
THE 2023 LIBERIA PRESIDENTIAL & LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

EISA-LIEOM Multi-Stakeholder Post-Election Review Workshop Report



Monrovia, Liberia
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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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Acronyms

BVR	Biometric Voter Registration
CDC	Coalition for Democratic Change
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Civic and Voter Education
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
IEOM	International Election Observation Mission
IPCC	Inter-Party Consultative Committee
LEON	Liberia Elections Observation Network
LTOs	Long-Term Observers
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Election Commission
PwD	Persons with Disability
UP	Unity Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) deployed an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) to observe the Liberian 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections. The mission, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been in Liberia since January 2023. The mission's mandate was to monitor, assess, and report on all stages of the electoral process by international and regional benchmarks. The mission employed sound methodology, consisting of the observation of electoral activities and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders at the national and county levels. The two-day workshop on 28 and 29 February 2024 aimed to assess the 2023 general election thoroughly, teasing out lessons learned and recommendations for enhancing future elections.

Mr. Baïdessou Soukolgué, the Executive Director of EISA, welcomed all stakeholders present, thanking them for joining the EISA-LIEOM Multi-Stakeholder Post-election Review Workshop for the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. The two-day workshop seeks to examine and deliberate on the 2023 electoral processes thoroughly, identify lessons learned, and generate recommendations to improve future elections. In his official remarks, Dr. Nevers Mumba, the former vice president of Zambia and the Head of Mission of the EISA-LIEOM underscored the collective commitment of all present to the democratic values that form the bedrock of Liberia, also noting the peaceful conclusion of the 2023 general and presidential elections as a testament to the country's dedication to democratic principles. In her address, Madam Christine N. Umutomi, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, underscored the importance of the review workshop, adding that the United Nations is drawing lessons learned from the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. She noted that despite the challenges, the election was successful, suggesting that if leadership is willing, democratic advancement is possible. She concluded by noting the need to address the timing of election funding and the strengthening of political parties.

Sessions covered the legal and normative framework of elections in Liberia, the political and election environment, the voter registration processes, civic and voter education, election dispute resolution, polling and results management, inclusivity, media and security, and election observation.

- On the legal and normative framework for election, the session underscored the importance of a comprehensive legal and regulatory provision for election. Gaps were identified in the existing frameworks: the insufficiency of the Aliens and Nationality Law, the implementation of the code of conduct, and the enforcement of campaign financing regulations of the provisions by the National Election Commission (NEC).
- The 2023 elections were held as one contest within a highly polarized political environment, with the race between the leading contenders being extremely competitive,

though devoid of issue-based debate. Though turnout was high, efforts to campaign in a competing party's stronghold sometimes resulted in violence.

- The biometric voter registration process (BVR) was well organized. Despite being faced with challenges, including technical and logistical difficulties, long distances between BVR centers and communities, and limited awareness, citizens still showed a high level of enthusiasm towards acquiring the voter ID. The session also highlighted other challenges, including the trucking of voters, which manifested within and across counties and national borders. This, together with the registration of underage voters and voter inducement, potentially compromised the independence of some of the voters.
- The civic and voter education session highlighted the critical role of traditional leaders in the electoral process. The session also took note of the limited participation of women, noting that the failure to implement the voluntary gender quota was partly due to the lack of incentives. The initiatives aimed at increasing political party candidate nomination to 30% of women candidates failed, with only 15% being realized.
- The efficient and timely adjudication of electoral cases and the commendation of the NEC for hiring additional hearing officers to support the NEC's magistral offices emerged as positive aspects to repeat in future elections. Nonetheless, the coherence of the applicable legal framework for dispute resolution needs to be enhanced. Also, the NEC needs to hold pre-election violators to account.
- Voters had positive perceptions of how the NEC managed citizens' anxiety during the results announcement by balancing the results from opposing parties.
- Despite some progress, challenges remain in achieving gender equality in Liberia, particularly in areas of women's political participation. Existing data show a decline in women's political participation, with a corresponding decline in women's nominations. Contributing factors for the persisting gender gap include entrenched traditional and cultural norms and practices and the lack of political will to implement institutional reforms and provisions to promote gender equality.
- Issues such as a poor media economy, disinformation and misinformation, limited media literacy, a weak regulatory framework, and poor and limited access to technological infrastructures were identified within the media space. Also noted were the limited media coverage of the elections and the male-dominated nature of media ownership and management.

