S. (1977). Ten Years of Gambia's Independence: A Political Analysis. *Présence Africaine*, 104, 28–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24349456> accessed on 19 October 2021

⁵ For administrative purposes, Gambia was divided into two: Colony (urban) and Protectorate (rural) regions.

⁶ Edie, C. J. (2000). Democracy in The Gambia: Past, Present and Prospect for the Future. *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement*, 25(3/4), 161–198. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43658048> accessed 20 October 2021

⁷ The confederation was established in 1982 and collapsed in 1989. It aimed at achieving political and economic unity between the two countries. However, in an effort to protect their sovereignty with respect to the more powerful Senegal, Gambia resisted efforts to form a greater unity.

junior officers. The coup, which elicited excitement and high expectations, especially among the youth, was justified on the grounds of the endemic corruption and complacency of the ruling PPP.⁸

Following the successful coup, the military established the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) to govern the nation. The five-man AFPRC was led by Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh. The council promised to restore true democracy, transparency, and accountability,⁹ which had been eroded during Jawara's rule. The council ruled by military decree after abolishing the 1970 Constitution. The House of Representatives was also abolished and political party activities banned.

Through the Programme of Ratification and Transition to Democratic Rule (PRTD), the council announced a four-year transition timeline for a return to civilian rule. Following pressure from both within and internationally, the AFPRC appointed the National Consultative Committee (NCC) in December 1994 with a mandate to subject the AFPRC's programme of activities and timetable to the public and development partners and obtain their views and offer recommendations.¹⁰ Following the recommendations of the National Consultative Committee (NCC), the timeline for transition to democratic civilian rule was reconsidered and reduced to two years. Thus, the presidential election was pushed forward from November 1998 to June 1996 but was postponed to 26 September 1996.

In line with the amended PRTD, several commissions were established to support the return to civilian rule. The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) was mandated to draft a new constitution. The Constitution was passed through a referendum on 08 August 1996 but became effective on 16 January 1997, following the presidential and national assembly elections held on 26 September 1996 and 02 January 1997 respectively. The Electoral Law Review Commission was charged with

reviewing and redrafting the electoral legislation. It developed the Elections Decree, 1996, which came into force on 02 January 1996. The Provincial Independent Electoral Commission (PIEC) was established to conduct and supervise elections. The ban on political activities was lifted except for three political parties, the PPP, NCP, and GPP that had existed during the Jammeh era. Also prohibited from participating in the elections were all persons who held the offices of president, vice president and ministers in the previous (PPP) regime. The decree banning their participation, Decree NO. 89 of 1996, was lifted in 2001.

Ahead of the elections, Jammeh retired from the army and formed a political party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), as a vehicle for his entry into civilian rule. Concerns were raised about some prohibitive conditions which restricted broad-based participation in the elections. The deposit required by parliamentary candidates had been raised from D200 to D2,500 (dalasi, the local currency) for presidential candidates to D2,500 to D7,500.¹¹ Candidates also risked forfeiting their deposit if they failed to garner 40% of the vote. In addition, the number of endorsement signatures was considerably high. The logistics of submitting 5,000 registered voter signatures was considered a daunting challenge for all but the incumbent.¹² Another undemocratic provision in the Constitution was the removal of the two-term presidential limit, despite the wish by Gambians for such limits as expressed in the CRC. In addition, Sec 62(3) (a)(b)(c) of the Constitution prohibited the following persons from vying for presidency: persons who had been compulsorily retired, terminated or dismissed from public office; those found guilty of any criminal offence by court; and persons found liable for misconduct, negligence, corruption or improper behaviour by any commission.

⁸ Saine, A. (2008). The Gambia's "Elected Autocrat Poverty, Peripherality, and Political Instability," 1994–2006: A Political Economy Assessment. *Armed Forces & Society*, 34(3), 450–473. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609039> accessed 20 October 2021.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://gambia.dk/ncc/annex1.htm#17>

¹¹ Wiseman, J. A. (1996). Military Rule in the Gambia: An Interim Assessment. *Third World Quarterly*, 17(5), 917–940. <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/11220651.pdf>, accessed 20 October 2021

¹² SAINE, A. S. M. (1998). THE MILITARY'S MANAGED TRANSITION TO "CIVILIAN RULE" IN THE GAMBIA. *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, 26(2), 157–168. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45294022> accessed 20 October 2021

2.1.3. Second Republic

The presidential elections of September 1996 and National Assembly elections of January 1997, held under the above conditions, restored civilian rule in The Gambia. Yahya Jammeh of the APRC was elected president. His party also won a majority of the parliamentary seats, 33 out of 49.

The second republic of The Gambia had a positive start. The country's return to civilian rule attracted the resumption of international relationships and donor aid which had been stopped during the military rule. This enabled the country to realise a partial economic recovery. However, the newly elected regime began to perpetrate the same vices it had accused the previous regime of committing.

