



LIBERIA GENERAL PRE-ELECTION MEDIA ASSESSMENT REPORT

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)- International Election Observer Mission (EISA-IEOM)

To

Liberia October 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections



4 September 2023

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1. Background

This Media Assessment Report, which covers the pre-election period of the Liberia 2023 Presidential and Parliamentary elections up to 1 September 2023 examines the critical role of the media during elections. Being the oldest of its kind in West Africa,¹ the Liberian press and media are critical stakeholders in political and electoral information dissemination and facilitating political discussion and civic engagements. This assessment draws on the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa's International Election Observation Mission (EISA-IEOM) observations and in-depth interviews conducted with political and media stakeholder engagements during the pre-election phase (the Biometric Voter Registration Exercise and Candidate Nomination). Stakeholders engaged include media houses and organizations, political parties, and female political aspirants at the national and county levels.² Engagements were guided by an interview guide, exploring issues relating to the media landscape and the political context within which the media operates, media freedom, the role of media in civic and voter education, gender, misinformation, and disinformation.

Findings suggest that media coverage regarding broadcasting range and hours is limited despite a media landscape characterized by the proliferation of media houses. The media in Liberia is also:

1. Politically polarized,
2. Partially free, and
3. Largely self-censored.

Despite resource constraints, the absence of contractual engagement with the National Election Commission (NEC), and election programming, the media undertakes Civic and Voter Education (CVE) awareness, utilizing existing political programs. Findings also point to the widespread mis/disinformation in online and offline spaces. Media coverage of female politicians is limited and negative, explained by gender stereotyping, imbalanced power in media ownership and management, and limited women's media strategy.

2. Context

Growth of the press and media freedom in Liberia flourished in the post-war period (post-2003). The growth and freedom of media can be attributed to a combination of constitutional provisions, legal frameworks, and international agreements. Liberia is a signatory to international agreements that emphasize freedom of expression and press freedom. These agreements include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, highlighting the importance of protecting

¹ Olukoju, Ayodeji, 2015, Liberia. In Falola and Jean-Jacques, Africa. An Encyclopedia of Culture and Society.

² Refer to annex for the list of stakeholders engaged and the interview guide.

freedom of expression and information. Domestically, the fundamental law that supports media freedom in Liberia is the Constitution of Liberia, which outlines the rights and freedoms of citizens, including those related to freedom of expression and the press. The relevant constitutional provisions include:

Article 15: This article of the Liberian Constitution protects the freedom of speech, thought, and expression. It states that "every person shall have the right to freedom of expression, being fully responsible for the abuse thereof."

Article 17: This article protects the right to freedom of the press. It states that "all persons, at all times, in an orderly and peaceable manner, shall have the right to assemble and consult upon the common good, to instruct their representatives, to petition the Government or other functionaries for the redress of grievances and to associate fully with others or refuse to associate in political parties, trade unions, and other organizations."

Article 21: This article further emphasizes the freedom of the press, stating that "no censorship shall be established. Nor shall the right to speak, write or print be abridged." (Constitution of Liberia, 1986).

In addition to the constitutional provisions, Liberia has enacted laws specifically addressing press freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of information. These include:

The Kamara Abdullah Kamara (KAK) Act of Press Freedom, 2019: This law protects and promotes freedom of the press and expression by creating an environment conducive to quality journalism and independent reporting. The KAK Act repealed the following sections of the Penal Code 1978:

Section 11.11: Criminal Libel against President

Section 11.12: Sedition

Section 11.14: Criminal Malevolence

The Freedom for Information (FOI) Act 2010: The FOI law is important for genuine democracy and good governance. The FOI Act promotes and protects the effective, equitable, and affordable exercise of the right of access to information.

3. Regulatory structure

Liberia has had a history of evolving media regulation, particularly in its transition after the civil wars and its efforts to establish a democratic society. Here are some key aspects of the media regulatory framework in Liberia as of September 2021:

Press Union of Liberia (PUL): The Press Union of Liberia is a non-governmental organization representing journalists' interests in the country. It plays a role in advocating for press freedom, professional standards, and the rights of journalists. The PUL has been discussing media regulations and laws in Liberia with an eye to amendments and improvements, but these are yet to take effect.