Recommendations

1. Revisit the amendments to the legal framework for elections, align electoral laws and principles to ensure a consistent and comprehensive legal framework for dispute resolution, ensure that pre-electoral violators are held accountable, and review the electoral laws to include provisions on cyber security to help contain cybercrimes, including cyberattacks, misinformation, disinformation, and data leaks.
2. Address infrastructural and logistical challenges before future elections.
3. Make the electoral process more inclusive by increasing women's political participation, facilitating the involvement of PwDs, and realizing the constitutional rights of diasporans and pre-trial detainees to vote.
4. Work towards issue-based political debates during elections.
5. Increase the number of polling precincts and reposition centers nearer to previous ones to reduce travel time and facilitate access.
6. Expand biometric verification to voting day, streamline the application and payment procedures for replacing lost and damaged voter ID cards, and reduce the price of USD 5.
7. Implement continuous registration to ensure the participation of persons who turn 18 just before the election. Districts and electoral boundaries also need to be delimited to ensure equal representation.
8. Ensure the timely release of results and ensure that the NEC's website is accessible 24/7 during the announcement of results.
9. Enhance public information provision and incorporate sign language interpreters to enhance the awareness by all stakeholders of the electoral process.
10. Ensure adequate security of NEC staff, temporary and permanent.
11. Support journalists in ethical reporting, improve digital media monitoring, increase investment in media literacy programs, and increase training for media practitioners on all aspects of the election, including disinformation, misinformation, and gender-sensitive reporting.

1. Background

The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) deployed an international election observation mission (IEOM) to observe Liberia's 2023 presidential and legislative elections. The mission, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), had been in Liberia since January 2023. The mission's mandate is to monitor, assess, and report on all stages of the electoral process by international and regional benchmarks. EISA deployed twelve (12) long-term observers to 12 counties, starting from April 2023. For election day, 20 short-term observers were also deployed for the first and the subsequent second-round elections.

The mission employed sound methodology, consisting of observation of electoral activities and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders at the national and county levels. Findings from analyzed data are due to be released. Recognizing the significant role of the various stakeholders in the election, EISA-LIEOM organized a multi-stakeholder post-election review workshop for the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. The two-day workshop on 28 and 29 February 2024 aimed to thoroughly examine the 2023 general election, identify strengths and gaps in the electoral process, and obtain stakeholder input. Specifically, the workshop seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Share and discuss the recommendations from the various election observation reports.
- Facilitate reflection and future actions based on the recommendations.
- Promote the consolidation of democratic electoral processes through targeted discussions on legal and other reforms. Moreover, by facilitating discussions around transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in elections, this event aspires to promote sustainable democratic development at the national level.

The expected output is a set of lessons learned and recommendations compiled in a workshop report to guide reforms for the 2029 election cycle and enhance democratic electoral processes in Liberia.

2. Opening Remarks

Mr. Baïdessou Soukolgué, the Executive Director of EISA, welcomed all stakeholders present, thanking them for joining the EISA-LIEOM multi-stakeholder post-election review workshop for the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. He noted that this review workshop culminates in EISA's extensive and invaluable long-term international observation mission in Liberia. The two-day workshop seeks to examine and deliberate on the 2023 electoral processes thoroughly, identify lessons learned, and generate recommendations to improve future elections. To achieve this goal, he urged all stakeholders to share their perspectives openly, as recommendations will be treated with the utmost seriousness in the finalizing of the EISA-LIEOM report. He also urged fostering better collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders to synergize efforts to enhance future

electoral activities. Mr. Baïdessou Soukolgué thanked all who made the observation mission possible, including USAID, for their invaluable financial support, and the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

In his official remarks, Dr. Nevers Mumba, the former vice president of Zambia and the EISA-LIEOM head of mission, underscored the collective commitment of all present to the democratic values that form the bedrock of Liberia. He also noted the peaceful conclusion of the 2023 general and presidential elections as a testament to the country's dedication to democratic principles. He reflected that the workshop's objectives, which were to share insights from various election observation reports, facilitate reflection to provide a basis for future actions to promote democratic consolidation in Liberia. He urged discussions to be guided by “What worked well, what did not, and why, and What needs to be done going forward?” Underscoring the importance of the timing of this workshop to foster an objective perspective on issues identified during the election, he urged the active participation and engagement of all. Dr. Nevers Mumba commended EISA for its practical and conclusive method of observation, USAID for the support of the mission, the National Electoral Commission for rolling out a free and fair democratic election, the government and people of Liberia for believing in the values of democracy, and former President George Weah for allowing democracy to win in a region that has been struggling with the unconstitutional transfer of power.

In her address, Madam Christine N. Umutomi, the United Nations resident coordinator, underscored the importance of the review workshop, adding that the UN is drawing lessons learned from the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. She noted that despite the challenges, the election was successful, suggesting that if leadership is willing, democratic advancement is possible. She concluded by noting the need to address the timing of election funding and the strengthening of political parties.