Whilst the justification of the 1994 coup was to eliminate entrenched corruption and protect human rights, a promise reiterated by Jammeh upon his succession into power as a civilian ruler, the same situation reemerged in his administration. The government became increasingly

dictatorial and hostile to any form of criticism. Rampant arrests and the abduction of political opponents and independent journalists became commonplace.¹³ Jammeh's 20-year regime was thus characterised by human rights abuses amid shrinking media and civic spaces. Some media houses were closed and journalists assassinated.¹⁴ Jammeh's administration was the subject of coup attempts in 2000, 2006, and 2014, which, although unsuccessful, underlined the growing discontent in the country.¹⁵

Similar to the previous regime, Jammeh's administration did not lead to an electoral change of government, despite the holding of regular elections until 2016 (see Table 2 below). The growing discontent led to the formation of a coalition by six opposition parties and an independent candidate, dubbed Coalition 16, in the lead-up to the 2016 elections.¹⁶ The coalition, with Adama Barrow as the presidential candidate, finally defeated and ousted Jammeh from leadership after 22 years in power.

Table 1: General Elections Results (%) (1966–1992)

Political Party	Year					
	1966	1971	1977	1982	1987	1992
PPP	65.32	63.84	69.79	61.73	54.5	54.47
UP	33.37	15.69	*	2.88	*	1.43
DCA	**	.....	.....	.....	.....
GPP	.....	.....	.....	.....	15.5	7.96
National Convention Party (NCP)	.....	.....	27.87	19.65	28.83	21
PDP	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4.81
People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)	.....	.....	.....	.....	1.05	2.72
Independent	1.31	20.56	2.34	15.74	0.12	7.6

Source: Edie, C. J. (2000). *Democracy in The Gambia: Past, Present and Prospect for the Future*. Africa Development / Afrique et Développement, 25(3/4), 161–198. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43658048>

* Included in NCP totals

** Included in UP total

¹³ The Gambia: 1994-present, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/gambia-1994-present/> accessed 21 October 2021

¹⁴ The editor of the Point, Deyda Hydara was assassinated in December 2004 allegedly on government orders.

¹⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/The-Gambia/Political-change> accessed 24 October 2021

¹⁶ The coalition comprised the United Democratic Party (UDP), People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS), Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), National Reconciliation Party (NRP), The Gambia Moral Party (GMP), National Convention Party (NCP), and the Gambian Party for Democracy and Progress (GPDP). The independent candidate was Dr. Isatou Touray

Table 2: Trend of Presidential Results (1996–2016)

Year	Candidate	Political Party	No. of Votes	Percentage votes
1996	Yahya Jammeh	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC)	220,011	55.77
	Ousainou Darboe	United Democratic Party (UDP)	141,387	35.84
	Hamat Bah	National Reconciliatory Party (NRP)	21,759	5.52
	Sidia Jatta	People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)	11,337	2.87
2001	Yahya Jammeh	APRC	242,302	52.84
	Ousainou Darboe	UDP	149,448	32.59
	Hamat Bah	United Front (UF)	35,671	7.78
	Sheriff Mustapha Dibba	National Convention Party (NCP)	17,271	3.77
	Sidia Jatta	PDOIS	13,841	3.02
2006	Yahya Jammeh	APRC	264,404	67.33
	Ousainou Darboe	UDP	104,808	26.69
	Halifa Sallah	National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD)	23,473	5.98
2011	Yahya Jammeh	APRC	470,550	71.54
	Ousainou Darboe	UDP	114,177	17.36
	Hamat Bah	UF	73,060	11.11
2016	Barrow Adama	Coalition 2016	227,708	43.29
	Jammeh Yahya	APRC	208,487	39.64
	Kandeh Mamma	Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC)	89,768	17.07

Source: Independent Electoral Commission

2.2. Political context of the 2021 election

The Gambia will hold presidential elections on 4 December 2021. These will be the sixth elections since the return to democratic rule following the 1994 military coup. Voters will elect a president for a 5-year term. The elections are also the first since the defeat of Yahya Jammeh, who had ruled the country for 22 years.

The Gambia achieved the first-ever electoral change through the ballot in the 2016 elections after two phases

of one-party political dominance since independence in 1965.¹⁷ The incumbent, President Adama Barrow, won the 2016 elections after garnering 45% of the votes against Jammeh's 36.7% votes. Following the announcement of results, Jammeh initially conceded defeat. However, he rescinded his decision a week later and dismissed the election results as fraudulent and called for a fresh election. Through his political party majority in parliament, he successfully passed a motion for a state of emergency. His party also indicated that they would challenge the election results in court; but this was not possible as The

¹⁷ The PPP was the dominant party from 1966 to 1994 while the APRC dominated from 1996 to 2016.

Gambia did not have a sitting Supreme Court at the time. The ensuing constitutional crisis was defused through the military intervention by the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), with the support of the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), leading to Jammeh fleeing into exile in Equatorial Guinea.

Besides being the first post-Jammeh regime elections, three other key issues provide the backdrop against which the elections will be held. These are the establishment of a Truth, Reparations and Reconciliation Process (TRRC) to investigate human rights violations committed under the presidency of Yahya Jammeh and the delay in the submission of the report; a failed constitutional reform process; and the breakdown of the political consensus including the sacking of the vice president and formation of a new political party by President Barrow.

Following the 2016 elections, the newly created government embarked on a series of activities aimed at the re-establishment and consolidation of democracy. One of these was the establishment of a TRRC. The Commission had a mandate to conduct research and investigations into human rights violations committed under the presidency of Yahya Jammeh. The Commission ran from January 2019 to May 2021 and heard the testimonies of witnesses with firsthand knowledge that implicated Jammeh in murder, torture, rape and other crimes.¹⁸ The TRRC was tasked with, among others, making recommendations for reparations, reconciliation and institutional reforms as well as identification and recommendation for the prosecution of persons who bear the greatest responsibility for human rights violations. Although the final report was to be presented by end of July 2021, the Commission indicated that it would be submitted to the president by the end of November 2021. Implementation of the recommendations before the elections was not possible due to the late submission of the report.