Media Laws and Regulations: Liberia has laws and regulations that impact the media landscape. Some relevant laws include the Freedom of Information Act, which theoretically promotes transparency and access to information. However, enforcement and implementation of this law have been inconsistent.

Broadcasting Regulation: The Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) regulates the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors. This includes issues related to licensing, frequency allocation, and technical standards for radio and television broadcasting.

In Summary

Liberia post-war: Media flourishes due to the constitution, laws, and global pacts. Constitution's Articles 15, 17, and 21 protect speech, press, and assembly rights, while the KAK Act (2019) removes repressive Penal Code sections, enabling quality journalism. FOI Act (2010) enhances transparency, aligning with Liberia's commitment to democratic openness. International agreements like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights reinforce media freedom in Liberia.

4. Media Landscape

The media landscape in Liberia is predominantly fragmented, with many media houses catering to local communities within one or two counties, with a few national media platforms reporting throughout Liberia. Currently, over 200 media houses are licensed to operate in the country, most of which are radio stations. Of the 214 media houses, 164 are radio stations, 11 television stations, and 41 print and online media.³ As noted by some media stakeholders, though online TV stations enjoy niche viewership, radio is the major source of media consumed in the mainstream media space. Most media outlets outside the capital are radio stations. Of the 164 radio stations registered to operate, 109 are found outside the capital and are sometimes even community owned. The proliferation of media houses post-conflict period has been enabled by the country's constitutional and legal provisions, which allow for the freedom of expression and the press.

Despite the high number of radio stations, there is limited broadcasting range and hours of coverage. Except for the state-owned station, which has the facility to cover the entire country, the community and privately-owned stations have a short broadcast range. Faced with the cost of operations, including power supply through the use of diesel generators, most community-based and privately owned stations have limited broadcasting hours. Except for a selected few, most radio stations operate between 4 am and 10 am and 4 pm to 10 pm. Radio stations operating outside these limited times collaborate with

³Internews 2022, National Media Directory

communication companies to power the radio station's operation, raising questions about the independence of the media.

These times of operation have implications for information access, particularly in the electioneering period. As noted by one of the media stakeholders, the time allocation for voter and civic education engagements falls outside that radio station's current operating times, so these activities are rarely covered on their platform.

Beyond the above limitations, a major challenge most media platforms face is competent and professional staff. According to the media themselves, problems such as weak editorial standards limit the professionalism of their offering. Some of the contributing factors for this include the poor media economy, underfunding of the media, particularly the community radio stations, attrition rates (the movement of the well-trained media personnel to public relations/other better remunerated sectors), and politicization of the media.

In summary

The media landscape in Liberia is characterized by fragmentation, with over 200 licensed media houses, primarily radio stations, catering to local communities. However, limited broadcasting range and hours of coverage, often constrained by operational costs and dependence on communication companies, impact information access, especially during critical periods like elections. Furthermore, a significant challenge faced by most media platforms is the shortage of competent and professional staff, with factors such as weak editorial standards, poor media economy, attrition rates, and politicization contributing to professionalism limitations.

5. Media Freedom

Constitutional and legal provisions guarantee media freedom in Liberia. However as observed by media practitioners, journalists continue to encounter a range of abuses and challenges. Liberia is ranked 66 out of 180 countries on media freedom by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). These issues cast doubts on the effective exercise of press freedom within the country. Some key concerns include:

Intimidation and harassment: Press Freedom is facing some challenging headwinds in the current media environment. Some media practitioners submitted that attacks on media have raised security concerns contributing to greater levels of self-censorship to reduce the risks to the safety of journalists and media platforms. In the electoral environment, intimidation and harassment often stem from political interests. This has manifested as threats, physical attacks, and even legal actions intended to suppress media reporting. As observed by some media stakeholders, some serious cases of intimidation and harassment against journalists have even been committed by overzealous law enforcers and regulators.

Lack of safety: According to a manager of a privately owned media house, many journalists operate in an environment where their safety is constantly at risk. He submitted that during the election period, covering sensitive topics such as corruption by government and politicians leaves them vulnerable to physical harm. For this reason, he must often sleep in the studio when he is running a night show. He also made a habit of changing the places where he sleeps. If he has an early morning show, he must organize for private security to escort him to the office. In Liberia, journalists who dig into sensitive political or corporate matters report on the pressure they face from influential figures who seek to protect personal interests. This can lead to job and personal insecurity, poor morale, and depression.