3. Key Takeaways from the Sessions

3.1. Setting The Stage: Background, Legal & Normative Framework

Attorney Darren Domah chaired the first session with Cllr. Boakai N. Kanneh, the chairperson of the Law Reform Commission, presenting the legal and normative framework within which the 2023 elections were held. Key takeaways from his session include the following: he noted that the Constitution of Liberia guarantees the holding of free, fair, transparent, and periodic elections, not only limited to the president and vice president and members of the legislature, that is, the senators and members of the House of Representatives, but also to the paramount, clan, and town chiefs. On this basis, Cllr. Kanneh noted that holding the 2023 presidential and general elections without including paramount, clan, and town chiefs renders the generality of the elections incomplete and in violation of Article 56(b) of the Constitution. According to him, this has implications for the legitimacy of persons serving in these capacities.

He noted issues relating to adherence to electoral dates. Although the October 10 election complied with constitutional provisions, other electoral activities, specifically the voters' registration, exhibition, publication, and submission of the final registration roll, were all delayed. He also highlighted the violation of campaign financing regulations, particularly the adherence to submitting financial reports to the NEC. Per the legal requirements, all political parties are to submit their financial report to the NEC on September 1 every year and publish, submit, and provide a detailed statement of assets and liabilities thirty days before elections. Most major political parties violate campaign financing regulations. Cllr. Kanneh noted that, unfortunately, the NEC failed to act on such violations.

The Aliens and Nationality Law, the legal instrument in addition to the Constitution that governs citizenship in the country, was amended before the 2023 elections. The amended law violated the Constitution in several respects. The amended law provides for dual nationality but excludes holders of dual nationality from holding elected offices and several other executive positions, such as the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Minister of National Defense, and the Governor of the Central Bank. Because this law was not timely publicized, it became difficult for the NEC to apply most of its new provisions. These violations are yet to be submitted to the Supreme Court for judicial review.

The Code of Conduct is one of the most abused legal instruments in the country, following the need for the Supreme Court to give interpretations of it on several occasions, thereby making it less effective. It is recommended that the Code of Conduct be repealed and a new Code of Conduct be promulgated to address all the contending issues.

Session recommendation 1

Drawing on the gaps in the legal framework and the violations identified above, recommendations for consideration include revisiting the amendments to the legal framework for elections and addressing some of our infrastructural and logistical challenges before future elections.

3.2. Political Environment and Election Campaigns

Mr Baïdessou Soukolgué, the Executive Director of EISA, chaired this session of the workshop and focused on the political context of the election. Dr. Nathaniel Walker, ECOWAS representative, and Attorney Teh Pour, executive director of the Independent Human Rights Commission of Liberia, made presentations.

In his presentation Dr. Nathaniel Walker noted that the 2023 elections of the president and vice-president, 15 Senators, and 73 House of Representative members marked a significant milestone as Liberia celebrates 20 years since the end of the civil war. This being the fourth electoral cycle,

Dr. Walker highlighted the competitive nature of the election, attributed to its high-profile candidates, i.e., the Hon. Joseph Boakai, former vice-president under President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and incumbent President George Weah. Having contested in previous elections, both candidates were bent on winning the election. The competitive nature of the election implies that efforts by political parties to infiltrate the strongholds of competing parties resulted in violence in some cases.

The National Elections Commission (NEC) accredited forty-six (46) political parties to contest in these elections. Parties participating in the election ran vigorous campaigns across the 15 counties, utilizing various campaign forms, including meetings, political rallies in open spaces/public squares, and candidate posters in public areas. Of the total registered voter population of 2,471,617, 78.86%, that is 1,949,155 voters turned out to cast their vote during the first round of the presidential and legislative elections. Even though women constituted 50.06% of the registered voters and were actively engaged in campaign activities, only 15% of female candidates contested as candidates in the election. Other issues of concern raised by Dr. Walker included the vulnerability of youth, the failure of the campaign to prioritize issue-based debates, the power of incumbency, tribal and regional considerations, and compromised media houses.

The submissions made by Attorney Teh Pour highlighted concerns about women's low participation as candidates even though they constitute a significant portion of the population. He also noted the exclusion of diasporans and pre-trial detainees.

Session recommendation 2

Recommendations underscored the importance of making the electoral process more inclusive by increasing women's political participation and facilitating the constitutional rights of diasporans and pre-trial detainees. Also encouraged were efforts to ensure that political debates are issue-based.

3.3. Reflections on Voter Registration Processes

Ms Kau Belleh chaired the fourth session, with discussions by presenters EISA-LIOEM LTO Dr. Fortune Agbele and Ms. Garmai Davies of the Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON). Representatives from the Unity Party (UP) and the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) were part of this session as observers.

