

National Electoral Commission



Strategic Plan Evaluation Report

Presented by NMF Consulting Group

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

NEC: National Electoral Commission

NISR: National Institute of Statistics for Rwanda

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

EDPRS Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy

FGD: Focus Group Discussions

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

CSO's: Civil Society Organisations

GoR: Government of Rwanda

NID: National Identity Department

Executive Summary

NMF Consulting Group was hired by NEC to conduct a formative evaluation of the 2012-2017 strategic plan. Drawing from a desk review, interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, the evaluation examined NEC's strategic plan on five key areas: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The evaluation team rated NEC's strategic plan as well implemented and good in structure overall – on average, across all criteria, the programs in the strategic plan are meeting expectations as defined by performance criteria. Further, none of the program categories in the strategic plan evaluation were ranked “needs improvement”. This finding is a summation of the following findings by evaluation criteria:

We find that NEC's strategic plan is relevant, meaning that the NEC's strategic plan is exceeding expectations. Specifically, the strategic plan is rates very good in its clarity and logic. It is straightforward to understand the relationship between 1) the expected outcomes from short term through to longer term; and 2) between outputs and outcomes. Outcomes appear very realistic. Assumptions are mostly included, and are explicit and relevant.

We find that NEC's strategic plan is efficient. NEC has put in place a strong management structure aimed at success and efficiency at both the program and activity levels. All NEC's programs have monitoring plans that have been put in place during the design phase. The monitoring plans include an identification of the risks and mitigation measures for the implementation of the strategic plan. The NEC team is proactive in monitoring implementation and progress, as well as in enlisting support to overcome any challenges. We further find that the implementation of the strategic plan exceeds expectations by managing relationships with key stakeholders and partners proactively

In the category of effectiveness, we find that NEC's strategic plan has been well implemented with a majority 80 percent of outcomes/targets are achieved in implementation process of the strategic plan. At the time of evaluation, about 20% of programs reflected a gender outcome under implementation of the strategic plan. NEC could exceed expectations if it continues toward greater gender integration in

all of its programs and elaborate them more into activities. In implementing the strategic plan, NEC has a funding limitation that hinders the accomplishment of all it's actively on a bounded timeframe.

We find that NEC's strategic plan has had an impact on the population and on the country as a whole. There appears to have been strong intended or unintended progress towards impacts 70 percent. NEC is on track to meet its strategic targets. We estimate that in 2017, NEC would have delivered on most of its targets as stipulated in the strategic plan. In the next coming phase, NEC will focus more on the targets that were moderately achieved.

In the category of sustainability, we find that NEC's strategic plan is moderately sustainable. NEC has made substantial investments in institutional strengthening and capacity building of its employees and volunteers. However, the majority of NEC programs do not have a sustainability plan that outlines how necessary activities will be conducted in future, and by whom in terms of funding. Furthermore, in many cases no different sources of financing have been identified that will support the ongoing implementation of the strategic plan.

The evaluation found several achievements under section 5.1, lessons documented under section 5.2 and proposes several recommendations under section 5.3 to improve NEC's implementation of the strategic plan in the next upcoming phase.

1. Introduction

Rwanda is one of the best performing countries in Africa and an example of success in post-conflict reconstruction (Bigsten and Isaksson 2008). Following the devastating effects of the genocide against the Tutsis on Rwandan economy in 1994, the government embarked on an extensive reconstruction program based on sound economic policies, peace and stability. The consequences of the 1994 genocide remain a central feature of Rwanda's political and social landscape, but new institutions and elections have ushered in a more promising era. Decentralization seen as pivotal to the dismantling of an authoritarian has brought the services closer to local population.

As stipulated in article 1 of the 2015 amended Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, "All powers derives from the people; national sovereignty belongs to the people who shall exercise it directly by way of referendum or through their representatives". In order to conduct a democratic process an institution in charge of organizing and ensuring the reliability of elections is required, one, which enables the citizens to vote in order to entrust power to their freely chosen representatives.

In accordance with this constitutional requirement to give the people the right to freely vote their leaders, the Government of Rwanda put in place the National Electoral Commission. This was created under article 24 of the Arusha Peace Accord, signed on 4 August 1993 between the Government of Rwanda of that time and the Rwandese Patriotic Front, pertaining to power sharing. The National Electoral Commission was formally instituted by law N° 39/2000 of 28 November 2000 which set out its organization and functions. In terms of the structure of the NEC, it has a seven-member Commission, including the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. At least two of the seven members must be lawyers and at least 30 percent of the Commission must be women. The Commission serves a five-year mandate, which is renewable once.

To inform the design of that next phase and assess its impact to date, NEC has contracted NMF Consulting Group to carry out a formative and summative evaluation of the 2012-2017 strategic plan. The audience for this evaluation is both NEC and other stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations, Political Organizations, Media, Development partners and others. This report presents the findings of the NEC's 2012-2017 strategic plan evaluation that are based on the five axes of intervention under the following objectives;

- Strengthen the electoral system to provide citizens with a process by which they are able to choose freely their leaders
- Promote democratic values and reinforce participation of people from all walks of life in the electoral process
- Optimise the performance of National Electoral Commission through the high quality of performance of its resources, know how, management style, shared values and organization.

The evaluation team was composed of a balance of individuals who had various experiences with evaluations. This arrangement allowed the evaluation team to quickly get up to speed with the complexity of the NEC's programme operations, while having a bias-free perspective. The team had an two evaluation specialists who brought contextual knowledge and three others who were engaged in data collection with local language skills. The team comprised of Rukundo Bosco Johnson, Team Leader, Ngamije Festo deputy Team, Ntaganda Solomon, Uwibambe Adelaine and Mugiraneza Isaac who all engaged in data collection. The evaluation lasted for approximately 40 days. It was initiated with contract signing on May 11, 2016 and was finalized on June 27th, 2016.

1.1 Rationale for evaluation of 2012-2017 NEC Strategic Plan

- Develop a methodology for meeting the requirements of the Terms of Reference.
- Assess the overall implementation status and achievement of the Strategic Plan in comparison with what was planned.
- Identify difficulties encountered during implementation of 2012-2017 NEC Strategic Plan.