The government also commissioned the drafting of a new constitution to replace the 1997 constitution. A draft

constitution was developed by the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) following a two-year consultative process throughout the country. The draft constitution, which it was hoped would reform the governance structure, failed to garner the requisite two-third parliamentary support. It was supported and rejected by 31 and 23 parliamentarians respectively. Salient provisions included the introduction of presidential term limits, checks on presidential powers as well as the introduction of gender quotas.

In January 2021, President Barrow ditched the opposition coalition, which had sponsored his candidacy in 2016, and formed a new political party, the National People's Party (NPP). The coalition collapsed following the sacking of prominent coalition members from the government. These included the vice-president, Ousainou Darboe. In addition, as part of the coalition agreement, Barrow was to serve as a transitional leader for a period of three years. However, he decided to finish his five-year term. The NPP formed a coalition with former president Jammeh's party, the APRC, ahead of the 2021 elections. While the contents of the pact have not been publicly disclosed, the merger with Jammeh's party brings into doubt the government's commitment of genuine reforms and dealing with injustices caused by the former regime, as promised upon Barrow's election. The merger is further believed to be a source of tension and anxiety, especially among the victims of Jammeh's repressive 22-year regime, and particularly those who testified during the TRRC hearings. It is not clear whether the coalition pact paves the way for the return of the former president to Gambia and, if so, whether he will receive amnesty for crimes committed.

Notwithstanding the above, the assessment mission noted that as part of the reform process, the government had established, for the first time ever, a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The mandate is to promote and protect human rights. An Access to Information law was also enacted in August 2021. In the context of elections, granting the right of access to information enhances transparency in the process. In addition, a

¹⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/24/gambia-commission-uncovered-ex-presidents-alleged-crimes> accessed 19 October 2021.

Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Bodies, Enterprises and Offices as regards their dealings with Yahya Jammeh and connected matters (Janneh Commission) was established. The Commission submitted its Report in nine volumes to the president on 29 March 2019. The Commission noted that implementation of the recommendations was ongoing, albeit at a slow pace. It further noted the delay in the passage of the Anti-Corruption Bill, 2019 which aims at strengthening Gambia's anti-corruption legal framework.

A total of 21 candidates presented their nomination for the presidential race, signalling a liberalised political space. However, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) nominated six candidates to contest the presidential elections. Fifteen candidates were disqualified for not meeting the constitutional requirements. Among the disqualified was the only and first-ever female candidate to present her presidential nomination, Marie Sock.

There are also rising concerns ahead of the elections about the issue of ethnic identity and an increase in related cases of hate speech and what these portend for the electoral environment ahead of, during and after the elections.

While some efforts towards consolidating democracy in the transition period have been initiated, Gambians will go into the first post-Jammeh elections without having achieved major electoral reform milestones as anticipated. They will also go into the elections without achieving the much-needed reconciliation and healing which was the intent of and could have resulted from the implementation of the TRRC's recommendations.

3. COVID-19

Despite the challenges that have been posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the mission noted that the IEC has put in place health and safety measures in preparing for the upcoming election. The voter registration process was conducted at the height of the pandemic and the mission

was informed that COVID-19 protocols were observed. The IEC staff were wearing adequate health personal protective gear. In addition to mandatory wearing of a mask and adequate social distancing, the commission also provided handwashing stations and hand sanitisers for the public at every polling station.

4. THE CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING THE 2021 ELECTIONS

4.1. Legal framework

The Gambia is a state party to various international human rights instruments that guide the conduct of democratic elections. However, international laws are not self-executing in The Gambia due to its dualistic nature, i.e., international instruments need to be domesticated by individual countries post ratification. It is therefore mandatory to domesticate them before they can be applicable in national courts of law.

At the national level, the legal framework for the conduct of elections is provided by the Constitution of the Republic of Gambia, 1997, as amended; the Elections Act, 1996, as amended; and the Local Government Act, 2002, as amended. Other related guidelines include the Code on Election Campaign Ethics and Election petition rules.

Following the defeat of Jammeh in the 2016 elections, the new government led by President Adama Barrow committed to implementing reforms aimed at aligning the legal framework with the new political dispensation. Key among these was a new constitution to replace the 1997 Constitution which was associated with the repressive Jammeh rule. The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) charged with the development of the new constitution submitted its final draft to the president on 30 March 2020. Key provisions of the draft Constitution Amendment Bill were to: provide presidential term limits to two five-year terms; amend the electoral system to provide for an absolute majority in the presidential election; introduce

a quota system for female representation in the National Assembly; and also regulate presidential powers through the introduction of approval of ministerial appointments by the National Assembly.