The presentation by Ms. Garmai Davies noted that the introduction and implementation of biometric voter registration (BVR) during the 2023 electoral cycle was a critical step towards enhancing the integrity and transparency of elections, as the BVR technology captures unique biological traits like fingerprints or facial features of eligible voters to prevent fraud, multiple voting, and other irregularities associated with voter registration. However, she noted that despite its successful implementation, the process had some challenges, including delays in the release of funds, which created delays in the training and deployment of BVR staff; limited public awareness;

inadequate citizens' knowledge of the importance and procedures of biometric registration; addressing misconceptions and concerns regarding the use of biometric technology; technical and logistical constraints with logistical challenges impacting on deployment to registration centers across the country, transportation of equipment and personnel to remote areas; and security concerns during registration processes.

Dr. Fortune Agbele's submission highlighted the fact that the voters were enthusiastic about acquiring the voter identification card. According to interactions with voters, this is partly explained by the interest to participate in the election and to receive the new voter ID card for other non-voting engagements that may require formal identification. She noted that despite the peaceful and prosperous conduct of the BVR exercise, some challenges were observed. These include operational and logistical challenges, including shortages of BVR kits with implications for some registrants who had to make the return journeys to the registration centers to collect their voter ID cards; long distances from registration centers to particularly remote communities, discouraging some members of vulnerable groups like the elderly, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and pregnant women; voter trucking intra- and inter-county and cross-border and inducement, with potentials of compromising the independence of voter decision; and underage registration and inducement, which has implications on the children who were registered.

Session recommendation 3

Recommendations were made to consider increasing the number of polling precincts, and repositioning centers nearer to previous ones to reduce travel time and facilitate access; expand BVR verification to prevent duplicate or proxy voting and enhance the integrity of the electoral process; and streamline the application and payment procedures for the replacement of lost and damaged voter ID cards and reduce the price of USD 5 to facilitate accessible to voters.

3.4. Civic and Voter Education Processes

The session on civic and voter education during the 2023 presidential and legislative election, as a presentation, was chaired by Mr. George Sharpe of EISA, with Ambassador Juli Endee and Arkon Tengbeh, a representative from the UNDP. This session assessing NEC's partnerships and interaction with electoral stakeholders highlighted the critical role played by traditional leaders in the electoral process. The session also took note of the limited participation of women, noting that the failure to implement the voluntary gender quota was partly due to the lack of incentives. The initiatives aimed at increasing the candidate nomination of political parties to 30% of women candidates failed, with only 15% being realized.

Session recommendation 4

Based on the limited women's political participation and the failure of the 30% gender candidate nomination, it was recommended that incentives should be created for political parties to increase the number of women on the candidate listing.

3.5. Election Dispute Resolution

The first session of the second day focused on election dispute resolution. Ms. Antonetta Hamandishe chaired the session, which included presentations from Mr. Ignatius Wesseh from the Political Affairs Department of NEC and Attorney Darren Domah, EISA legal expert.

As noted by Mr. Wisseh, the NEC reviewed and revised all of its regulations, including the hearing procedures, in preparation for the 2023 general elections. The revision looked at the statutory period provided for the NEC to hear cases arising from elections (30 days) and the period for appeals. Political parties, through the inter-party consultative committee (IPCC), participated in the preview process.

In noting what worked, Attorney Domah commended the NEC for the timely revision of regulations complementing the New Elections Law, which he argues speaks to the NEC's commitment to adapting to evolving legal frameworks and ensuring compliance with current legislation. His presentation also noted the efficient and timely adjudication of electoral cases and commended the NEC for hiring additional hearing officers to support the NEC's magistral offices; these are positive steps towards strengthening its organizational capacity and ensuring a smoother electoral process.

Areas identified for improvement include the coherence of the legal framework for dispute resolution. According to Attorney Domah, inconsistency in the applicability of these two elements manifested in the case involving VOLT v. NEC, where corporate law principles were applied, leading to the dismissal of the matter. Also noted was the NEC's failure to bring to account pre-election violators. The lack of accountability for breaching pre-campaign activities weakens the electoral legal framework.

Session recommendation 5

One of the recommendations is to align electoral laws and principles to ensure a consistent and comprehensive legal framework for dispute resolution. Again, considering the electoral law violations with impunity, the NEC is encouraged to set measures to ensure that pre-electoral violators are held to account in future elections.

3.6. Polling and Results Management

Day two opened with a session on polling and result management during the 2023 elections, chaired by Ms. Antonetta Hamandishe. Presentations were made by Isaac Zahn, NEC elections technology expert, and Moses Bailey, the elections program officer from Democracy

International.

The session highlighted the processes employed by the NEC for voter registration, voting day, and results tally, collation, and announcement. Perceptions of the ordinary Liberians collected through focus-group discussion were presented, which noted that most people felt the NEC took too long to announce the preliminary results from the various magisterial areas across the country. This applied even to counties that were easily accessible. However, they expressed satisfaction with how the NEC managed their anxiety by balancing the announcement of results from incumbent and opposition party strongholds. The presentation highlighted that women constituted more than half of the voter population, hence the need to increase their participation as candidates.

