



GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY



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Acronyms

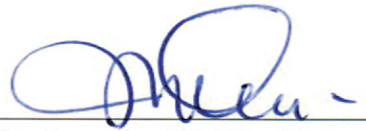
NEC	National Elections Commission
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UN	United Nations
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
NDI	National Democratic Institute

Foreword

This document outlines the National Elections Commission's (NEC) gender mainstreaming policy. It represents a commitment at all levels of the NEC to support gender mainstreaming in public and political life. We at the Commission believe that women can play a leading role in both of these spheres. The NEC through this policy shall strive to ensure leadership and lead by example in introducing a gender strategy that aims to break down the barriers women face in participating fully in public and political life. This policy document acknowledges the importance of increasing the number of women at all levels of electoral administration as well as ensuring that women voters are free to vote according to their preferences. It also aims to ensure women are more equally represented in elected offices while championing gender mainstreaming as a key part of our public agenda.

Despite Liberia being a State Party to international and regional treaties recognizing the equal rights of women, girls and women still face discrimination in our society. Some forms of discrimination are overt and others more subtle. The combination of these pressures on women limits their opportunities and this requires positive and affirmative action to redress the imbalance. Being equal is not only a fundamental human right. When women and men have equal opportunities, societies are stronger, more creative and diverse as well as more peaceful and prosperous.

On the release of this document, the NEC now officially has a gender mainstreaming policy to guide its planning and activities. Decisions will be taken which include a clear gender dimension with an objective to mainstream gender across all units of the NEC. Engagement with political parties and stakeholders will be undertaken with gender issues on the table and as we work to implement this policy we hope to set new benchmarks and standards in public life.



Cllr Jerome G. Korkoya, J.D
Chairman

Background

The National Elections Commission (NEC) is an autonomous public commission that is responsible for the conduct of elections for all elective public offices and the administration and enforcement of all electoral laws throughout the Republic of Liberia. The Commission is committed to building and strengthening of a democratic society and sustainable peace in Liberia through the conduct of free, fair, credible and transparent elections. This can only be a reality when all Liberians – women and men – have equal opportunities to engage in the electoral processes as voters, candidates, electoral staff or simply supporters of a political party.

A closer look at the participation of both men and women in the electoral process as candidates, voters and electoral staff, workers, observers and party agents reveals some gaps with lower percentage on the part of women. In 2011, women accounted for only 11 percent of the candidates contesting for Presidency, seats in the Senate and House of Representatives. As at 2016, women account for only 10 per cent of the members of the Senate and 11 per cent of the House of Representatives. The gender gap is significant both among the candidates and the elected representatives. Amongst the voters the gap is closer with 45 per cent among women in 2014 Special Senatorial Elections. However, few counties had lower female turn out such as in Margibi, 41 per cent, and River Cess, 41 per cent. Although, the gender gap may not be significant among voters, consistent efforts are necessary to address the gaps in the number of female candidates compared to male and the socio cultural barriers that pose challenges to women's political participation.

At NEC only 22 percent of the permanent staff is female. Only one of the 19 magistrates in the 15 counties is female. All the regional coordinators in the four regions are males. NEC recruited females in various temporary positions. According to NEC Human Resources (2016) in average about 30 percent women were recruited as polling staff. Most worthy of note is in Margibi County where 63 percent of those recruited were females. Among the national observers more than 40 percent were women. The extent to which women participated as party agents is not clear due to absence of data.

Policy Context

The development of NECs Gender Mainstreaming Policy is informed by Liberia's existing legal frameworks which include national and international imperatives. At the national level the policy is drawn based on the supreme law of the Republic of Liberia, the 1986 constitution, and the New Elections Law (2014) as amended. The policy also draws its inspiration from the National Gender Policy, (2009) of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, which was established by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection Act, enacted in (2001).

At the international and regional levels, Liberia has ratified the following instruments: the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), (1984), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), (2006), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), (1966), UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security (2000), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), (1995), UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, (1993), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), (2015). At the African regional level, Liberia is a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (ACHPRRWA), (2004) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), (2004).

NEC as the national election management body positions itself to fulfill the obligations in promoting democratic elections where women and men fully participate in electoral processes with their needs taken into account in the planning and administering of elections.

Rationale for the Gender Mainstreaming Policy

The Commission is in a unique position to play a leadership role in creating the conditions necessary for the equal participation of women and men in Liberia's electoral process. The Commission recognizes that gender inequality is one of the threats to Liberia's democracy and long-term development. In 2011, a Gender Section was established and the gender policy formulation process was put in place at NEC signifying the Commission's commitment to gender equality. This policy therefore serves as a framework for the commission in its mainstreaming effort internally and externally in its dealings with all electoral stakeholders. This policy will contribute to the deepening of democracy in Liberia by ensuring equal participation of women and men. It also helps to realize the aspirations of the National Gender Policy (2009). The policy is directed at key priority areas with four objectives. The objectives are matched with accompanying strategies. It will be accompanied by an implementation plan which includes a result framework, a work plan, means of measuring progress and a risk management plan.