- Engage NEC Commissioners, Staff, Volunteers and other Stakeholders participation to the extent possible in the evaluation process.
- Formulate recommendations and strategies of implementation for the remaining period of 2012-2017 NEC Strategic Plan.
- Formulate recommendations that can form basis for the next NEC Strategic Plan.
- Make presentation to the National Electoral Commission and key partners on results of Evaluation.
- Present to the National Electoral Commission 3 hard copies and a softy copy of the final Evaluation Report taking into consideration all observations formulated

1.2 Methodology & Approach of the evaluation

The overall approach of the evaluation was to consult as widely as possible throughout all stages of the assignment including assessment and review of key NEC outputs. To keep the NEC fully engaged in the process the Consultants carried out interviews with NEC Commissioners, staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders that were identified in the evaluation process as well. To this end, a stakeholder's workshop involving key stakeholders prior to submission of the Final Report was conducted for triangulation and sourcing additional inputs as well as developing ownership and commitment to the process on the part of the various participants. The Consultants conducted extensive discussions, assessments and reviews of existing NEC 2012-2017 Strategic plan

The approach used both qualitative and quantitative methods using primary and secondary data. The methodology was based on an iterative design to capture the perspectives of all stakeholders, including NEC staff, and partners, as well as other stakeholders. The evaluation methodology comprised of (1) a desk review of the strategic plan and other NEC documents (2) in-country data collection through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Thorough review of existing strategic plan documents including program and activity reports, and action plan implementation

1.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were carried out with key stakeholders both at the levels of policy formulation and implementation oversight as well as at policy implementation levels. Some of the stakeholders that were interviewed included CSOs, Political organizations, Development Partners and media. The interviews were conducted using a developed interview guide that was approved by NEC.

1.2.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The Focus Group Discussions were carried out on the group basis and other NEC stakeholders. Focus group discussions were specifically targeting the big number of NEC volunteers who were brought together at the selected districts to have a discussion. The selections of the volunteers were specifically done at the district level.

1.2.3 Sampling Method

The sampling technique helped in the selection of the key respondents that provided information necessary for the judgment of the strategic plan's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Sampling used was purposive to ensure that representatives of all relevant stakeholders and key informants are included. Participants for the focus group discussion selected for the evaluation were among NEC volunteers in 4 districts that is: Gicumbi, Bugesera, Rwamagana, Huye.

Sampling was purposive and this was oriented to specific target groups like NEC commissioners, technical staff at the headquarters and in the districts, volunteers and from stakeholders. The selection of respondents was carried out in the four provinces.

1.2.4 Evaluation Challenges

The evaluation process of the 2012-2017 strategic plan has had several limitations. First, the findings from the beneficiaries are derived from a small number of individual beneficiaries.¹ This decision was taken for timing and budgetary reasons, as well as the practical issue that in some of NEC's extended activities in the whole

¹The findings were derived from reports produced and discussions and interviews that the evaluation team had with NEC staff, implementing partners, civil society organizations and volunteers.

country there were few beneficiaries that could be interviewed. The very short timeline given from contract signing to the fieldwork start offered little to no time to receive enough feedback from NEC on the design of the evaluation materials. Ultimately, delays to kick off with fieldwork were inevitable. Finally, the evaluation team focused on limiting the length of interviews and discussions with stakeholders to avoid over-burdening respondents.

The evaluation team noted that these aforementioned constraints could result in reduced coverage of stakeholders and insufficient matching of field research instruments to evaluation needs. To mitigate these risks, the team broadened the interview targets (ultimately meeting with over 80 individuals), used call-backs of subjects met during the evaluation process to ensure limited duplication of data requests, prioritized documentation during initial review, and adjusted the interview templates during the field work to match the strategic plan details and evaluation methodology.

2. NEC's Strategic Plan and its Development Context

The second strategic plan was developed by NEC and covered the period 2012-2017 and the implementation period was from 1st July 2012 to June 30 2017, in line with the financial year of the Government of Rwanda. This strategic plan was developed based on the success of the first one and this was refined to correct for weaknesses in performance, including strategy definition, deployment and execution. The strategic plan was developed to facilitate NEC be able to extract annual action plans and implement as per the mandate placed on it(NEC) by the constitution.

2.1. Strategic pillars of NEC's strategic plan

The 2012-2017 strategic plan presents an analysis of the mission internal and external environment of NEC. It is developed based on five axes identified by NEC to efficiently fulfill its mission. The five axes are:

- i. Prepare and organise free, fair and transparent elections. This axis includes preparing and conducting legislative elections, local elections and presidential elections.
- ii. Civic Education: The axis involves voter education program and covers;

- Strengthening sustainable relationship and synergy with other election stakeholders (CSO's, Political parties, Community based organizations, the Media, etc.)
 - Delivering civic and voter education programs based on national civic education policy
 - Creation of regional democracy and good governance training center
 - Annual stakeholder civic education assessment workshops and seminars
 - Creation and strengthening of national education technical and steering committees as provided in the national civic education policy.
- iii. Reinforce relations and partnership with other institutions. This involves partnership with local and international election stakeholders and institutions. The main area of orientation for this axis is;
- Put in place a NEC customer care service delivery and public relations policy and strategy
 - Strengthen NEC's communication and information strategy
 - Hold annual Democracy and Public Interaction week to show case NEC activities, achievements and sensitize the public on their roles in the electoral process
 - Organize at least two regional conferences on democracy governance and elections to share experiences and best practices with national and international election management professionals and research institutions
 - Publication of videos of NEC's activities and events on the websites
 - Put in place an appropriate notice board for information sharing
 - Increase print and circulation of NEC magazine
- iv. Reinforcing national electoral commission institutional and human resources. This axis aims to strengthen institutional and human resources development support program to have a long term professional impact. The main areas of program orientation are;
- Training of NEC staff in BRIDGE comprehensive course
 - Building of 10 NEC zonal offices and equipping them to handle decentralised electoral activities

- Acquisition of at least two new printer machines to increase capacity of existing machine to effectively handle NEC's printing requirements.
 - Conducting a high level profitability study of NEC printer with an aim of reducing NEC dependence
 - Training of NEC staff in line with their job descriptions
- v. Capacity building in ICT
- Modernization of ICT equipment and software
 - Offsite disaster recovery for the security of election database
 - Installation of NEC own voter registration network at district level using fiber
 - Automatic data synchronization with NID citizen registry
 - Mobile electoral transfer system
 - Electronic voter registration
 - Strengthening ICT technology in election management system
 - Installation of a nonvoting list system
 - Installation of finger print biometric and electronic cards system

2.2 Main stakeholders

The main stakeholders in the NEC's implementation of the strategic plan include: Government institutions, Rwanda Governance Board, MINECOFIN, the media, Civil Society Organizations, Political parties, International development partners, volunteers from the various provinces.