Session recommendations 6

Recommendations were made to include the timely release of results and the need to review the electoral laws to include provisions on cyber security to help contain cybercrimes, including cyberattacks, misinformation, disinformation, and data leaks, especially during electoral periods. Also, technical issues resulting in the non-availability of the NEC website at certain times should be addressed promptly. The NEC website should be accessible 24/7 during the announcement of results. Providing public information to enhance all stakeholders' awareness of the electoral process is essential. Also, sign language interpreters are critical for all events to facilitate the hearing-impaired audience. Adequate security for NEC staff, both temporary and permanent, should be considered.

3.7. Inclusivity in Electoral Processes

The second session on day two explored inclusivity in the 2023 electoral process. It was chaired by Attorney Darren Domah with a presentation from Ms. Kau Belleh, the Gender and Social Inclusive expert with EISA, the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), and Hannah J. Watson, HR/OIC of the National Commission on Disabilities. The presentation highlighted the importance of inclusive elections.

Despite some progress, challenges remain in achieving gender equality in Liberia, particularly in areas of women's political participation. Existing data show a decline in women's political participation, with a corresponding decline in women's nominations. Contributing factors for the persisting gender gap include entrenched traditional and cultural norms and practices and the lack of political will to implement institutional reforms and provisions to promote gender equality.

Session recommendation 7

The government should domesticate those regional and international legal frameworks, strengthen national policies on advancing women's political participation, and develop a

national agenda to incorporate and highlight women's specific issues. CSOs should be supported to raise awareness of the implementation of existing protocols, identify potential women leaders, conduct needs assessments, and provide training and technical support for them. To facilitate the participation of PwDs, training on tactile voting should be provided, including sign language interpretation at every stage of the electoral cycle. The government is also encouraged to demonstrate the political will to domesticate regional and international legal frameworks to advance women's political participation.

3.8. Role of the Media and Security

Ms. Kau Belleh facilitated the next session, focusing on the role of the media and security including presentations were made by Jefferson Massah from Internews, George Yonbior, EISA-Media Analyst, and DCP Joshua N. During of the Liberia National Police (LNP).

Mr. Jefferson Massah noted that the support from USAID Media Activity enabled the organization of nationwide election debates, trained journalists and talk-show hosts on election and conflict-sensitive reports, and media practitioners and bloggers on fake news. He identified issues such as a poor media economy, disinformation and misinformation, limited media literacy, weak regulatory framework, and poor and limited access to technological infrastructures.

The presentation by George Yonbior highlighted the limited media coverage of the elections, noting that most election-related news was through newscasts, with fewer radio stations running election programs. He noted that the poor media economy and media ownership and management are skewed in favor of men.

DCP Joshua N. During also highlighted the security provisions made during the election, including the deployment of personnel to all regions and counties before, during, and after the election to ensure citizens could exercise their rights.

Session recommendation 8

Recommendations were made to support journalists in ethical reporting, improve digital media monitoring, increase investment in media literacy programs, and increase training for media practitioners on all aspects of the election, including disinformation, misinformation, and gender-sensitive reporting.

3.9. Election Observation

The final session of day two covered election observation, with presenters from ECC, and Mr Thomas Du of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Key takeaways from this session include:

Though the 2023 presidential and legislative elections are the fourth post-conflict elections, they are the first to be managed and financed entirely by Liberia. The election generated interest among

the international community, and the NEC accredited over 9,000 national and international observers. Some of these were long-term observers (LTOs) based abroad in various counties. This enhanced the election quality as these LTOs monitored, assessed, and reported on all aspects of the electoral process.

However, the accreditation process is centralized in the NEC HQ in Monrovia, with the release of funding for the accreditation process needing to be prompt and to enhance the flow of communication on the process. The centralized system posed challenges to obtaining accreditation for replaced observers and retrieving missing accreditations, especially at the county level.

Session recommendations

The NEC was encouraged to consider de-centralizing the accreditation process to enable observers across the country to obtain accreditation at the various magisterial offices to facilitate the deployment of observers. Also recommended are the timely release of accreditation funding and having clear communication on the accreditation process.

4. What did not Work?

4.1. Law and regulatory framework

The inadequacy of the amended Aliens and Nationality Law to address the citizenship requirement of selected members of the executive; implementation of the constitutional provision to elect traditional leaders; adherence to campaign financing regulations, particularly regulations on financial reporting; the ability of the NEC to hold to account any abuse of the code of conduct; and the coherence of the applicability of the electoral legal framework's provision on dispute resolution.

4.2. Inclusion

The poor inclusion of minority groups, including women, with only 15% of the candidate listing being women despite the fact that they constitute more than 50% of the voter population; PwDs; and no provision for diasporan and pre-trial detainee voting.

4.3. Logistics and operations

The placement of BVR centers, and operational and logistical challenges with the implications of travel time and distances between registration centers, particularly to remote communities.

