



Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE)

Election Strategic Plan 2020-2022

October 2019



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Acronyms

AUOM-Africa Union Observation Mission

CSOs-Civil Society Organization

ECSF- Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Forum

CCRDA- Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations

CECOE- Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections

CECVEA-Consortium of Ethiopian Civic and Voters Education Actors

CVE-Civic and Voters' Education

ELA-Ethiopian Lawyers Association

EPRDF- Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

ENDAN- Ethiopian National Disabilities Associations Network

ESAT- Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio

FDI-Foreign Direct Investment

FDRE-Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

FPTP -First Past The Post'

GDP-Gross Domestic Product

IAG-Inter Africa Group

IDPs-Internally Displaced Persons

NEBE-National Election Board of Ethiopia

NEWA-Network of Ethiopian Women Association

OLF- Oromo Liberation Front

ONLF -Ogden National Liberation Front

OMN- Oromo Media Network

PWDs- Persons with Disabilities

SNNPR-Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State

WHO-World Health Organization



1. Background

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) around the world play a crucial strategic role promoting citizens' participation and ensuring that electoral processes are free, fair, and credible. CSOs can also reduce election-related conflict dynamics by stimulating a peaceful electoral environment. In view of the ongoing democratic reform in Ethiopia and the upcoming 2020 election, several Ethiopian CSOs recognized the need for forming a network of CSOs to support the electoral process, coordinate engagement in the upcoming election in 2020, and facilitate long-term CSO engagement in the electoral process in a sustainable and systematic way.

CSOs that participated in the consultative workshop held on March 1, 2019 along with NEBE, Agency for Civil Society Organizations, and other government agencies, decided on May 20, 2019 among other things to establish the *Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections – CECOIE* as a distinct entity mandated with leading and coordinating all election related activities. The workshop also designated a seven-member interim coordinating committee for the establishment of the Coalition and related activities. The seven interim coordinating committee members are:

1. Ethiopian Civil Society Organization Forum (ECSF), Chairperson
2. Inter Africa Group (IAG), Deputy Chairperson
3. Ethiopian Lawyers Association (ELA), Secretariat
4. Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA), Member
5. Network of Ethiopian Women Association (NEWA), Member
6. Consortium of Ethiopian Civic and Voters Education Actors (CECVEA), Member
7. Ethiopian National Disabilities Associations Network (ENDAN), Member
8. The Interim Coordinating Committee is mandated with overseeing the work of the interim secretariat as they design and implement CSOs' election-related activities and develop CECOIE formation documents and strategic plan, until the Coalition is established and duly registered with the Agency for Civil Society Organizations and becomes fully operational. The registration process is currently underway.



2. Country context

2.1. Political Environment

In 2015, conflict over Addis Ababa's large-scale urban development plan sparked mass protests in Oromia. This unrest spread to Amhara and other regions, ultimately resulting in the sudden resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalgn and paving the way for the ascent of Dr. Abiy Ahmed and his reformist government to political power. In his first year in office, Dr. Abiy has introduced unprecedented reforms. As a result of the newly unfolding political development, tens of thousands of political prisoners -- including prominent opposition political party leaders and journalists -- were released. The sanctions imposed on political parties designated by previous administrations as terrorist organizations (such as *Arbegnoch- Ginbot Sebat*, *the Oromo Liberation Front-OLF* and *the Ogaden National Liberation Front*) have been lifted. In addition to releasing journalists, the government has also relaxed its control over the state media, and exile broadcast media such as Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT) and Oromia Media Network (OMN) were allowed to open their offices in the country. The government also established the *Law and Justice Advisory Council* to review the controversial legislations such as the civil society, the media, anti-terrorism, and electoral laws, as well as other legislations such as commercial and criminal procedure laws. Furthermore, the government has initiated judicial reform, the liberalization of the economy through the privatization of state-owned companies such as the Ethiopian Air Lines, Ethio-Telecom, and others. Another significant political measure that has impacted both domestic politics and the political situation in the Horn of Africa was the peace deal signed with neighboring Eritrea, ending a two-decade long border war.

Despite these promising developments that rekindled the hopes of many Ethiopians living at home and in exile, the country faces many challenges. First, violent ethnic conflicts have resulted in death and injuries, wanton destruction of property, and the displacement of millions of innocent civilians. As one study indicated, Ethiopia has over 2 million internally displaced people, including almost 1 million displaced in April and June of this year alone due to inter-communal conflict between the *Guji and Gedio* communities in Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). In early August, at least 145,000 more people were displaced in Somali and Oromia regional states due to renewed fighting on their shared border. In September, ethnic violence displaced an estimated 15,000 people from the



outskirts of Addis Ababa. Despite signs of possible clashes, the government failed to prevent attacks. Except for humanitarian aid, Human Rights Watch is not aware of sustainable federal government efforts to address internal displacement and inter-ethnic violence. The aforementioned incidences sufficiently reveal the fragility of the democratic reform currently underway.