The Bill unfortunately failed to garner the requisite 2/3 majority parliamentary support needed for it to pass. It was supported by 31 and rejected by 23 of the 58-member assembly. The rejection was despite the overwhelming support for a new constitution by Gambian citizens as attested by surveys conducted by both Afrobarometer and the International Republican Institute (IRI).¹⁹

There were also efforts to review the Elections Act, 1996, as amended. Proposals for legal, administrative and procedural changes to the conduct of elections were advanced. These included adoption of paper ballots in voting, and the revision of the demarcation of electoral constituencies. The Election Bill, 2020 was however not enacted. It is currently at the National Assembly. The last amendments to the Act were in March 2017, meaning that they will be applied to the presidential elections for the first time. They aimed at reversing the increase in candidate's nomination fees as provided for in the Elections (Amendment) Act, 2015. The 2017 amendments reversed to the fees of their initial amounts of D10,000, D5,000, D2,500, and D1,200 for the president, MPs, mayor and Local Council seats respectively.

The mission noted that the legal framework broadly provides sufficient basis for the entrenchment of democracy through provisions for a multi-party-political system; a majoritarian electoral system; conduct of regular elections; as well as an effective remedy including challenging election results.

However, the mission noted that the gaps, meant to be addressed by the rejected constitution and proposed by election observer missions in the 2016 election, persist. For instance, the law does not provide for presidential term limits which are necessary deterrents for governments from becoming authoritarian; it does not reasonably

provide for the functional independence of the IEC due to the appointment and dismissal of commissioners; lacks affirmative action to promote the participation and representation of vulnerable and underrepresented groups such as women, youth and People with Disabilities (PWDs); and lacks voting rights for prisoners.

It is therefore imperative that the constitutional review process be revisited, and consensus sought if the legal framework is to be aligned to international and regional commitments to which The Gambia is party.

4.2. Electoral System

The Gambia is a multi-party state. The president is elected in a single round using the First-Past-The-Poll (FPTP) method. The president is elected for a five-year term. The Constitution does not provide limits on the number of terms a president can contest.

The Gambia has a unicameral parliament. Similarly, members of the National Assembly are elected using the FPTP method in single member constituencies. There are 53 constituencies. Following elections, the president nominates five additional members to the unicameral parliament, bringing the total to 58. Parliamentarians are also elected for five-year terms.

The country uses a unique voting system which comprises a drum and marbles. In this case, the drum represents the ballot box, while the marble, also referred to as a token, represents the ballot. A voter casts their ballot (marble) in iron drums specifically marked for each candidate. The drum (ballot box) bears the party's candidates identifying party colours. It also has the party symbol or candidate's photograph. Once cast, the ballot hits a bell and produces an audible sound that notifies the polling staff that people have voted. Sand or saw dust is placed at the bottom of the drum so as to prevent any other sound from being audible. This voting system has served the electoral needs of The Gambia since 1960.

¹⁹ According to a 2019 survey by the International Republican Institute (IRI), 87% of Gambians agreed the country needs a new constitution. 60% rated the work of the constitutional review commission as very good or good. <https://www.iri.org/resource/new-poll-gambians-support-new-constitution>, accessed on 1 November 2021. In regards to opinions on specific constitutional provisions, Gambians expressed strong support for presidential term limits in general (85%) and specifically for reintroducing a limit of two five-year terms in the new Constitution (87%). https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/D%C3%A9p%C3%A4ches/ab_r7_dispatchno338_gambias_draft_constitution_reflects_citizen_preferences.pdf

However, the proposal to replace the system with paper ballots during the recent proposed electoral reforms was rejected. The proposal by the IEC was informed by the increasing number of political parties and candidates. The IEC cited the ensuing operational challenges as well as increased costs as a justification for the proposed reform. There was a 100% increase in political parties from nine contesting elections in 2016 to 18 in 2021. The proposal was, nevertheless, not supported by most political parties who felt that the level of illiteracy, which motivated adoption of the system, was still high and there was not sufficient time to conduct adequate voter education, should the proposal pass. Similarly, there was a proposal to replace the FPTP system with an absolute majority voting system in the presidential elections.

4.3. Election Administration

The IEC is established under Section 42 of the Constitution, 1997 (as amended). It comprises a chairperson and four other members. Members of the Commission are appointed for a seven year term which is renewable only once. Appointment is by the president, in consultation with the Judicial Service Commission and the Public Service Commission. The president also has the power to remove appointed commissioners. Before a commissioner is removed, a tribunal to investigate the matter should be set up.

The IEC is composed of the Commission and staff who are appointed by the Commission. The Commission's headquarter is supported by regional offices in each of the seven regions of the country. Each regional office is under the direct oversight of a member of the Commission, who also acts as the returning officer (RO) for elections in their area. Each regional office is headed by a regional electoral officer (REO).

The mandate of the IEC is provided for under Section 43 of the Constitution and Section 8 of the Electoral Act, 1996, as amended. The responsibilities include: to conduct and supervise the registration of voters; conduct and supervise

all public elections and referenda; register political parties; demarcate electoral boundaries for both national and local government elections; develop an elections timetable in advance of the elections; nominate candidates for the various elective positions and ensure that the candidates for elections make a full declaration of their assets at the time of nomination; announce the results of all elections and referenda; and conduct elections of the speaker and deputy speaker of the National Assembly.

The Constitution provides for the independence of the IEC. Section 43(3) stipulates that, in the exercise of its functions under this Constitution or any other law, the Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority. The Commission receives funding through the government from moneys appropriated by the National Assembly. It may also receive grants, donations, and fees from groups other than a political party. The Commission should submit its annual estimates of expenditure to the president for presentation to the National Assembly. The president is, however, not allowed to make any amendments but may attach his or her own comments and observations. The Commission is audited annually by the Auditor General. It is also expected to submit audited statement of its accounts to the National Assembly at the end of each financial year.