Censorship and self-censorship: Despite legal protections, censorship, both overt and subtle, remains a feature throughout the media in Liberia. Journalists may self-censor to avoid backlash or threats, limiting the diversity of voices and perspectives in media coverage. The self-censorship is often due to:

Political pressures on the editorial and productions to ensure that party or politicians' interests are propagated through the media.

Socio-cultural: According to one radio station manager in Lofa, radio programs that touch on the sensitive aspect of culture, for example, Anti-female genital mutilation, attract a backlash from the community elders. For such reasons, the radio station must regulate the content and debates on such matters.

Economic challenges: A poorly funded media sector in Liberia amounts to a lack of divergent voices in Liberia that can raise critical issues, especially around issues of politics and government. If media platforms become critical of the government, they might not receive business from the government, with a chilling effect of the type of content editors and managers prefer to cover.

Legal challenges: Lawsuits and legal actions are used to silence critical voices in the media. These legal battles can be financially draining for already struggling media and disincentivize journalists to pursue investigative reporting.

Lack of access to information: While there are legal provisions promoting access to information, the actual implementation can be inconsistent. Government bodies withhold information or make it difficult for journalists to obtain crucial data, hindering their ability to provide accurate and informative reporting. The impunity with which information is withheld renders the legal statutes meaningless despite the protection offered in the law.

Impunity: In most cases where a journalist has been harassed or abused physically or, worse, killed, the media stakeholders observed that the perpetrators of violence or threats against journalists are not held accountable for their actions. This culture of impunity can embolden aggressors and deter journalists from pursuing critical stories.

In summary

While Liberia's constitution and legal framework enshrine media freedom, the reality on the ground reveals a complex landscape where journalists encounter numerous obstacles, including intimidation, censorship, legal challenges, and safety concerns. These issues collectively hamper the free and open exchange of information and ideas, which are essential components of a thriving democracy.

6. Political Plurality

The EISA IEOM assessment of the media and political plurality established that media in Liberia is politicized and polarized. According to the media stakeholders who interacted with EISA LTOs in the pre-election period, a significant proportion of media houses, 100 out of 165, are owned by politicians. This ownership dynamic influences the media's agenda-setting and information dissemination, elevating the risk of biased reporting.

Within this polarized media landscape, except for a handful of community media houses, it was evident in the assessment that media content is profoundly influenced by political agendas, especially in elections. The impact of politically aligned ownership goes beyond ownership itself and significantly shapes the nature of content and coverage. This influence reaches editorials and the information disseminated, crafted by individuals closely connected to politics. This dynamic contributes to the production of media content that is inherently biased and lacks balance, leading to a form of reporting that is skewed and unequal in its representation of various perspectives.

The impact of the poor media economy, compounded by a politicized media landscape, was highlighted as a key factor that shapes media in Liberia. According to the stakeholders in the media sector, the need to generate revenue often leads media houses to self-censorship and alignment with the government or personal interests of sponsors to secure business opportunities, thereby making them susceptible to manipulation. The effects of such a poor media economy in the democratization and electoral environment, as observed by the stakeholders, include but are not limited to the following:

Media finance constraints: The financially constrained media economy limits the resources available for investing in journalism. Media outlets might struggle to hire skilled journalists, conduct thorough investigations, or cover a wide range of topics. As observed by some journalists and media practitioners, financial constraints have greatly contributed to a decline in the overall quality of journalism, affecting the accuracy, depth, and diversity of news coverage. One of the journalists noted that once you introduce yourself as a journalist,

people quickly sum it up that you have *“joined the list”*. Joined the list, meaning the noble profession of journalism is seen from the prisms of corruption. People immediately assume that they are corrupt, or that they are part of a corrupt system. This is because there have been cases of journalistic corruption in recent years, which has damaged the public's trust in the profession. In addition, financial constraints faced by the media industry are linked to poor working conditions. Journalists in Liberia often work in poor conditions. This can include a lack of access to electricity, poor internet connectivity, and dangerous working environments.