3. Evaluation Findings of National Electoral Commission Strategic plan

This section discusses the strategic plan formulation, ownership by stakeholders, implementation approach, linkages between programs, indicators and other interventions and the achievements vis a vis the expected results for both NEC and implementation partners.

3.1. Strategic plan design

The strategic plan was designed by NEC for the period of five years from 2012-2017 which is an institution that has a mandate to prepare the whole electoral apparatus, ensure that elections are conducted in a free, fair and transparent way

and to conceive and implement and a civic and voter education program. The strategic plan was designed and follows an objective oriented plan that derives an axis of intervention. Under the axis of intervention, the strategic plan is developed strategies and expected results with performance indicators aligned.

3.2 Implementation Approach

NEC implemented the strategic plan through its respective units, coordination personnel, and the executive secretary as the head of the technical team followed up with implementation progress on a regular basis. The strategic plan implementation was scaled down into annual action plans, which indicate the annual targets and activities to deliver output. NEC prepared annual progress reports comprising off financial and activity reports. The strategic plan had review meetings annually to review the implementation progress and provide guidance towards achievement of NEC objectives and targets.

3.3 Strategic plan implementation status versus planned activities and expected with outputs

The table below presents the strategic plan achievements in comparison with what was planned in the strategic plan document and the accomplished as well as the realization rate and strategic plan's contributions to the strengthening of the NEC mandate.

Table2: Strategic plan achievements vs. expected outputs as per set indicators

| Narrative Summary | Indicators | Key achievements/Progress | Observation |
|--|---|---|--|
| Global objective 1: Strengthen the electoral system to provide citizens with a process by which they are freely their leaders. | | | |
| Outcome1: Support the electoral process through coherent legal instruments | | | |
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laws governing elections adapted to electoral practices, accessible, easily usable on management processes. 2. Reviewed NEC instructions are available ready for publication | <p>Amended electoral law translated into three languages and approved by competent organs</p> <p>Reviewed NEC instructions published and translated in three official languages</p> | <p>In 2012-2013, NEC prepared a law governing elections but the year ended before it was out in the gazette. The same year NEC revised the instructions election orders governing the chamber of deputies. NEC prepared different laws governing elections, in different years. NEC among other laws prepared law No 03/2015 of 23/07/2015 and upon endorsement, the law was shared with different stakeholders engaged in elections.</p> <p>A communication strategy was developed by NEC and election manual developed for stakeholders and voters. In 2013-2014 quarter one, NEC provided training to the different categories of the citizens on the electoral processes and procedures especially for the parliamentarians held in September, 2014</p> | <p>As per set indicators, this output was achieved at 100%. However, delays were observed in delaying to publish laws in the official Gazette.</p> |

Outcome2: Prepare, organize and supervise legislative, presidential and municipal elections in a free, fair and transparent way

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Electoral staff members and the population are trained on the revised electoral law and related instructions 2. Key stakeholders trained on the revised electoral law 3. NEC get on time financial resources needed to acquire election materials and service 4. NEC has the capacity to conceive and print voting ballots 5. Elections are conducted timely in accordance with the legal framework | <p>Number of people per category who attended training sessions</p> <p>Necessary electoral materials and logistics acquired and in place at least one month before election</p> <p>Voting ballots printed and distributed on time</p> <p>Polling staff facilitated in meals, transport, and communication</p> | <p>NEC completed the revision on the law governing elections. The law was publicly introduced and the electoral staff trained. Key stakeholders were trained especially the civil society organizations and political parties.</p> <p>Financial resources were limited in the process of implementing the strategic plan. Resources mainly come from the government treasury, supplemented by small amounts from development partners. NEC had its own printing machine but the government later took this to other use. This hampered the printing process.</p> | <p>These outputs were to some extent achieved. Training was carried out, to both key stakeholders, the population and the electoral staff. However, insufficient budgets hampered the realization of the outputs effectively. Late delivery of voting materials to some polling stations was also affecting effectiveness of voting processes. While NEC owned its printery, it would be easier to provide ballots on time. At the moment is a huge challenge</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

| Narrative Summary | Indicators | Key achievements/Progress | Observation |
|--|---|---|--|
| Global objective 2: Promote democratic values and reinforce the participation of people from all walks of life in the electoral process | | | |
| Outcome1: Reinforce the civic education program to ensure citizen's better participation in the electoral process | | | |
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey to evaluate citizens training needs is conducted 2. Training programs developed 3. Women, youth and disabled actively participate in electoral process | <p>Survey on citizens training needs produced</p> <p>Number of training manuals developed</p> <p>Number of training sessions conducted compared with target groups</p> <p>Evolution of women, youth, and disabled participation to different election</p> <p>Number of women, youth and disabled across all elections</p> | <p>Training programs were developed by NEC, for all levels if citizens. And training manuals were produced to facilitate sensitizations of the population on the electoral process. The population was sensitised on the electoral process. Women and youth and the disabled participated actively in the election at all level (youth councils, parliamentary elections and presidential elections) the youth and women took the lead the recently concluded referendum.</p> <p>The same categories ow women, youth, and disabled have aspired at different electoral levels and have been elected to represent the population.</p> <p>NEC has made progress in communication of election results that enable provisional and final results to be announced in 24 hours after elections.</p> | <p>The results/outputs have been realized at a good level. The training manuals are not sufficient for all the population and training does not cover and is not delivered to the whole population. Participation of women, youth and disabled in the electoral process is not indicated by disaggregated data. An improvement in the communication of election results has been realized, with provisional and final results being announced in 24 hours.</p> |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Outcome2: Reinforce NEC capacity to measure citizens' satisfaction regarding electoral process | | | |
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <p>1. Based on research findings, develop strategies to promote democratic values and find solutions and to weaknesses identified</p> | <p>Number of research recommendations implemented</p> | <p>NEC in 2013-2014 under the financial support of UNDP carried out a research study on the training on the electoral process. The findings indicated that training on the electoral process provided tangible results on the electoral process in Rwanda</p> | <p>This output was achieved highly and rated very good based on the findings from the evaluation. The youth in the Diaspora did not get the training on the electoral process. This has just begun to be implemented in the last two years.</p> |
| Global objective 3: Optimize the performance of NEC through the high quality performance of its resources, know how, management style shared values and organization | | | |
| Outcome1: Reinforce partnership with stakeholders in the electoral process | | | |
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <p>1. NEC's working relationship with key stakeholders is improved.</p> <p>2. Key stakeholders play an active role in electoral process</p> <p>3. NEC relationship with EMBs and institutions relating to democracy strengthened</p> | <p>Number of MoU's signed with key stakeholders</p> | <p>In 2012-2013, NEC focused on the working relationship with stakeholder both local and international. NEC received different partners who came to NEC for consultations and study tours. A few MoU's were signed, with some development partners like UNDP.</p> | <p>This output has been achieved at a very good. Partners are still limited and this limits NEC activities to be maximized.</p> |