The assessment team noted that the appointment of members of the Commission does not guarantee its independence. There is therefore a need to make the appointment method inclusive and transparent.

5. KEY FINDINGS ON THE PRE-ELECTION PHASE

5.1. Voter registration

Voter registration is undertaken by the IEC, following the announcement of dates for general and supplementary registration. Section 12 of the Elections Act, 2009, as

amended, provides requirements for registration as a voter. This includes that a voter should be a citizen of The Gambia and has attained or will attain the age of 18 years at the time the election will be held. They should either produce a birth certificate, a Gambian passport, a national Identity card, or an attestation, which is a document certified by a district chief or village Alkalo. Registration is constituency-based, meaning that a person should register in a constituency where they reside or were born. A person is disqualified from voting if they adhere to a foreign power or State or are serving a sentence of imprisonment; are registered to vote in another country; and are of unsound mind.

The General Voter Registration for the 2021 elections was undertaken from 29 May to 11 July 2021. The exercise was initially scheduled for 14 January to 26 February as per the elections calendar. The IEC attributed the delay to logistical challenges relating to the procurement of materials and equipment for registration. Following the registration, the IEC produced a provisional register with a total of 987,484 registered voters on 12 July 2021. The register was displayed at the various registration centers from 16 to 19 August 2021 for verification, objections and appeals. The IEC voided all the voters' cards issued in the previous elections. All registered voters were therefore requested to apply for new voter cards.

For the first time in the history of The Gambia, the final voter register was segregated according to gender and different age groups. It has a total of 962,157 voters of which 545,318 (56.67%) are female while 416,839 (43.32%) are male. The register marked an 8.5% increase in registered voters, compared to 2016 where the total registered voters were 886,578. The country has a youthful voter population with the 18-35 age bracket comprising 57% of the total registered voters. There are 1,554 polling stations, 53 constituencies and 120 wards spread across the seven (7) regions of Gambia. Each polling station will have at most 800 voters, with the nine most populated centres having 736 voters per polling station.

The Gambia has not provided for diaspora voting despite constitutional provisions in favour of their voting.²⁰ A Supreme Court ruling on 27 January 2021 reaffirmed and stated that they should be allowed to vote as their continued disenfranchisement constitutes an assault on their fundamental rights. Diaspora registration was scheduled for 1st July to 31st July 2021. However, the IEC did not follow through with the registration. On 28 May 2021, the IEC Chairperson announced that they would not conduct the registration based on the existing laws. The Commission argued that there was a need for a new constituency to be created to allow for diaspora registration.

The mission was informed that no major complaint was filed regarding the voter registration exercise when it was displayed for public viewing. There was, however, a case against the IEC by two CSOs regarding the requirement for attestation in order to register as a voter. The Centre for Research and Policy Development (CRPD) and Gambia Participates challenged the decision to give authority to the mayor of Banjul to issue attestation for the purpose of voter registration.²¹ The High Court ruled that the mayor has no authority to grant or approve attestations. Nevertheless, it did not annul the voter cards which were issued based on attestations by the mayor as sought by the complainants. They were referred to the Elections Revising Court which has the jurisdiction on such matters. The complainants did not go to the Elections Revising Court within the period provided for objections. The case was thus dismissed with costs.

Interlocutors consulted by the mission expressed concerns that the IEC had not conducted an audit of the voter register. An audit verifies the accuracy of the voter register and is thus an important process to undertake in order to assure citizens of its credibility.

Voter registration was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was reported that registration was undertaken in compliance with the COVID-19 prevention protocols. The registration centres had handwashing

²⁰ Section 39 of the Constitution states that every Gambian, including those residing outside the jurisdiction, is entitled to be registered and to vote in an election to the offices of President, members of the National Assembly, for local government offices and traditional rulers as well as in referenda".

²¹ Attestations are by village head or district chiefs. However, since Banjul is a city/ town, with no village head, the mayor is responsible for attestation of voters. This was never challenged before because of the authoritarian nature of the previous ruling regime.

stations, citizens' temperatures were taken, and the staff wore masks. The assessment mission noted the legal gaps in relation to voter registration, especially in regard to diaspora voters and attestation procedures. The lack of proper procedures for registration of diaspora voters resulted in the disenfranchisement of an estimate of over 200,000 Gambians who live abroad.

5.2. Political party registration and candidate nomination

5.2.1. Political party registration and finance

Political parties are registered by the IEC. The requirements to register a political party include: filling an application form obtainable from the IEC; a declaration signed by not less than 10,000 registered voters, with at least 1,000 voters from each of the seven (7) administrative areas; and a registration fee of 1 million Dalasi (D1,000,000 or USD 20,000). In addition, the party should have a secretariat in each administrative region; should hold a biennial congress; and the party executives should reside in The Gambia.

There are no provisions for state funding of political parties in The Gambia. This notwithstanding, a political party is not allowed to receive a contribution or donation from any person who is not a citizen of The Gambia or from any corporate or unincorporated body. Parties are required to submit yearly audited accounts to the Commission.

There are currently 18 registered political parties in The Gambia. This marks a 100% increase from 2016 where only nine political parties were registered.