Another critical issue threatening the democratic reform is the intra-party struggle within the ruling EPRDF, the coalition of four seemingly independent organizations. The governing coalition, known for being tightly knit, is now locked in a fierce internal power struggle that has undermined its unity of purpose and action. The assassination of the Amhara regional president, Ambachew Mekonnen, while presiding a security meeting with key officials in the city of Bahir Dar and the murder of the Chief of Staff, General Se'are Mekonnen is another example of the intra-party conflict and the fragility of the reform processes.

2.2. Socio-Economic Environment

Ethiopia is the most populous landlocked country in the continent of Africa and the second-most populous country of Africa after Nigeria¹. It has an estimated 2019 population of 112.08 million, which ranks 12th in the world². If Ethiopia continues its current rate of growth, the population will double in the next 30 years, reaching 210 million by 2060.³ Despite progress toward eliminating extreme poverty, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest countries in the world, due both to rapid population growth and a low starting base.⁴ Only 49% of the population over 15 years of age is literate, and many children only attend school for 8 or 9 years.⁵ Only 57% of the country has improved access to clean drinking water, while 42% still struggle to find clean water. Only 28% of the population has access to improved sanitation services, while 72% struggle to maintain sanitation.⁶ This likely contributes greatly to the very high degree of risk of transmittable diseases and illnesses. Most women give birth to children outside of the vicinity of hospitals often only attended to by an elderly midwife. The mortality rate of mothers while giving birth is high.⁷

¹ Ethiopia Population 2019

² ibid

³ ibid

⁴ Ethiopia Economy 2019.

⁵ Ethiopian Population 2019

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid



Ethiopia is currently one of the fastest growing countries in the world.⁸ For more than a decade before 2016, GDP grew at a rate between 8% and 11% annually—marking Ethiopia as one of the fastest-growing states among the 188 IMF member countries.⁹ Ethiopia has the lowest level of income-inequality in Africa and one of the lowest in the world, with a Gini coefficient comparable to that of the Scandinavian countries.¹⁰ Additionally, improvement in agricultural practices has decreased the nation’s former levels of starvation.¹¹ On the other hand, Ethiopia has one of the lowest global incomes per capita. Its reliance on domestic investment restricts foreign investment, which could otherwise account for a comparatively successful economy. More than 70% of Ethiopia’s population is still employed in the agricultural sector, but services have surpassed agriculture as the principal source of GDP.¹² Ethiopia’s foreign exchange earnings are led by the services sector - primarily the state-run Ethiopian Airlines - followed by exports of several commodities.¹³ Manufacturing represented less than 8% of total exports in 2016.¹⁴ Ownership of all land remains in the hands of the state, with use rights granted to landholders.¹⁵ The state has allowed the private sector to participate in banking, though it restricts foreign ownership.¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, the government has initiated the privatization of state-owned companies such as the Ethiopian Air Lines and Ethiopian-Telecom. Ethiopia has made starting a business easier by removing the requirement to open a bank account for company registration and eliminating the paid-in minimum capital requirement.¹⁷ The underdeveloped labor market hinders employment growth, trapping much of the labor force in the informal economy.¹⁸ Unemployment rate in Ethiopia increased to 19.10% in 2018 from 16.90% in 2016.¹⁹ Ethiopia’s economic freedom score is 53.6, making its economy the 137th freest in the 2019 Index.²⁰ Ethiopia has attracted roughly \$8.5 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI), mostly from China, Turkey, India and the EU; comparatively, US FDI is \$567 million. Investment has been primarily in infrastructure, construction, agriculture/horticulture, agricultural processing, textiles, leather and leather products.²¹ Over the past three years, government spending has amounted to 17.9% of the country’s output

⁸ Ethiopian Population 2019.

⁹ Ethiopia Economy 2019

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ Ethiopia Population 2011

¹² Ethiopia Economy 2019

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ 2019 Index of Economic Freedom

¹⁶ GDP2019 Index of Economic Freedom

¹⁷ 2019 Index of Economic Freedom

¹⁸ GDP2019 Index of Economic Freedom

¹⁹ Trading Economics Ethiopia Unemployment Rate <https://tradingeconomics.com/ethiopia/unemployment-rate>

²⁰ GDP2019 Index of Economic Freedom

²¹ Ethiopia Economy 2019



(GDP), and budget deficits have averaged 2.6% of GDP. Public debt is equivalent to 56.2% of GDP.²²