| Outcome2: Reinforce capacities and skills of the NEC's human resources | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEC staff are managed through result oriented system 2. NEC staff are more effective and efficient 3. NEC staff members managed to visit other countries 4. The training program is the outcome of the evaluation of staff members' skills | <p>At least 80% of operational objectives have been attained</p> <p>Level of performance of NEC staff</p> <p>An annual training program exist and shows training activities to be carried out and targets</p> <p>Necessary equipment, material and services are physically available</p> | <p>NEC conducted training and managed to secure 902 number of volunteers in 2012-2013. This number has steadily increased and facilitated NEC in the electoral process. Approximately 32 NEC staff members were trained, some locally others abroad. This provided a level of capacity that has see NEC achieve its objectives.</p> <p>In comparison to the 2012-2013, NEC has build capacity of its staff by having more qualified personnel. At present, NEC has 41 staff with Bachelor's Degree while 8 have Master's Degrees.</p> | <p>The results were achieved moderately. While training of NEC staff has been carried out as planned in the strategic plan, their facilitation in terms of material has been limited. NEC staff operating in districts do not have enough equipment like laptops, vehicles. Volunteers are also not well facilitated in terms of communication, transport and allowances in their support in the electoral process.</p> |

| Outcome3: Equip NEC with modern and adequate service and material resources to enable it better fulfil its mission | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEC has equipment, material and services needed specific to its activities 2. NEC has a functional modern printing house generating income for its activities 3. The documentation center operates efficiently 4. NEC has an action plan aligned the period covering the strategic plan, thus a tool for mobilization of funds | <p>Necessary material, equipment and services physically available</p> <p>Feasibility study on how to modernize and increase NEC printing house is conducted</p> <p>Acquired new printer machine and accessories</p> | <p>NEC managed to purchase its own printing machine to facilitate its activities. This was supposed to be expanded in the strategic plan and the printer was used to generate income for NEC as a supplement to the huge budget demanded. A documentation center is functional, and annual action plans are developed with their budget lines.</p> | <p>These results were attained moderately. The printing house has been taken away from NEC, and this creates further problems in delivery of their services. The printer did not generate enough internal funds. The documentation isn't electronic yet.</p> |
| Outcome 4: Computerization of the electoral list | | | |
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An electoral list updated 2. Voters have cards | <p>The final updated electoral list is available.</p> <p>100 percent of voters have voter cards</p> | <p>The lists of voters were updated and voter cards issued by NEC early enough before the elections. Voter lists are updated on every election that is planned and new voter cards issued to new population that attained the voting age.</p> <p>Voters are able to access voter list services on line and NEC has a permanent voters' register that is only updated every year without fresh voter registration</p> | <p>Outputs in this outcome were achieved moderately to the expectation. NEC performed well in this outcome and needs further advanced system to link the still living voters and the deceased from the sector level.</p> |

| Outcome5: Modernization of ICT Equipment | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEC has a number of sufficient and modern servers 2. NEC has a sufficient number of functional computers 3. High degree of security 4. Data processing is facilitated 5. Well operating computer system all time | <p>Six new servers acquired in the period of the strategic plan</p> <p>The number of acquired computers and other peripherals compared with expressed needs</p> <p>Percentage of reduction of critical incidents</p> | <p>NEC facilitated the acquiring of servers but not all the six as planned. The number of computers purchased was small and the operating system is functional though not efficient.</p> | <p>The modernisation of ICT is still below the required standards, the whole operating ICT system is not effective and computer accessibility by NEC staff retards service delivery and mandate fulfilment. These outputs were realised moderately than anticipated.</p> |
| Outcome6: Modernization of Software | | | |
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Registration cards, and copy rights acquired for software's to enable NEC adapt software to specific work of the commission 2. All electoral systems can be computerized 3. Develop automatic synchronization with NID citizen registry 4. Develop mechanisms for offsite disaster recovery for security of election database | <p>Number of software licenses purchased</p> <p>State of art software among which a database management software and stock</p> <p>Synchronization of data is functional</p> <p>Voter registration functional at district level</p> | <p>The number of software purchased was limited to the planned ones and synchronization of data with NID has not been finalized. Voter registration at district level has been implemented.</p> | <p>In the modernization of software, NEC has implemented this outcome moderately. There are still challenges in acquiring the required software and synchronization of data is not operational. Voter registration at district is being done but not in a computerized system.</p> |

| Outcome7: Reinforce IT capacity to deliver additional support to process | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Outputs/results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEC uses IT in all phases of elections 2. Staff members form ICT visit other countries with computerized system | <p>Additional IT applications developed and used in managing elections</p> <p>A minimum of two staff from ICT unit visit at least two countries.</p> | <p>NEC possesses an ICT unit, which is functional at the headquarters level and with some extensions. ICT staff have been equipped with training both locally and in other countries.</p> | <p>The use of ICT in all phases of elections is not yet applicable and functional. Votes are tallied and entered in the system manually. The extension of the IT system to districts is still not functional. NEC has moderately implemented this outcome ad the results have not been effectively and efficiently achieved.</p> |

3.4 Financial management

This section provides an overview of the budget allocation per each financial year since the beginning of implementing NEC's 2012-2017 strategic plan. The implementation of the strategic by NEC follows the annual financial year that starts in July and ends in June. The execution of the planned budget against the actual budget has left NEC with a huge deficit. In each financial year, NEC Has always had a deficit and this has greatly affected the implementation of the strategic plan and realisation of its outputs. At the time of evaluation of NEC's strategic plan, the actual budget for 2015-2016 was not available and could be incorporated in the next evaluation. Similarly, NEC will still be implementing its strategic plan next financial year 2016-2017 with lots of expected outcomes. NEC is preparing for the presidential elections and this will require huge amounts of funding.