The mission noted that political parties have a forum for dialogue through the Inter-Party Committee (IPC). It was established in 2010 but became fully operational in April 2017. Each of the 18 registered political parties is represented in the committee which has regional structures in all seven regions of The Gambia. On 25 September 2021 and under the auspices of the IPC, all represented political parties signed a peace pledge

referred to as The Janjangbureh Peace Accord for a violence-free election. The IEC signed the pledge as a witness.

5.2.2. Candidate nomination

Section 46 of the 1997 Constitution stipulates that election for the office of the president should be conducted three months before the expiration of the term of the incumbent president. It further grants the IEC the responsibility to determine the dates for the nomination of candidates and for holding the election. In line with this, the nomination date for the presidential election was set for 30 October to 5 November 2021.

To be nominated as a presidential candidate, one must: be a citizen of The Gambia; be at least 30 years of age; have a minimum education qualification of senior secondary school education; be a resident in The Gambia for five years immediately preceding the election; nominated by at least 5,000 registered voters with at least 200 voters drawn from each region; present a sworn Declaration of Assets and tender tax clearance certificate. In addition, a candidate should pay a deposit of D10,000. The law allows for independent candidates for all elective positions.

The IEC received a total of 21 nomination papers from prospective candidates. It presented the nomination papers for public scrutiny on 06 November 2021 from 08:00 to 12:00 noon. No objections were raised. The Commission thereafter approved six candidates. Fifteen candidates were disqualified for not meeting the constitutional requirements. Among the disqualified was the only and first-ever female candidate to present her nomination, Marie Sock. The candidates are President Barrow, the incumbent, who is contesting for his second term under the NPP; Ousainou Darboe of United Democratic Party (UDP); Mamma Kandeh of Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC); Halifa Sallah of the People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS); Abdoulie Jammeh of the National Unity Party (NUP); and Essa Mbye Faal contesting as an independent.²²

²² Ousainou Darboe is a former foreign minister and one of the three vice presidents in Barrow's government. He was sacked in March 2019. He is believed to be the strongest opposition candidate. Mamma Kandeh came in third in the 2016 elections with 17.1% votes. Halifa Sallah was a spokesman to Barrow during the 2016 presidential election campaign and former special advisor to president Barrow. Abdoulie Jammeh is the former Director-General of The Gambia Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA). Essa Mbye Faal is the former lead council of Gambia's TRRC.

Following nomination, candidates are required to sign and abide by the election Code of Conduct. For the first time in the history of the country, all six nominated presidential candidates signed the Code of Conduct on 11 November 2021. By signing, the candidates pledged to ensure a peaceful and democratic vote. They further agreed to resort to judicial processes to address any disputes which may arise from the election.

5.3. Voter education

Civic education in The Gambia is the core responsibility of the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE). The Council was established in 1998 with a mandate to create and sustain awareness of constitutional democracy for the achievement of political, economic and social stability through civic education. The mission was informed that the activities undertaken by the NCCE included sensitisation of voters during the voter registration process. Voter sensitisation included eligibility criteria; rights of voters; importance of voting; and peace in the electoral period. They also engaged in the translation of materials into local languages and their distribution; community education complemented by radio and television advertisements; and the sensitisation of citizen observers on peace. In implementing its activities, the NCCE collaborates with The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO).

Voter education, on the other hand, is the mandate of the IEC. It conducts voter education in partnership with CSOs. The materials and messages used are developed by the IEC then shared with the partners. All messages developed by the partners are vetted by the IEC on their appropriateness. The mission was informed that, due to its lean staff and limited resources, the IEC had co-opted the Women's Bureau, the National Youth Council (NYC), the CSO coalition on Elections, Gambia Federation of the Disabled (GFD), NCCE and musicians to support their voter education efforts.

The IEC provided voter education through community meetings, caravans with loudspeakers and music

throughout the country, women and youth caravans, and radio and television advertisements. They also used social media (WhatsApp messages) which were reported to have spread the information far and wide across the nation. However, they reported the challenge of misinformation and noted their difficulties in countering misrepresentation.

5.4. Civil society

The Gambia has a robust civil society which operates in a relatively free space. Interlocutors consulted by the mission noted that the space had opened up following the defeat of Jammeh in 2016. Several CSOs consulted by the mission reported their active participation in the electoral process. The NYC was established in 2009. Some of the activities include undertaking an assessment mission in 2019 on youth political participation; developing training manuals on youth political participation; training 40 youth on election monitoring; sensitisation on the importance of voter registration; development and dissemination of peace messages; and sensitisation of the youth on the importance of voting.

The council reported the challenge of violence among the young people. It was observed that unlike previous elections, the current threat is communal violence fueled by hate speech. A further concern on the rising incidences of hate speech and fake news was that the older generation believes most of the shared news. The spread of fake news is exacerbated by the high mobile penetration. Some of the planned activities include the development of a dashboard for all election reporting. Information will be received from the entire country and act as a conduit for early warning signals.

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Gambia are part of the CSO coalition.²³ WANEP is the coordinator of the coalition's steering committee. Activities undertaken as part of the coalition include training of 53 observers to observe voter registration; developing reports on voter registration;

²³ The CSO coalition on elections is a group of 30 civil society organisations established to facilitate civil society participation in elections, democracy and good governance. While the coalition was set up in 2016, it appointed a steering committee for the first time in the run-up to the 2021 elections

peace building; developing policy briefs and undertaking a situational analysis of what is happening in The Gambia; and capacity building of CSOs on election dispute resolution. The coalition reported that they had secured funds to train and deploy 150 observers from member organisations for election observation. They, however, noted that the numbers were not sufficient and that they were fundraising to increase the numbers. They also reported plans to set up a situation room which would report to the National Elections Response Group.