4.4. Civic and voter education

Limited civic and voter education, including little public awareness of the importance and procedures of biometric registration; and addressing misconceptions and concerns regarding the use of biometric technology.

5. Closing Remarks

5.1. Concluding Remarks by the Head of EISA-LIEOM

In his final remarks, Dr. Nevers Mumba, head of EISA Mission, drew some conclusions for stakeholders' reflection. These include the successes of the 2023 presidential and legislative elections despite facing challenges, indicating that overcoming obstacles in democratic Liberia is feasible, but only when the leadership is willing. He also urged relevant stakeholders to consider the timing of the release of election funds. He added that democracy without the complete inclusion of women and minority groups is incomplete; hence, he urged that efforts be made, including establishing legal frameworks and regulations to safeguard women's participation and strengthening mechanisms for accessibility for the disadvantaged and marginalized groups. He concluded with the need to strengthen political parties to enhance issue-based politics.

5.2. Official Workshop Closing Remarks by USAID Mission Director

Mr. Jim Wright, the USAID Mission Director, noted that the workshop allowed all partners to review the electoral process, including the BVR, legal and regulatory frameworks, the campaign process, and CVEs, assessing what worked well, what could be replicated, and what could be approved for future elections. He added that these form an essential part of our learning and adaptation process and that all can benefit and support each other. He said the recommendations and ideas discussed in this workshop would be acted upon, and the US government would collaborate with all partners and stakeholders to follow up and improve the electoral process.

He commended the CSO for working tirelessly to coordinate and maintain the peace during the election. He also commended EISA for their role during the election by way of providing critical data points and analysis to the NEC, for enhancing the transparency of the electoral process, and for organizing this review workshop which allows stakeholders to reflect on the 2023 elections and to learn from successes and challenges in order to improve their performance in future elections.

He noted that as Liberia celebrates successful democratic elections, there should be swift action on all pending reform actions, encouraging international and domestic partners, the Government of Liberia, and local leaders not to lose momentum to improve but to continue the critical reforms.

On that note, the two-day Multi-Stakeholder Post-Election Review Workshop for the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections was closed.

5.3. Vote of Thanks by the Executive Director of EISA

Mr Baïdessou Soukolgué expressed his appreciation to USAID for supporting EISA at the continental and specific country levels, such as Madagascar and Liberia. He underscored the importance of their support to the EISA team in Liberia, noting that without the critical work undertaken by USAID during the 2023 presidential and legislative elections, it would not have been possible, and nor would this review workshop, which has enabled a stakeholder review of the electoral process to draw out best practice and lessons for future elections.

He also thanked the National Electoral Commission, all political competitors, the Liberia National Police, and the people of Liberia for supporting EISA's work during the elections and for their commitment and contribution to evaluating and assessing the electoral process. He noted that as a pan-African organization, lessons learned from Liberia will be extended to other parts of the continent.

He also appreciated the dedication of the observers who were deployed to the various counties, and to the core team based in the EISA office in Monrovia. These included the former EISA country director, Mr. Grant Masterson, and the current EISA country director, Ms. Antonetta Hamandishe. He concluded by urging support from USAID to the EISA team as it brings the mission to an end.

Annex A: Workshop Program

DAY ONE: 28 February 2024

Workshop Director: Ms Lenny Taabu, EISA Senior Program Officer, Elections and

SESSION 1: WELCOME REMARKS AND OFFICIAL OPENING

This session constitutes the formal component of the Multi-stakeholder Post-election Workshop. Besides the formal introductions of the participants by categories as well as introduction of the invited dignitaries, the session provides the objectives of the Workshop and outlines expected outputs and outcomes.

Political Processes

08:00–08:30	Registration
08:30-08:35 All	Opening Prayer/Reflection
08:35–08:45	Introductory Remarks Ms Antonetta Hamandishe, EISA Country Representative
08:45–09:00	Welcome Remarks Mr Baïdessou Soukolgué, EISA Executive Director
09:00-09:20	Official Opening of the Workshop HE Dr. Nevers Mumba, EISA HOM and former Vice President of Zambia
09:20-09:30	Official Remarks UN Resident Coordinator
09:30-09:40	Legislative Representative: TBD
09:40:10:00	TEA BREAK and Workshop Group Picture All participants and dignitaries

SESSION 2: SETTING THE STAGE: BACKGROUND, LEGAL AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

This session sets the stage for the Multi-stakeholder Post-election Workshop beginning with a presentation on the context within which the 2023 Elections were conducted. It will review the legal framework and its impact on the conduct of the elections.