Low advertising revenue: Media outlets in Liberia rely heavily on advertising revenue to stay afloat. However, the economy is weak and there is not a lot of money available for advertising. This makes it difficult for media outlets to pay their staff and invest in new equipment.

Bias and sensationalism: According to the media themselves, much of Liberia’s media platforms are biased and/or engage in sensationalism in their coverage, analysis, and reporting. This is also informed by the need to attract audiences and generate revenue. Consequently, the biases and sensationalist media have contributed to a polarized public discourse and hindered the objective presentation of facts, especially in the context of the 2023 General Elections.

Diminished Civic Engagement: In a highly politicized media landscape, genuine civic engagement becomes elusive. A significant portion of the Liberian populace tends to ingest information from the predominant source - radio - with unwavering trust, often neglecting critical evaluation. This concerning trend, highlighted by stakeholders, creates passive consumers of content, rather than active, engage citizens calling governance structures to account. Influential actors, including the government, can deftly exploit this susceptibility to significantly influence media discourse and disseminate manipulative propaganda. This insidious maneuvering not only distorts public perceptions but also reinforces ideologies while stifling dissenting voices.

In Summary

The data underscores the significance of media plurality in sustaining a healthy democratic process and identifies key challenges such as media politicization, economic constraints, shrinking civic space, and negative gendered coverage. Efforts to address these challenges through self-regulation, code of conduct revisions, and initiatives like women journalist training demonstrate steps toward enhancing media diversity and balanced coverage in Liberia's political landscape.

7. Media's role in CVE during BVR Voter Education and Exhibition

The NEC is the institution with the primary responsibility for Civic and Voter Education (CVE) in Liberia. Ahead of the 2023 elections, NEC launched its CVE campaign and CVE Cells on 23 February 2023. The CVE Cells, composed of CSOs and other community groups, undertake outreach activities that involve sensitizing citizens on the BVR exercise and exhibition and extend their functions to complement NEC's oversight role during the campaign period with regards to candidates' adherence to the election code of conduct.

The media played its part in providing information on NEC activity during the different phases of the electoral process. However, some media stakeholders that were engaged indicated that the media generally went the extra mile to sensitize the public on the election by sourcing news and providing analysis on key issues. There were also lamentations of the NEC not paying for programs and involving the media, particularly community radio stations.

Sometimes, the NEC is accused of being biased in choosing media organizations to work with. Interlocutors pointed out that during past elections, the NEC created a Media platform (WhatsApp) where all official election information was posted in real-time. This was described as a best practice that provided equal access to information for the media such that those with limited resources had access to credible real-time official data from the NEC.

Most media houses engaged affirmed that they did not have any election programs. However, they were using existing programs to conduct CVE and discuss developments pertaining to the elections. For instance, issues arising from the deduplication of the voter roll were discussed on morning talk shows, probing what happens to duplicate registrants.

Prime FM radio management shared how some of the existing shows on the station discuss topical election issues. Among the topics that garnered a lot of feedback was a discussion on the 2% threshold, which bars political parties that did not attain the minimum of 2% of the overall votes from the previous elections from participating in 2 subsequent elections⁴.

According to some stakeholders, the media is not just providing coverage but also asking tough questions of government officials and political candidates. Although there are no election programs, they mainstream election-related content in their daily programming. Civil society organizations have sometimes engaged the media to air programs and jingles as part of their civic education efforts. Conversely, most political parties have structured civic and voter education strategies. Whether they will be more active in conducting CVE on the campaign trail is yet to be seen. It should be noted that while political parties often have

⁴ The Elections Law of the Republic of Liberia

programs for CVE, these programs are restricted to issues that directly impact the political party, and are sometimes used to conduct “pre-campaigning” under the guise of CVE, so the full impact of political party CVE remains limited.

Several civil society organizations have made efforts to equip the media with election reporting and countering misinformation and disinformation. Internews Liberia, ILab, and the Publishing Association of Liberia (PAL) are among the organizations with targeted activities for the media aimed at building capacity in election reporting.