Guiding Principles

The National Elections Commission, by adopting the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, is guided by the following fundamental principles:

- a. The policy is developed based on the supreme law of the Republic of Liberia, the Constitution, the New Election Laws 2015 (as amended), the National Gender Policy (2009) and key Liberian National Development Strategies and Policies as well as international Conventions and agreements that Liberia is party to;
- b. Advances that the equal participation of women and men is a fundamental human right and is an integral prerequisite for the delivery of free, fair and transparent elections and building a democratic Liberian society;
- c. Acknowledges that the society assigns roles, responsibilities and attributes to women and men, which create a gap and have an impact on the extent to which they are able to participate equally in electoral and other democratic governance processes;
- d. Builds on the desire of Liberians for an inclusive, equitable, free and accountable electoral process and the commitment of the Commission, its management and personnel to deliver on an effective, gender responsive, transparent and responsible electoral process;
- e. Advances that integrating gender perspectives into its institutional processes and electoral operations is critical for the creation of an institution that actively promotes gender equality;
- f. Advances a 50 – 50 Affirmative Action based on the Constitution which provides for equal participation of men and women as per Chapter III, on fundamental rights, Article II (b) All persons, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, creed, place of origin or political opinion, are entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, subject to such qualifications as provided for in this Constitution”.
- g. Intends to establish non-partisan partnerships with multiple state and non-state actors as integral to achieving the goal of this policy.

Policy Goal

The goal of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy is to contribute to achieving the equal participation and representation of Liberian women and men in all aspects of electoral process as voters, candidate, electoral staff observers, and party agents, amongst others.

Policy Objectives

NEC has identified four objectives which are based on its mandate as an election management body committed to a gender responsive electoral process.

- a. Ensure a gender responsive Commission.
- b. Build institutional capacity to promote gender mainstreaming in elections.
- c. Promote women's participation as voters, candidates and observers.
- d. Strengthen NEC gender mainstreaming mechanism.

Policy Implementation Plan

To further demonstrate the commitment of the Commission towards gender equality in the electoral process, an implementation plan has been developed to facilitate the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy.

The development of the implementation plan is based on the realization that a step by step plan on how to achieve gender mainstreaming will contribute to the realization of the policy objectives. It is also based on the conviction that an outline of the leadership commitment, necessary strategic partnership, and resources are prerequisites to the actualization of the policy. The implementation plan is also a tool that enables the commission to track progress and make necessary amendments. It also allows for periodic review and follow-up on lessons learned.

NEC's Commitment to the Policy

The National Elections Commission is fully committed to the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy. The commitment translates to human, financial and all other necessary resources including collaborating with all relevant electoral stakeholders to ensure the realization of the policy objectives. This will further enhance NEC's determination in leading the process towards a gender responsive electoral process.

Conclusion

NEC Gender Mainstreaming Policy has been adopted as a response to the existing gender gaps within the Commission and as a framework in leading towards a gender responsive electoral process. The process which culminated in the adoption of this policy commenced since 2013. The policy was achieved through the commitment of the leadership, personnel and extensive consultation within the Commission as well as with key electoral stakeholders. The technical support from the development partners contributed immensely especially in the finalization and launch of the policy.

Acknowledgment

The process of developing the NEC Gender Mainstreaming Policy under the leadership of the NEC Board of Commissioners, brought together many stakeholders including governmental institutions, civil society organizations, international and national development partners and key sections of the NEC. All stakeholders committed to promote gender equality discussed, deliberated and agreed on the main issues which are pertinent to the context of Liberia's electoral processes and women's political participation. Time and other resources invested into the discussions and debates to shape the agenda on promoting gender equality in electoral processes in Liberia, which enable the production of this policy document.

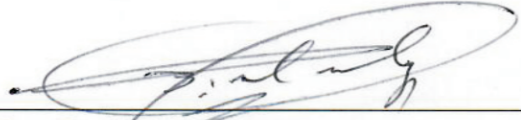
The National Elections Commission would like to thank its staff in particular the Gender Section for the leadership, guidance and coordination of the various processes of the development of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy. It was not an easy task as each organization had its priority areas of operation, but NEC managed to ensure all key stakeholders were involved in the process and today the policy document is available.

NEC would also like to thank all organizations and individuals involved in the different stages and processes of developing the NEC Gender Mainstreaming Policy. In particular, special thanks should go to UNDP Election Project for the technical and financial support, United Nations Women entity for Gender Equality (UN-Women), the European Union (EU), the Swedish Embassy, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Canada, who contributed to the achievements of having a policy document in place.

Lastly but not least The National Elections Commission would like to extend appreciation to all those whose names were not mentioned, but directly or indirectly contributed to the success of the tasks of the developing and printing of the policy document.

Adopted on This 31st Day of May, D 2017 Under Our Hands and Seal of the National Elections Commission (NEC)

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Hon. Boakai A. Dukuly
Commissioner

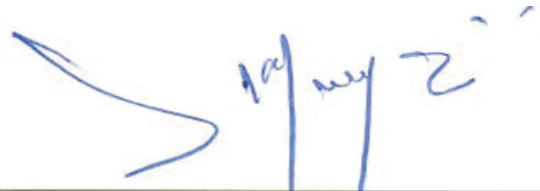


Hon. Davidetta Browne Lansanah
Commissioner



Hon. Jeanette A. Ebba-Davidson
Commissioner

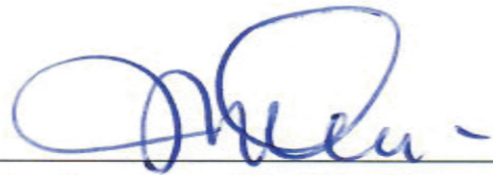
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Commissioner



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Commissioner



Hon. Sarah Jegede-Toe
Co- Chairperson



Cllr Jerome G. Korkoya, J.D
Chairman