Chairperson: Attorney Darren Domah

PART I: LEGAL AND SYSTEMIC ISSUES

10:00-10:30 Reflection on the regional, continental, and international standards for democratic elections DUCOR Institute

10:30-11:00 A critique of the legal framework that governed the Liberia 2023 Elections Law Reform Commission

SESSION 3: POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT & ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The political environment within which elections are conducted has an impact on the outcome of the elections. Equally, adherence to an electoral code of conduct binding political stakeholders to agreed norms and principles throughout all the stages of the electoral process is a pre-requisite to the successful holding of elections. This session probes the political environment within which the 2023 elections were conducted. It also assesses the impact of the political environment on the election campaigns as well as the conduct of political parties throughout the entire electoral process.

Chairperson: Mr Baïdessou Soukolgué

11:00-11:20 The Political Environment and its Impact on Political Party Campaigns
ECOWAS Resident Ambassador/ Representative

SESSION 4: REFLECTIONS ON VOTER REGISTRATION AND PROCESSES

The Liberia 1986 Constitution bestows the responsibility for the registration of voters on the National Elections Commission. The 2023 elections were, therefore, the first since the Election Management Body (EMB) created and managed a voters roll using biometric technology. This session assesses the performance of the EMB and electoral stakeholders during the voter registration processes for the 2023 elections and draws lessons for improvement of the future voter registration.

Chairperson: Ms Kau Belleh

11:20-11:40 Political environment, campaigns, and human rights

11:40-12:00 Finding the common ground: Farmington Declaration in mitigating political tensions.

PART II: ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

12:00-13:00 Implementation of the bio-metric voter registration and compilation of the voter's roll: challenges and lessons learned.

EISA-LIEOM LTO
LEON

Political party representatives

13:00-14:00 **LUNCH BREAK**

SESSION 5: CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION PROCESSES

This session focuses on civic and voter education (VE) during the 2023 election cycle. It assesses the NEC's partnerships and interaction with electoral stakeholders on the one hand and the performance of both the NEC and CSOs public outreach strategies employed during the elections. Attention will also be given to the role of other electoral stakeholders such as political parties, CVE Cells and the media. Concrete policy recommendations will emerge from this session regarding how best to improve civic and voter education content and processes.

Chairperson: Mr George Sharpe

14:00-14:30 Overview of the voter education strategy for the 2023 general elections: content UNDP-Election Support team

SESSION 6: ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Liberia Constitution makes provisions for the prevention, management and peaceful resolution of disputes related to elections through the judicial system and NEC administrative system. These constitutional provisions are in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance 2007. This session assesses implementation of the election dispute resolution (EDR) mechanisms with the overall objective of generating knowledge and to identify lessons learnt to improve the EDR architecture for future elections.

Chairperson: Ms Antoneta Hamandishe

14:30-15:00 Assessment of the nexus between voter and civic education during 2023 election cycle
WANEP

15:00-15:30 Role of traditional institutions in civic education PEACE Crusaders

15:30-16:00 Management of election dispute/ appeals and ensuring adherence to the electoral code of conduct.
NEC, Political Affairs Department

16:00-16:30 An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Liberia EDR architecture
EISA legal analyst

END OF DAY ONE

DAY TWO:

Director of Ceremonies: Ms Antonetta Hamandishe, EISA Country Representative

**SESSION 7: POLLING AND RESULTS
MANAGEMENT**

This session appraises the polling day processes and the management and administration of results with the view to making concrete recommendations on areas that need improvements.

Chairperson: Ms Antonetta Hamandishe

08:30-08:50	Voting, vote counting and tabulation processes. NEC
08:50-09:10	Results transmission and Announcement of Results Democracy International
09:10-09:50	Plenary Discussions
09:50-10:10	Tea Break

PART III: PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

**SESSION 8: INCLUSIVITY IN ELECTORAL
PROCESSES**

This session looks at participation in the election processes and assesses the extent to which the 2023 elections promoted the participation of women, youth and people with disabilities.

Chairperson: Attorney Darren Domah

10:10-10:50	A critique on the participation of women, youth and people with disabilities in the 2023 electoral process WONGOSOL and NCOD
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SESSION 9: ROLE OF THE MEDIA AND SECURITY

This session looks into the role of the media and security sectors during the 2023 elections. It reflects on the conduct of the media with respect to election reporting during the pre-election, election and post-election phases. The session also looks at the role of the security sector to ensure a conducive environment for citizen participation during the three phases. The session draws lessons for future elections.

Chairperson: Ms Kau Belleh

EISA GESI

10:50-11:30 Role and conduct of the media during the 2018 harmonized elections electoral process.

SESSION 10: ELECTION OBSERVATION

This session provides a platform for the observation groups that were accredited during the 2023 elections to provide a summary of key observations and recommendations.

Chairperson: Ms Lenny Taabu

Internews

EISA media analyst

11:30-12:00 The role of the security sector in the 2013 pre-election and post-election periods.
Liberia National Police (LNP)

12:00-13:00 **LUNCH BREAK**

PART IV: SUPPORT TO THE ELECTORAL OBSERVATION

**SESSION 11:
CLOSING**

This session is meant to wind up the workshop with concrete policy recommendations regarding necessary improvements in the conduct, management and administration of the electoral process in Liberia.