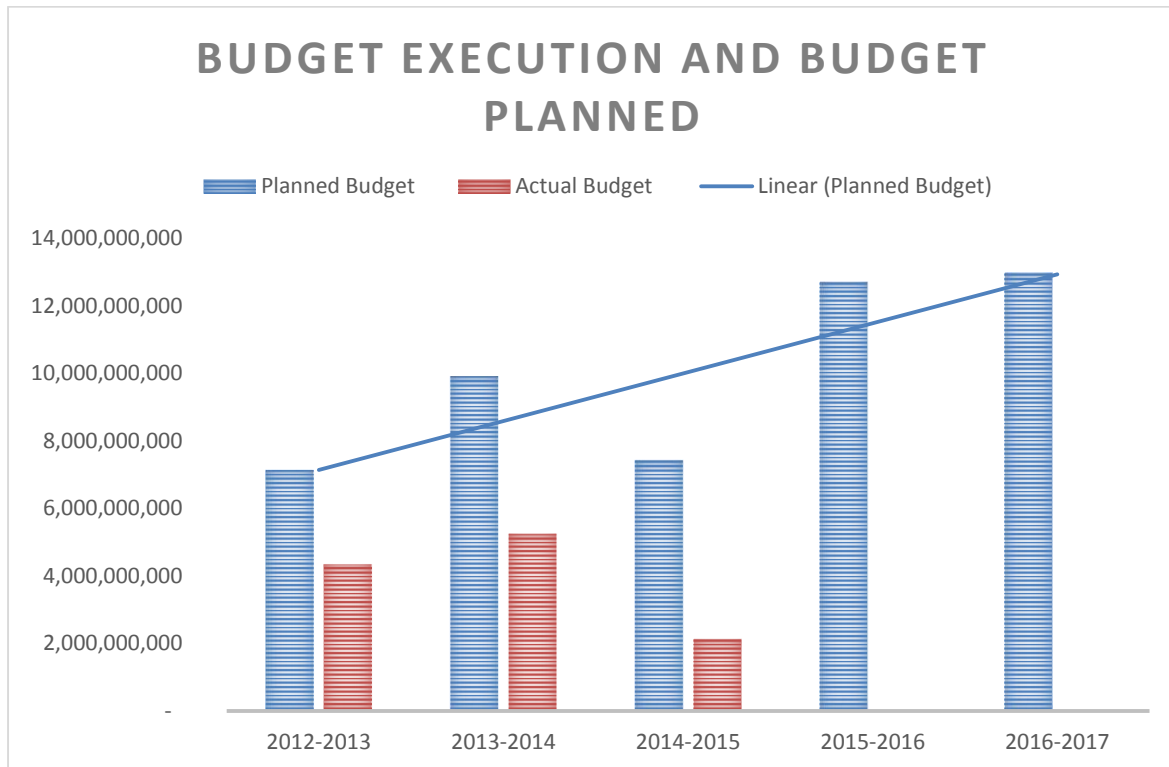
Table1: Budget execution vs. planned budget per outcomes and outputs

| Planned Budget Vs Budget execution Plan | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Financial Years | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 |
| Planned Budget | 7 136 054 882 | 9 913 239 743 | 7 434 377 217 | 12 708 259 945 | 12 976 852 762 |
| Actual Budget | 4 338 673 306 | 5 236 571 105 | 2 130 711 077 | 0 | 0 |
| Deficit | (2 797 381 576) | (4 676 668 638) | (5 303 666 140) | 12 708 259 945 | 12 976 852 762 |

Source: NEC annual reports

For the effective and sufficient implementation of the electoral commission activities, there is need to avail more funding to NEC and solicit for more funding from other partners. The variation in actual spending and planned spending humiliates the functional formation of NEC and retards the implementation of the target objectives. This has been the reason why NEC has not achieved some of its targets like ICT extension and software purchases. The graph below indicates the variations in actual spending and budgeted spending.

Figure 1: Graph showing actual spending against planned spending



Source: NEC's annual reports

3.5 Relevance

The evaluation team applied the rubric to the overall strategic plan and also to a subset of the programs. The evaluation team committed to and ultimately assessed the whole strategic plan and annual action plans. In specific, we find that the strategic plan's Clarity and Logic is well developed and Contribution to NEC and Partners is evident. The strategy is well aligned with NEC's objectives, the Rwandan government's policies and strategies, as well as beneficiary needs.²

National Electoral Commissions' portfolio demonstrates a high degree of coherence. There were no cases where strategies were contradictory in their purpose. NEC has been intentional in their efforts to do this and eliminate initiatives that were not aligned with its vision, objectives or goal. A major contributor to this success was the

² NEC's strategy was assessed in detail and stakeholders consulted during this evaluation. The strategy was assessed using a review of various reports and other documentation.

revision of NEC's log-frame in the mid-term review of the strategic plan and identifying potential areas for improvement assess progress, in abide to achieve set objectives.

We also find that NEC's approach is well aligned with both the institution and Government's agendas to organize free, fair and transparent elections, increased civic education, for growth and prosperity. NEC's interventions target a wide variety of stakeholders, including the civil society organizations, volunteers, political parties, other government institutions, parastatals and development partners. NEC's participatory approach and multiple review processes of their action plans over the years, have ensured that stakeholders' interests at the regional and national level remain at the heart of the NEC's mandate and are reflected in the strategy's work plans – particularly in a context where priorities shift over time.

Furthermore, in cases where discrepancies among strategies between NEC are the citizen's and government have been identified, they have been rectified with a proper solution. For example, the citizens signed for a referendum, GoR opted to implement the citizens' request together with NEC, and this was implemented even though there were limited funds, with short notice.

Whereas the rationale for NEC's orientation centered significantly around electoral process, this is fundamental but does not link directly other government strategies (e.g. the EDPRS) and consequently the NEC's log-frame. NEC justifies this in terms of the difficulty in measuring the linkages between government strategies and its efforts. This does create the risk that by excluding a linkage from NEC's overall results framework, some of NEC's strategies and programs may not ultimately contribute to this aim.

3.6 Efficiency

NEC has put in place a strong management structure. The evaluation data suggests that all staff have a strong command of the strategic and operational issues concerning the strategic plan and its implementation. In addition, NEC's working culture is both proactive and dynamic. NEC leadership is alerted to potential and

emerging issues in a timely manner, through frequent communication and the technical officials follow management (financial and otherwise) guidelines to address challenges to implementation of the strategic plan quickly.