Given the existing limitations of the media landscape in Liberia, it is worth noting that the issues surrounding media ownership and media polarization play a significant role in how media programs are crafted. While some media houses are commended and said to be impartial, it cannot be ignored that the underlying perception of the community is often in tandem with the understanding that there is always undue influence by media owners.

In Summary

During the BVR Voter Education and Exhibition in Liberia, the NEC led Civic and Voter Education (CVE) efforts, launching its campaign and involving CVE Cells comprised of CSOs and community groups to educate citizens and oversee candidates' adherence to the election code of conduct. The media played a role in disseminating information but faced challenges, such as NEC not financially supporting programs and accusations of bias in media selection. Past practices like a dedicated WhatsApp platform for real-time information were praised for equalizing access. Media outlets incorporated election-related content into their programming and asked tough questions, while civil society organizations helped build media capacity in election reporting. Media ownership and polarization remained significant concerns affecting program content.

8. Mis(dis)information and Hate Speech

The Liberian legal framework does not address mis/dis information generally. Although the statutes have defamation laws that can be used to follow up on dis/misinformation, it is not enough to navigate the complexities of the two constructs.

It was observed that mis/disinformation is generally widespread both online and offline. For instance, during the BVR exercise, a lot of false information was circulated about the requirements for one to register as a voter. Some of the community radio stations affirmed that they had been misled and published wrong information, which the NEC later corrected, and they, in turn, used their platforms to correct any misinformation.

Additionally, cases of disinformation were observed once the official campaign period had commenced. For example, social media was observed with news making rounds that the

Magistrate of NEC Upper Nimba was seen putting up ruling party CDC posters in Nimba County. The same image was used again, accusing the Magistrate in Grand Bassa.

The high stakes in the political environment, which is largely politicized and polarized, contribute to fueling the spread of dis(mis)information and hate speech by politically owned media houses. There are, however, efforts to tackle this phenomenon, including the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) signed by the media and security wings supported by USAID. Other known interventions include an editors' forum capacity building on fact-checking, countering gender dis(mis)information, and also training on hate speech organised by Internews.

During a countering dis(mis)information dialogue organized by the *ILab Liberia* in Nimba County with female politicians, testimonies were heard of how many of them were victims of hate speech, dis(mis)information. They shared experiences of how they had been catfished online by unknown men who later attempted to blackmail them and attack their character. In some instances, false information was shared about them in their electoral districts, which led to their supporters losing confidence in them.

As the election date draws nearer, there may be an upsurge of dis(mis)information, especially on the campaign trail. Compounded silence in the law pertaining to the spread of false information and the need for fact-checking to counter the spread will be crucial to countering the vice.

In Summary

The Liberian legal framework lacks specific provisions to address misinformation and hate speech, relying on defamation laws that may not adequately handle these issues. Both online and offline, misinformation was prevalent during the BVR exercise, with community radio stations inadvertently spreading false information corrected by the NEC. Instances of disinformation emerged during the official campaign period, fueled by a polarized political environment and politically-owned media outlets. Efforts to combat this include Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), fact-checking training, gender disinformation awareness, and hate speech training supported by USAID and organizations like Internews and ILab Liberia. With the upcoming election, addressing misinformation through fact-checking and legal clarity becomes crucial.

9. Gendered Dimension to Media Coverage

The gendered dimension of media and election coverage in Liberia is a complex issue with a long history. Women have historically been underrepresented in the media, both as journalists and as subjects of coverage. There is limited and negative media coverage of

women explained by factors including gender stereotyping, imbalanced power in media ownership and management, and limited women's media strategy: Media coverage of women in politics mirrors women's underrepresentation in decision-making, leadership, and political spaces. From the LTOs' interactions, it was observed that historically in the context of elections, women politicians in Liberia have faced challenges related to media representation. Women politicians receive less media coverage and publicity relative to their male counterparts. They also experience negative media coverage.

Some stakeholders that EISA LTOs interacted with reported that the media landscape is still cultured and traditional, accounting for gender stereotyping, underrepresentation of women's viewpoints, and hostile criticism. Media's interactions with women politicians sometimes undermine women's leadership abilities by focusing on traditional gender roles and their appearance. Women's viewpoints in media discourses are also underrepresented, as most quoted experts, sources, and talk show panelists remain men. Women in politics also sometimes face harsh and personal criticism from media outlets, accounting for women politicians shying away from the media.