The organisations reiterated concerns on the misinformation and rising incidences of hate speech in the lead up to the elections. They also identified hot spot areas, namely Kombo South, Busumbala, and Gimara.

5.5. Participation of women

The Gambia has acceded to various international and regional human rights treaties on the protection of women. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979; the Convention of the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) of 1952, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. At the national level, Gambia has adopted a Women's Act, 2010; Sexual Offences Act, 2013; Women's Amendment Act, 2015 as well as a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

1,218,124 million women in The Gambia comprise 50.41% of the total population of 2.417 million.²⁴ They also comprise 57% of the total registered voters. Despite their numerical dominance, their political participation is low. There are five women in the National Assembly, three of whom were elected and two nominated by the president. Thus, women comprise 8.62% of the 58-member assembly. The number is lower than the 30% women representation recommended by ECOWAS, of which Gambia is a member. In addition, none of the six presidential candidates is female. The nomination of the only, and first female candidate ever to present her nomination for the presidential race was rejected by the

IEC for not meeting the nomination requirements. The mission observed that the vice president of The Gambia is a woman, Isatou Touray, who was appointed by the president in March 2019. This is a positive start towards enhancing women's participation and the consolidation of democracy in the country.

The mission noted that despite the state being party to various international and regional treaties on promoting women's political participation, as well as having national laws on their protection, the country lacks specific laws on promoting their political participation. It further noted that the rejected draft Constitution had provisions quotas for female membership in political parties and in the national assembly.

5.6. Media environment

The media in The Gambia is regulated by the Ministry of Communication through the Gambian Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). In particular, in the broadcasting sector PURA grants licenses to operators and ensures their compliance with legislation and radio frequencies. It also protects consumers through dispute resolution. PURA regulates only radio and television broadcast and excludes online media. There is also no regulator for print media, which is governed by legislation.

The Gambia Press Union (GPU) is the umbrella body for media in The Gambia. Its focus areas include rights at work, press freedom, media ethics, legal assistance and capacity building for the media. It has a media code of conduct which is binding on all media houses and journalists. Among the activities in which the GPU is engaged in support of the electoral process are sensitisation of media and citizens on their civic duties, specifically how to vote and conduct themselves peacefully during the elections period; and capacity building for media houses and journalists on the electoral process and fact checking. At the time of the PAM, the mission was informed that the GPU had organised 35 media sensitisation forums and trained 95 journalists on election reporting.

²⁴ World Bank 2020 Statistics <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=GM> accessed on 2 November 2021.

There is also a media council which was established in 2018. It is independent from the GPU and is a self-regulatory body aimed at regulating editorial content across the entire media. It comprises media professionals and representation from the government. While it receives no support from the government, the director of information is represented on the council board.

The mission was also informed that the media operates in a relatively free environment, unlike during the Jammeh era. There are 13 community radios and 40 private FM radio stations across the country, six television stations, including the national broadcaster and two online television stations. There are six print media/newspapers, all of which broadcast in English language.

Interlocutors consulted by the mission raised concerns about rising incidences of hate speech and fake news. There is no law on hate speech in The Gambia which makes it difficult to regulate these incidences. Furthermore, the mission was informed that the GPU undertook research on the prevalence of hate speech in the media. The major finding was that online media platforms were used, especially by politicians and religious groups²⁵, to propagate hate speech. It thus initiated projects aimed at sensitising journalists to avoid hate speech reporting.

Another area of concern raised was that of the security of the media. It was reported that there were incidences of the media being attacked by state security and political parties with impunity on the part of the perpetrators. Attacks during the voter registration process were reported.

5.7. Campaigns and campaign financing

The IEC sets the dates for the campaigns. According to the election calendar, the campaign period was set for 9 November to 2 December 2021.

Section 93 of the Elections Act, 1996, as amended, provides that the IEC should ensure equal time is given to each candidate and party on the public radio and

television during the campaign period. In so doing, it should determine the time allocated to the candidates and political parties each day or such other period as the Commission may consider reasonable. Accordingly, the IEC has provided that the public broadcaster (radio and television) should allocate to each candidate, free of charge for airtime, a 'Party Political Broadcast' of up to 10 minutes of TV and 10 minutes of radio time (including all languages), over the election campaign period. Only approved private radio stations are allowed to carry political advertisements. They should do so for a maximum of 10 minutes per candidate per day.

During campaigns, candidates and political parties are prohibited from using state resources and property of any state organ for political propaganda purposes.

There is no law that regulates campaign finance in The Gambia. Legal provisions on who can fund a political party are in place. A political party is restricted from receiving funds from foreigners, corporates and unincorporated bodies. There is, however, no ceiling on the amount of money that can be contributed to a party or candidate. Similarly, there is no ceiling on campaign expenditure. While the law requires political parties to present their audited reports to the IEC, there are no similar requirements for candidates.

Interlocutors consulted by the mission raised concerns that the media, especially the national broadcaster, was biased against the opposition before commencement of the official campaign period.

5.8. Preparedness of IEC to conduct elections

The assessment mission noted that the IEC was on course in implementing its electoral calendar. It observed that, despite the initial delay in registration of voters, the process was undertaken in line with the new timelines provided. Procurement of election materials as well as preparations for the other activities, notably the nomination and campaigns, were underway.