In addition, the flexible approach that NEC has adopted in implementing activities in the strategic plan has allowed to adapt to an ever-changing environment with ease. Flexibility, in terms of activities and finances, have contributed to the success of many of its objectives. Partners that were consulted during this evaluation have most of the time recognized NEC's flexible and hands-on approach to strategy design and management. NEC has maintained a flexible approach in its collaboration with the different partners. Activities to be undertaken, results to be pursued and targets to be achieved have been discussed with some partners prior to implementation.

The findings also show that NEC staff manage relationships with key stakeholders and partners in a proactive and participatory manner. This has been done through the development of a robust strategic management system with innovative tools like the monitoring and evaluation plans being integrated into the work plans. All stakeholders report having a common understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, thus enabling open and transparent communication. Such working relationships are systematically sustained through technical and NEC's Board committee meetings that are held periodically with all key stakeholders. NEC leadership uses these meetings to monitor implementation and gain insights, lessons learned, recommendations and actions to address any outstanding issues, including financial and administrative challenges. Several partners have mentioned the fact that NEC staff interact with them during the implementation of their activities in the strategic plan. Most of them have appreciated the consistent guidance and swift feedback.

NEC has made strong progress achieving translating inputs into pre-established outputs, including:

- The election of Mediators committees was prepared and conducted. A total number of 17,948 members of mediators were elected at cell and sector levels.

- Local elections were prepared and conducted as per the strategic plan, where 274,146 local leaders in both local and special councils from the village to the district level were elected.
- The annual electoral civic education program was prepared and evaluated. Civic education training manuals were prepared and printed and evaluated prior to elections at all levels.

In fact, across all NEC set targets in the strategic plan, more than 80% of outputs have been achieved.³ In addition, NEC's M&E system ensures that activities are monitored on a regular basis and provides technical guidance and timely data. NEC's reporting system has also contributed to the efficient delivery of the strategy and activities within. Most partners, including the media, civil society organizations, volunteers have testified that they receive feedback from the electoral commission within three months after the elections are carried out.

Almost all activities have a final evaluation carried out upon completion.⁴The findings are then used to inform future decision making. For example, the monitoring framework used covers the whole implementation of the strategy, and has a component to monitor the implementation of annual action plans. While NEC's M&E and data-driven implementation are substantial, the diversity of intervention and coverage of the whole population present challenges in the final evaluation. Findings show that some targets only provide estimates but not exact figures of the achievements. Additional monitoring tools have yet to be put in place, such as the complete use of ICT in all NEC's programs. Such issues can undermine the efficiency of the programs' delivery in the medium to long run.

There is strong evidence of the innovations and/or best practices that have been employed by NEC especially in procurement, program design and implementation; the design of strategic plans to inform interventions, and implementation, the use continuous monitoring and evaluation, communicate progress on implementation and manage challenges. There has been the use of a variety of technical assistance,

³This estimate is portfolio-wide, based on a review of monitoring plans and reports, action plan reports and annual reviews.

⁴At the time of this evaluation, 90 percent of the annual activities completed had an evaluation carried out.

including volunteers, to improve capacity and sustainability within provinces and down in districts.⁵

Low number of staff at NEC has been cited as a major challenge affecting the efficiency in the implementation of the strategic plan. In response, NEC has provided support through a package of soliciting support from volunteers and provides further training to the available staff, even though the training is not enough. NEC has also requested technical assistance to complement grant funds to support financial management as well as their interventions from few partners. NEC's support-inclusive institution building for its employees and volunteers help reinforce program efficiency.

Overall, the evaluation team found that NEC'S strategic plan is efficient. In particular, the team has determined that the Adaptive Management of Plans and Budgets is efficient and the Relationship Management and Communication was well implemented and Translating Inputs to Outputs at the program level well articulated.

3.7 Effectiveness

The evaluation team found that NEC's strategies are mostly on track and will likely achieve their planned outputs by the time implementation is completed. NEC has been able to achieve 50-75% of its outcomes/targets as outlined in its results framework.⁶ Many of the NEC's key targets are currently being exceeded, including:

- Preparing and developing election calendar
- Preparing and organising all elections in the country
- Training, informing and sensitization of NEC commissioners, NEC Staff and the general public
- Voter listed prepared and updated at all levels
- Electoral civic program well developed and implemented

⁵ Volunteers contribute to sustainability and contribute to the implementation of NEC's programs especially in elections. This reduces financial strain on NEC.

⁶ At the time of this evaluation, most NEC's strategies had been implemented. Given the logic displayed in their annual action plan, the evaluation team think that all targets will likely be achieved.

- Partnerships with stakeholders developed and well managed

In order to attain its objectives, have developed partnerships with local institutions. NEC relies on a demand-driven approach and what the law provides and requires them to do, in that activities are normally based on the law and some proposed by citizens. NEC's local partners include the civil society organizations, the media, the districts, development partners, among others. Engagement with diverse partners has supported the realization of some targets.

It is also unclear how results from the implementation of the strategic plan have affected men and women differently, as gender is not elaborated in the strategic plan, and how it could be included in NEC's activities. Apart from what the law stipulates in composition of the elected (where 30 percent should at least be women), the real targets do not elaborate much on gender. Overall, the team assessed that the strategic plan is effective. Specifically, we find that implementation of the strategic plan is good at Translating Outputs to Outcomes.

3.8. Impact

The understanding and participation in the electoral process by the citizens, the preparation and undertaking of these elections as indicated in the strategic plan is the measure that NEC has chosen to judge its impact. The adoption of a results framework indicates that the strategic plan's impact indicators and targets are realised and through activities. Consequently, it is not possible to directly assess performance on all of the indicators given that targets were set based on indicators. However, NEC has implemented some activities that were not originally in the strategic plan for example the recent referendum. Overall, the evaluation team assessed that the NEC's strategic plan has had an impact on the end beneficiaries who are the citizens of Rwanda. This has been achieved where the population has managed to participate effectively in the electoral process and managed to elect their leaders.

4. Analysis of Sustainability and Opportunities for Scaling-Up

4.1 Sustainability

The evaluation criteria define sustainability as having clear, specific and relevant activities included to address sustainability. Monitoring of the sustainability of outcomes is undertaken (or planned). In the best examples, monitoring of outcomes goes beyond the strategic plan timeframe. A clear and comprehensive continuity strategy is included in the design and is being planned to date. The strategy includes a clear description of the upcoming strategic plan which will be based on the achievements from the current one. Responsibilities for developing the next strategic plan have been thought about and are outlined. Dependence on public funds is being well studied and self sustainability has been a priority for NEC in the next strategy plan. NEC plans to secure funds in adequate time before implementing its activities to make sure they are smooth and well delivered.