Chairperson: Ms. Antonetta Hamandishe

13:00-14:00 Accreditation of observers, code of conduct, key observations, and recommendations (PANEL A)

ECC LEON

14:00-15:30 Accreditation of observers, code of conduct, key observations, and recommendations (PANEL B)

ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Division

European UnionNDI

- 15:30–16:00 **Workshop Summary**
Workshop rapporteurs
- 16:30–16:45 **Key Takeaways**
HE Dr. Nevers Mumba, EISA HOM and former vice president of Zambia
- 16:00–16:30 **Official closing remarks**
Mr. Jim Wright, USAID mission director
- Vote of thanks: Mr. Baïdessou Soukolgué

Workshop Evaluation

END OF WORKSHOP

Annex B: List of Participating Stakeholders

No	Surname	Name	Sex	Organisation
1	Dr. Nevers	Mumba	M	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
2	Baïdessou	Soukolgué	M	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
3	Hamandishe	Antonetta	F	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
4	Taabu	Hellen	F	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
5	Domah	Darren Atty	M	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
6	Belleh	Kau	F	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
7	Sharpe	George	M	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
8	Watson J.	Hannah	F	National Commission on Disability (NCD)
9	Irish	Robert	M	The Carter Center (TCC)
10	Bloh	Oscar	M	Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC)
11	Togba D.	Emmanuel	M	National Center for Coordination of Response Mechanism (NCCRM)
12	Romare	Johan	M	Swedish Embassy
13	During	Joshua	M	Liberia National Police (LNP)

No	Surname	Name	Sex	Organization
14	Bernard–Jones	Vandetta	F	National Democratic Institute (NDI)
15	Neufville B.	Nora	F	Women NGOs of Liberia (WONGOSOL)
16	Speyrer	Peter	M	German Embassy
17	Umotoni	Christine	F	United Nations Resident Coordinator
18	Wright	Jim	M	USAID (Mission Director)
19	Truchard	Suzanne	F	USAID
20	Fahnbulleh–Jacobs	Louise	F	USAID
21	Johannes	Michael	M	USAID
22	Kolubah	Godo	M	Embassy of Ireland
23	Jhazbhay	Iqbal	M	South African Embassy (Ambassador)
24	Zahn S.	Isaac	M	National Elections Commission (NEC)
25	Fofana P.	Lansana	M	Unity Party
26	Du	Thomas	M	National Democratic Institute (NDI)
27	Dorko–Tarplah	Windor	F	The Carter Center (TCC)
28	Davies D.	Garmai	F	Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON)
29	Walker B.	Nathaniel	M	ECOWAS
30	Jallah	Masawo	F	ECOWAS

31	Zaye	Fiupsui	M	UNDP
32	Bryant	Trokon	M	UN Women
33	Varmah	Bornor Cllr.	M	Liberia National Bar Association (LNBA)
34	Sibley	Francis	M	Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON)
35	Kanneh N.	Boakai Cllr.	M	Law Reform Commission (LRC)
36	Benson F.	James	M	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP Liberia)
37	Kabba	Mamensie	F	Congress for Democratic Change (CDC)
38	Teh Pour	Urias	M	Independent National Human Rights Commission (INCHR)
39	Cole G.	Mackie	M	British Embassy
40	Kanneh A.	Salleh	M	National Muslim Council of Liberia
41	Endee	Julie	F	Liberia Crusaders for Peace
42	Donso V.	Varfin	M	Liberia Crusaders for Peace
43	Neuville	Paula	F	European Union
44	Wisseh	Ignatius	M	National Elections Commission (NEC)
45	Dowetin	Theophilus	M	European Union
46	Cabeiri	Mariaw	M	European Union
47	Maskova	Marcela	F	European Union
48	Briggs T.	Catherine	F	Democracy International (DI)
49	Bailey	Moses	M	Democracy International (DI)

No	Surname	Name	Sex	Organization
50	Abolou Y.	Nona	M	UNDP
51	Metzger	Boima	M	UNDP
52	Massah	Jefferson	M	Internews
53	Kiazolu	Ibrahim	M	Educate the Next Generation
54	Clement	Siame	M	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) HOM Team
55	Coker	George	M	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
56	Cephas B.	Saba	F	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)
57	Humon	Christine	F	ECOWAS Radio
58	Peters	Lincoln	M	New Dawn Newspaper
59	Tarlue	Aaron	M	DN News Live
60	Gray	Anthony	M	ECOWAS Radio
61	Kamara	Varflay	M	Liberia Broadcasting System (ELBC)
62	Clayeh	Webster	M	Frontpage Africa