²⁵ Between Christians and Muslims as well as inter Muslim sects (between different sects of Muslims)

The IEC is primarily funded by the government. It also receives both direct and implementation support from partners. The main supporters are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Africa Union (AU), ECOWAS, European Union (EU) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The mission was informed that the government had approved the budget from the IEC and that the Commission had received almost 100% of the requested funds.

Interlocutors consulted by the mission noted that the IEC had held monthly stakeholder consultative forums with them to provide updates and clarification on certain issues throughout the election period. Most of them expressed their confidence in the IEC.

The IEC was in the process of recruiting 6,500 staff to support the Commission during the elections. The mission was informed that while voters should vote where they are registered, there will be an exception for the IEC staff on election duty, who will be issued with Election Duty (E-duty) certificates to allow them to vote in their areas of deployment. The IEC has trained police on human rights standards and the electoral process. Other ongoing activities include training of the electoral staff, political parties, the police and CSOs on their role in elections.

Since the elections will be conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission's commitment to observing the COVID-19 protocols was noted. Part of the staff training included sensitisation on the protocols. The staff will be equipped with gloves and sanitisers as well as thermometers to take the temperature of voters. Social distancing will be observed at the polling stations.

While the preparations for the elections are on course, the need for capacity building for the IEC must be underscored. The mission was informed by interlocutors that the weaknesses in the IEC have led to instances of wrong interpretation of the law. The legal department of the Commission therefore needs strengthening. Also recommended was the need for the IEC to have a resident

statistician to avoid the statistical errors witnessed in 2016.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Government of the Republic of The Gambia

1. To revisit the constitutional review process in order to address the gaps in the legal framework for elections. These include:
 - Consider the introduction of presidential term limits.
 - Review the suitability of the current FPTP system and consider a majority system (50%+1) as an alternative.
 - Provide for affirmative action to promote the participation and representation of vulnerable and underrepresented groups such as women, youth and People with Disabilities (PWDs).
 - Consider the introduction of laws regulating campaign financing.
 - Consider public funding for political parties.
2. In the long term, implement the TRRC report recommendations to ensure restitution and justice for the victims of Jammeh's era.
3. Fast-track implementation of the reform agenda including the report of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

6.2. IEC

1. Put in place requisite mechanisms to allow for future diaspora voting.
2. Enhance the capacity of the Commission through setting up and staffing legal and statistics departments in the Commission.

ABOUT EISA

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

EISA has since its inception in July 1996 established itself as a leading institution and influential player dealing with elections and democracy related issues in the African continent. It envisions an African continent where democratic governance, human rights and citizen participation are upheld in a peaceful environment. The Institute's vision is executed by striving for excellence in the promotion of credible elections, citizen participation, and the strengthening of political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa.

Having supported and/or observed over 70 electoral processes in Africa, EISA has extensive experience in formulating, structuring and implementing democratic and electoral initiatives. It has built an internationally recognised centre for policy, research and information and provides this service to electoral management bodies, political parties and civil society organisations in a variety of areas, such as voter and civic education and electoral assistance and observation. Besides its expanded geographical scope, the Institute has, for the past several years, been increasingly working in new in-between election areas along the electoral and parliamentary cycle, including constitution and law making processes, legislative strengthening, conflict management and transformation, political party development, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and local governance and decentralisation.

EISA provides assistance to inter-governmental institutions, like the African Union, and the Pan-African Parliament, to reinforce their capacity in the elections and democracy field. The Institute has signed an MOU with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the East African Community (EAC); and the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA). Within the framework of these recently signed memoranda, the Institute will also provide similar assistance respectively these intergovernmental institutions. Its MoU with the African Union was also renewed in 2014.

With its headquarters in Johannesburg (South Africa), EISA has had field offices across the African continent and currently has offices in Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia and Zimbabwe, and a regional liaison office at the secretariat of the ECCAS in Libreville, Gabon.

Election observation activities

EISA has deployed continental observer missions for the past ten years including missions to Angola (2008), Botswana (1999, 2004, 2009), Central African Republic (2010, 2011), Democratic Republic of Congo (2005 referendum, 2006 elections), Egypt (2011, 2012, 2014, 2015), Ghana (2008, 2012), Guinea Conakry (2010), Lesotho (1998, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2015, 2017), Liberia (2011,2017), Madagascar (2005, 2007, 2013), Malawi (1999, 2004,2009), Mauritius (2000, 2005, 2010, 2014), Mozambique (1999, 2004, 2009, 2013, 2014), Namibia (1999, 2004, 2009), Senegal (2012), Seychelles (2011), South Africa (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2016), Tanzania (2005, 2010), Uganda (2011, 2016), Zanzibar (2005, 2010), Zambia (2005, 2008, 2011,2015, 2016), and Zimbabwe (2000, 2002, 2008), Reports on these missions can also be found on our website.



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About EISA

EISA is a not-for-profit-organisation established in 1996 based in Johannesburg, South Africa with regional offices in Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire and Libreville, Gabon. EISA currently has and has had field offices in 20 African countries.

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An African continent where democratic governance, human rights and citizen participation are upheld in a peaceful environment.

Mission statement

EISA strives for excellence in the promotion of credible elections, citizen participation, and strong political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa.

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