EISA also noted the power imbalance in media ownership and management. At the national and county levels, media houses, particularly the privately owned, are largely male-owned, with management also being male-led. A case in point is displayed in the table below. Of the four privately owned media houses in Lofa, three are owned by male politicians. All the media houses, including the community-own radio stations, are male-led. Women's underrepresentation in newsroom leadership is coupled with most media houses having fewer female journalists. As was admitted by media stakeholders, women media personalities are countable and have less influence than their male counterparts. The power imbalance in media ownership and management is compounded by the politically polarized nature of the media. As earlier noted, most media houses are owned by politicians who influence the content and coverage. This has implications for female politicians' access to these media houses, who compete with male politicians who own these radio stations.

Media Ownership and Management: The Case of Lofa

Media Institution	Ownership/Funding	Management	District
Alternative Youth Radio	Donor funded	Male-led	District 5
Deopelor Radio	Thomas Fala	Male-led	District 1
Dengola Radio	Mariam Beyan Fofana	Male-led	District 4
Kintoma Radio	Community Radio	Male-led	District 4
Makona Radio	Late Eugene Fallakpakai	Male-led	District 1
Radio Tambateko	Community Radio	Male-led	District 1
Radio Heilingen	Community Radio	Male-led	District 3
Voice of Lofa	Steve J. H. Zargo	Male-led	District 4

Source: EISA LTOs, September 2023

Factor accounting for limited media coverage of women in politics has been noted to include the lack of media strategy by women politicians. Women politicians are said not to be as aggressive as their male counterparts in drawing media attention. Women politicians sometimes do not inform or engage the media for their planned activities, contributing to less media coverage.

There are also several reasons why women politicians may be less likely to have a media strategy or to be proactive in reaching out to the media. These reasons include:

Lack of experience: Women politicians are often less experienced than male politicians, and they may not have the same level of knowledge about how to use the media effectively.

Lack of resources: Women politicians often have fewer resources than male politicians, and they may not be able to afford to hire a media consultant or pay for media exposure.

Gender stereotypes: Women politicians face gender stereotypes that discourage them from being aggressive in their media outreach. For example, they are seen as being too emotional or too soft to be effective politicians.

It is also important to note that the lack of media strategy by women politicians is not the only factor that contributes to limited media coverage of women in politics. Other factors include:

Gender bias in the media: The media often perpetuates gender stereotypes, which leads to less coverage of women politicians.

Lack of female journalists: There are fewer female journalists than male journalists in Liberia as alluded to earlier, and this can lead to less coverage of women politicians.

Lack of interest from the public: The public may be less interested in hearing from women politicians than from men politicians.

Organizations like the Female Journalists Association (FEJA) are trying to combat these dynamics by advocating for fair and balanced media coverage of women in politics. Specific to elections, the association plans to pair female journalists with female politicians to increase media coverage for female candidates.

In Summary

The gendered dimension of media and election coverage in Liberia reflects historical underrepresentation and negative portrayal of women. Women politicians receive less media coverage and often face negative scrutiny compared to their male counterparts. Gender stereotyping, media ownership by men, and limited women's media strategies contribute to this disparity. Women in politics may lack media experience, and resources,

and face gender biases, which hinder proactive media engagement. Additionally, the media landscape's male dominance and political polarization compound these challenges. Efforts by organizations like the Female Journalists Association aim to address these issues, including pairing female journalists with female politicians for increased media coverage during elections.

10. Recommendations

The following recommendations are being proposed based on the gaps identified in this assessment.

- Support community-owned radio stations to extend coverage time, particularly during the election period.
- The NEC should provide continuous CVE that is comprehensive, catering to a bigger demographic.
- There is a need for appropriate legislation that will address the spread of disinformation and false news.
- Consider improving access to media coverage for female politicians, particularly to community-owned radio stations.
- Media outlets should be encouraged to adopt gender-sensitive reporting guidelines and to train their journalists on how to avoid gender stereotypes.
- Women politicians should be proactive in reaching out to the media. They should pitch stories to journalists and make themselves available for interviews.
- Though the self-regulatory framework and institutions are a good idea in practice, in the future, the country should institute independent public institutions with the mandate to regulate media. This could be an independent commission or authority funded by the government.
- The government should try to protect the freedom of the press and assure the journalists of their safety.