Overall, the team found the NEC's strategic plan is sustainable and could be a benchmark for the development of the next strategic plan. While the majority of the NEC programs do not have a sustainability plan, much of the results achieved (or to be achieved) under the strategic plan will be sustainable in the medium- to long-term. Whereas NEC relies mostly on government funding, it obtains support from some partners. The citizens themselves have actively supported NEC's programs and an increased number of volunteers can be an evidence-based example. Plans are in advanced stages of soliciting for more resources from local partners as well as international to be able to implement the next phase of the strategic plan. To encourage sustainability, NEC should seek to leverage investment from others sources especially in ICT infrastructure, which is vital in the implementation of the strategic plan.

NEC's aim is to improve the sustainability of its work by building capacity of its employees, volunteers and partners including civil society groups. By developing and reinforcing institutional structures, NEC aims to increase partners' ability to fulfill their mandates and maintain their institutional efficacy without donor support. With respect to human capacity development, the evaluation team recognizes that across almost all outputs in the strategic plan, a capacity-building component is included even

though the limited number of employees limits implementation of the component. This constrains employee activities and they are always overloaded with different work. NEC must seek to mainstream a sustainability strategy across its entire portfolio to ensure that activities will continue to operate in whole or in part beyond the current strategic plan's time frame.

Given that the NEC frequently implements Government of Rwanda activities and those of the citizens, the sustainability of the work done by NEC depends on the political ownership by the local and national government. Adequate resources must be allocated from government budgets or from other sources to extend the continuity and success of the programmes outcomes. Fundamentally, any success that NEC shall have in improving governance in Rwanda will depend on government leadership and ownership.

4.2 Opportunities for Scaling-Up

Given that the NEC is currently engaged in the implementation of the remaining part of the current strategic plan, this evaluation considered opportunities for NEC to scale-up its existing activities during that phase. A clear opportunity for NEC is increased investment in ICT infrastructure that supports the limited number of employees it has. Given the sizeable investment need in this area as previously referenced and the strong returns anticipated in this investment, it is an important aspect that NEC should focus on in the next phase.

A vehicle to assist with the scale-up of the NEC's efforts is through the reinforcement in the number of employees to the institution and a close working relationship with stakeholders. A well-developed program for capacity building should be emphasized and allocated funds to ensure delivery of programs and implementation of the strategic plan.

The establishment and continuation of multi-stakeholder structures, which bring both partners and volunteers together, is also an opportunity for scaling up the success of the NEC's programs and activities. Currently, the number of volunteers is assumed

to be providing the required services but there is need to more to smoothen NEC' activities in a given timeframe.

5. Achievements, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

5.1 Achievements

Achievements of 2012 to 2017 Strategic Plan vis-à-vis the Planned Activities

- Lawmakers elections were organized for 2013-2014
- Local elections were organized in 2015 to 2016, about 412,490 were elected in 2016
- The 2012-2017 National Electoral Commission prepared training for citizens in broad civic education. The training unswervingly reached almost 750.000 citizens in the organized clusters as well as general mobilization and education of the population across Rwanda
- NEC also overseen the creation of the computerized voter registration system with up-to-date, accurate information, which enabled citizens to have confidence in the electoral process.
- NEC over the period 20012-2017 has managed to build partnerships with different stakeholders in the electoral process, including but not limited to political parties, civil society, the media and Development Partners.
- The enforcement of national electoral commissions institutions was set up, through this process 10 NEC offices were build, staffed and equipment were installed to manage voters' registration and election results
- Law governing elections were adopted to electoral practices
- The 2012 -2013 Program for training was enacted and the number of training manuals were produced
- Elections of both the chamber of deputies and parliamentary elections were conducted on 25th September 2013
- The mediators "Abunzi" committees' elections were conducted at cell and sector level

5.2 Lessons learnt

Several lessons have emerged from this evaluation:

- During the evaluation of 2012-2017, NEC staff asserted that lack of training needs assessment exercise and extensive training arrangement hinder their capacity to carry out the NEC activities.
- Members from the political parties asserted that some electoral laws take time to be passed by the mandated authorities and this impacts negatively on the implementation of NEC's programs
- Sensitization and monitoring of elections is still low, which does not cover the whole population. Training manuals are sometimes not sufficient and capacity to undertake sensitization in the whole country is low
- There is still a challenge of budget that retards the NEC activities in general. The only main major funder of NEC activities is United Nations Development Fund (UNDP). It ranges from supporting the electoral process and enforcing institutional capabilities of the NEC and civic education programs.
- The implementation of NEC activities requires ample funds crucial to perform the commissions' planned activities. The action plan of 2015-2016 indicates that the budget allocated shows a deficit of 63% compared to the needed budget. This constitutes a big challenge to the conduct of election related activities.
- The commission have few employees currently the commission currently has 47 employees, from the interviews carried among NEC Technical staff confirmed that sometimes are overstretched by the work especially during election period
- Investments in capacity building of volunteers should be undertaken cautiously, given that they can absorb large amounts of resources. Such investments need to be paired with other types of support to ensure that the capacity building generates an impact.
- Regular interaction between NEC staff and partners is critical for the implementation of the strategic plan. Particularly, engaging the partners in the planning process is critical for the success of NEC's implementation of the strategic plan.

- Sustainability has multiple aspects; while capacity building and institution building are very important, developing a sustainability plan that includes a realistic expectation of needed financial resources is critical. This should be considered from the beginning.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are a list of strategic and operational recommendations to improve NEC's current implementation of the strategic plan and inform the remaining phase:

5.3.1 Recommendations for next Phase

- To ensure better implementation of the strategic plan and foster development, NEC needs to tackle a complex package of challenges, going from financial expansion, institutional improvements, regulatory reforms, investment supporting measures, and often issues of improved communication and sensitization on programs. Each of these affects the others. In the implementation of the remaining phase of the strategic plan, NEC should continue to fund work across the five axes.
- In the upcoming phase, each program should have a well-developed and realistic sustainability plan that is developed. This could be in partnership with the various stakeholders during the implementation phase that identifies critical activities that must continue beyond program support. NEC should reflect on the viability of the programs in the strategic plan and consider alternative investments or sources of funding.
- In the next phase of implementing the strategic plan, gender needs to be more systematically incorporated into the indicators. There must be clearly articulated gender strategy with milestones and possibly with timelines that are integrated into the strategic plan from the outset. Technical expertise and staff should be brought on board to manage and ensure progress on the gender indicators across the programs.
- More additional budget support should be allocated to National Electoral Commission to get this; the commission should seek support from all election

stakeholders to ensure the implementation of 2012-2017 strategic plan especially the accomplishment of NEC intended activities

5.3.2 Recommendations for next Phase NEC Strategic plan after 2017

- In preparation for the next strategic plan, NEC should financial expansion, institutional improvements, regulatory reforms, investment supporting measures, and often issues of improved communication and sensitization on programs. In institution la improvements, capacity building of NEC staff should be enhanced and regulatory reform plans established.
- Civic education facilitation will play a key transformative role in improving NEC's delivery on its programs and activities in the strategic plan. This is primarily through the establishment of improved and more efficient processes including well-developed training manual, capacity building to trainers, effective use of different communication strategies, including the media. Therefore, NEC should continue to support civic education activities that will improve the implementation of transparent, consistent and predictable programs
- A lot of progress has been made in monitoring and evaluation but there is still more to be done. NEC needs to ensure that any program activity that will be implemented in the next phase has appropriate baseline information, well-defined targets, and SMART indicators from inception.
- Boost the allowance of the volunteers so as they may have active participation in NEC Activities. During Focus Group Discussions, volunteers indicated that they were promised to increase on their allowances but up to now nothing has changed consequently leading to lack of motivation to play part in NEC activities.
- There is a need for the NEC to improve the ICT for all its employees and have a central ICT station that connects to all its country offices. Volunteers need to be facilitated in with laptops especially those working in provinces and districts so that it may speed up the process of writing and submitting reports in a shortest timeframe. Further, logistics like vehicles need to be provided for employees in country sides to enhance their delivery

Annexes

Annex 1: References

Raporo y'itora rya Referendum ryo kuwa 17-18/12/2015

National Electoral Commission Action Plan 2012-2013

RAPORO YA Komite Y'abunzi yo muri Nyakanga 2015

Raporo Y'amatora Y'abagize Inteko Ishinga Amategeko, Umutwe W'abadebite, Yabaye muri Nzeri 2013

Raporo Y'ibikorwa bya Komisiyo Y'igihugu Y'amatora 2013-2014

Raporo Y'ibikorwa bya Komisiyo Y'igihugu Y'amatora Nyakanga 2012-Kamena 2013

National Electoral Commission Action Plan June 2013-June 2014

National Electoral Commission Action Plan 2014- 2015

National Electoral Commission Action Plan 2015- 2016

Annex 2: Focus Group Discussion Participants:

Gicumbi District

| Person | Title | Institution | Contacts |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Umutiesi Therese | Volunteer | NEC | 0783332519 |
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Rwamagana District

| | | | |
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| | | | |
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Ngororero District

| | | | |
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| Cherie Jennifer | Volunteer | NEC | 0786228650 |
| Bumbakari Faustin | Volunteer | NEC | 0788654507 |
| Ngbonziza John | Volunteer | NEC | 0788845877 |
| Bajeneza Oswald | Volunteer | NEC | 0788651297 |
| Niyonzima Emmy | Volunteer | NEC | 0788818891 |
| Muhikira James | Volunteer | NEC | 0784394443 |
| Buging Emmanuel | Volunteer | NEC | 0788251217 |
| Muramuzi Eugene | Volunteer | NEC | 0788481876 |
| Hagenimana Fabien | Volunteer | NEC | 0783284966 |

Annex 3: List of Interviewees

NEC Commissioners & Executive Secretary

1. Prof. KALISA MBANDA
2. Mr. MUNYANEZA Charles
3. Mrs. UWERA Pelagie

NEC Technical Staff

- Planning, Monitoring Evaluation Officer
- Public Relations /Communications Officer
- Director of Finance
- Election Management Specialist
- Election zone Coordinators 4
- Election staff Management and Development
- Director ICT
- Legal Advisor

International Development Partners:

- Kaisa Krusse Attach Political Section - European Union

Local Development Partners:

- Hategekimana Alphose, Legal Advisor- ITORERO(NIC)

Media:

- Eugene Kwibuka Senior Reporter- The New Times
- Theo Barasa Director- Radio Flash
- Itambineza Ange KfM

Civil Society Organizations:

- Safari Emmanuel Executive Secretary CLADHO

Annex 4: Five Key areas of evaluation

| Category | Sub-Category | Key Considerations |
|------------|---|--|
| Relevance | Strategic plan clarity and logic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the strategic plan have a clear logic that links outputs to long-term outcomes? • Are assumptions explicit and relevant? • Are the planned outputs necessary and sufficient to achieve desired outcomes/targets? • Do all implementers have an understanding of the strategic plan logic? |
| | Contribution to NEC and partner strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are expected outcomes relevant to the strategies of NEC, partners, and citizens? • Do outcomes contribute to NEC's aggregate strategic outcomes? |
| Efficiency | Adaptive management of plans and budgets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does NEC's team identify and understand the strategic and operational issues of the strategic plan? • Are actions promptly taken to overcome implementation issues? If so, are they well founded and insightful? • Is NEC and its team proactive at monitoring implementation and progress towards results? • Does monitoring occur systematically and is it based on complete monitoring plans? • Have innovations or best practices been used in implementation of the strategic plan? |
| | Relationship management and communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the NEC effectively manage relationships with stakeholders and partners and meet them on a regular basis? • Do stakeholders and NEC have a common understanding of each other's role and responsibilities? • Do all parties strive to build and maintain effective working relations? • Is communication open, trusting, and constructive? • How timely, relevant and accurate are |

| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| | | the monitoring reports carried out by NEC? |
| | Translating inputs into outputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the planned outputs of good quality and relevant to the desired outcome? • Will the expected output targets be achieved? • Is the implementation of programs completed on time? |
| | Additionality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence that the NEC's activities would not have occurred with external funding? |
| Effectiveness | Translating outputs to outcomes/Targets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have outcome targets been achieved or are they being achieved? • How effectively have gender issues been considered? |
| Sustainability | Sustainability addressed; sustainability of outputs and outcomes achieved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have clear, specific and relevant activities been included to address sustainability? • Has sustainability been monitored? • Have responsibilities been institutionalized fully in the strategic plan? |
| Impact | Achieving long-term outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has progress and measurement of NEC's contribution to impacts been completed? |