Annexes

Political and Media Stakeholders Consulted

1. Media Houses and Organisations at the National level

- a. Female Journalists Association of Liberia (FeJAL)
- b. Liberian Press Union
- c. Equitorial Liberian Broadcast System
- d. Internews- USAID Liberia Media Activity
- e. The New Dawn
- f. Prime FM
- g. BOSS Media

2. Radio Stations at the County level

- a. Alternative Youth Radio
- b. Deopelor Radio
- c. Dengola Radio
- d. Kintoma Radio
- e. Makona Radio
- f. Radio Tambateko
- g. Radio Heilingen
- h. Voice of Lofa

3. Political Stakeholders at the county level

- a. Alternative National Congress (ANC)
- b. Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC)
- c. Unity Party (UP)
- d. Independent female aspirants

DATA COLLECTION TOOL
EISA INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION IN LIBERIA

Thematic Areas	General Media Assessment Questions
General Information on Media Landscape	What are the media houses in your county? Disaggregated by State, Community, and Private owned, as well as by gender?
Civic and Voter Education	What are the civic and voter-education programmes being transmitted in the county?
	How adequate are the programs?
Political Plurality	What are the political and elections-related programs hosted/transmitted by the community and private media houses in your county?
	How accessible and affordable are the media houses to all aspirants and political parties in your county? Are the aspirants/political parties subject to the same conditions (time, rates, etc.)?
	In case of a gap in affordability in airtime, what are the initiatives being taken by the media house to bridge the gap? For example, women aspirants have challenges with finances.
	How diverse, balanced, and inclusive is the information broadcast/coverage (objectivity relating to political parties, candidates, gender, and other groups)?
	Is there any prejudice in reporting based on ethnic, religious, gender, or social issues?
	How free is the media?
	How do radio stations fund their operations?

Media Freedom	Do media houses operate in partnership with any corporate entity or individuals? If yes, what are the terms and likely implications on their ability to remain impartial?
Disinformation and Hate Speech	Are discussions issue-focused or aimed at attacking the personality of the competitors?
	Are there reported cases of disinformation?
	Are there cases of online media being streamed through local media stations?
Gender Mainstreaming	Are women candidates, and political leaders represented equally in media coverage?
	Do the language used in media coverage reinforce gender biases and stereotypes, are they derogatory and harass women?
	Are images and visuals used in a way that promotes gender equality and diverse representation?
	Is media coverage actively promoting women's political participation and leadership, highlighting women's achievement in your county?
	Are barriers to women in politics discussed, and are solutions proposed during your airtime programs?
	Are women's voices and perspectives included in political discourse, and are they given the same weight?

About EISA: The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) is a continental not-for-profit organization located in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire with field offices in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Madagascar, Niger, Liberia Chad, and Sudan. EISA has continental and sub-regional programs in the field of elections and democracy throughout Africa. EISA strives for excellence in the promotion of credible elections, citizen participation, and the strengthening of political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa.

About USAID Support to EISA-IEOM to Liberia: The USAID-funded EISA International Election Observation Mission (EISA-IEOM) Activity seeks to enhance the integrity of the 2023 Liberia Presidential and Legislative elections through the deployment of an independent international election observer mission (EOM) to monitor, assess and report on all phases of the electoral process in accordance with international and regional benchmarks. The IEOM is implemented in close coordination with and the financial support of USAID/Liberia and will complement the efforts of other electoral stakeholders. EISA-IEOM has deployed international LTOs across Liberia to observe BVR Phase 2 of the registration and will compile a Phase 2 and comprehensive BVR report at the conclusion of the inspection process.

Please find the LTOs Arrival Statement: <https://eisa.org/pdf/lib2023ltoarrival.pdf>

EISA-IEOM BVR Phase 1 Report: <https://eisa.org/pdf/lib2023eisabvr.pdf>

For all resources, including EISA statements and reports from the 2017 Liberia Elections
<https://eisa.org/epp-liberia.php>