2.3. Legal Environment

The UN *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation* states that “Elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, the free expression of whose will provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government. The rights of citizens to vote and to be elected at periodic, genuine democratic elections are internationally recognized human rights.”²³ In Ethiopia, as in many other countries, the right to vote is regulated by the legal regime governing general elections, local elections, by-election, and re-elections. The legal regime comprises the FDRE Constitution, which prohibits assumption of state power in any manner other than provided under the Constitution, i.e. election (Article 9.3), and recognizes every citizen’s right to vote and to be elected (Article 37). Furthermore, the Constitution under Article 54 stipulates election of members of the House of Peoples’ Representatives for a term of five years on the basis of universal suffrage and by direct, free, and fair elections held by secret ballot and establishes the First Past the Post (FPTP) “winner-take-all” electoral system. The Constitution further dictates that new elections must be held within six months in the event of the dissolution of the legislature (Article 60.3).²⁴ The Constitution also enshrines the fundamental rights and freedoms which are prerequisites for the exercise of the right to vote and to be elected including the right of thought, opinion, and expression (Article 29),²⁵ the right of assembly, demonstration, and petition (Article 30),²⁶ freedom of association (Article 31),²⁷ and freedom of movement (Article 32).²⁸ Recent legal reforms affirm this constitutional commitment to free elections. With the exception of the revised Criminal Code Articles 466-476 legislation including the Revised Political Parties’ Registration Proclamation No. 573/2008, the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Proclamation No. 662/2009, Directive No. 1/2009: on the Registration of candidates; the Directive No 2/2009: on the registration of voters; Directive No. 6/2010 and the Directive on Election Reporting Code of Conduct of the Media and Journalists are repealed. In order to establish an electoral institution that conducts free, fair, and peaceful elections at all levels in an impartial manner in which citizens freely express their will on the basis of equal popular

²² 2019 Index of Economic Freedom

²³ http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eueom/pdf/declaration-of-principles_en.pdf

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*



suffrage and secret ballot system, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has been re-established through the enactment of Proclamation No.1133/2019. In addition to recognizing the operational and administrative independence of the Board, the Proclamation envisions transparent and participatory selection and appointment of board members. The newly elected Board is now fully operational following the transparent and participatory process of appointment of officers. Merging political party registration, election system, and code of conduct the House of People's Representatives passed the Ethiopian Electoral and Political Parties Proclamation repealing Proclamation No. 573/2008 and the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Proclamation No. 662/2009.

While several meetings were organized with the view to ensuring the participation and incorporating the perspectives of political parties in the drafting processes the House of People's Representatives passed the Proclamation disregarding some of the recorded concerns of those involved in the forums. Although the draft proclamation envisioned making female candidates winners if they achieved an equal number of votes in the election, the Parliament rejected the proposal on grounds that it violates the very concept of gender equality. Another contentious issue was related to candidates working in the public service. The Proclamation requires them to resign temporarily until the completion of the election with no remuneration and benefits. While the new electoral law is a departure from the past legislations, in many respects it failed to address the controversial FPTP electoral system. The reason behind retaining FPTP is that it is anchored in the Constitution and replacement would require a constitutional amendment.

2.4 Gender and Social Inclusion

Studies show, "Women' political representation in politics in a given country is largely dependent on the socio-economic and cultural context within the country"²⁹.The socio-economic and cultural factors have several components including women progress in other profession outside politics, the existence of strong women's movement/organization in the country, the liberality of a society³⁰. The Ethiopian society can be characterized as traditional patriarchal society which undermines the role of women in public space³¹. The cultural context is not supportive to women's political participation in general and politics is viewed as a men's

²⁹ Hisayo Katsui, et al(2014) Reducing Inequalities: A Case Study on Ethiopia and Kenya, Abo Akademi University, p.26.

³⁰ ibid

³¹ Ibid,p.28



main place³². In Ethiopia the major factors that affect women political participation is the social attitudes on women's political participation³³. The levels of all factors for political participation of women in Ethiopia are not favorable in general³⁴. The political factors include political system, the presence of quotas and strong women's organization to promote women's participation in the public sphere³⁵. In Ethiopia there is no such strong women's organization which lobbies for the increase of women in politics³⁶. Even the quota system which has been in place "is a party quota system adopted by the ruling party... this party quota system is the main reason that created a gap between women's political participation in the ruling and opposition party"³⁷.

The country does not have well-researched and attentively conducted statistical data on the issue³⁸ of disability and political participation. There has been no statistical profile done by the National Census Commission, the National Election Board, Regional and Federal parliaments and political parties which may give a clue to assess the practical reality in the political life of these people. The lack of this information makes the task of examining the situation and the extent of their participation in the past elections difficult³⁹. Some of the reasons behind the low participations of disable persons in the electoral processes includes attitudinal barriers, low self-esteem on their ability to participate in the political sphere of the nation due to the deep-rooted social neglect of these people, and from the outside, i.e., the community which these people are part of it⁴⁰. In addition, technical and procedural barriers such as information and notices regarding the time and place of elections are not broadcasted in the way that PWDs could access and understand⁴¹ as well as infrastructural barriers giving little attention for PWD while fixing a place as polling station⁴² and facing a difficulty of accessing these places for registration and for voting⁴³.

Citing the joint statements of the Ethiopian Government and UN Humanitarian Coordination Office, reports disclosed that in 2017 alone close to " 857,000 people had been displaced in

³² Hisayo Katsui, et al(2014) Reducing Inequalities: A Case Study on Ethiopia and Kenya, Abo Akademi University, p.28.

³³ Ibid, p.25

³⁴ Ibid,p.34

³⁵ Ibid,p.28

³⁶ Ibid, p.34

³⁷ Ibid,p.52

³⁸ Shimels Sisay Belete (20110) Electoral Participation as a Fundamental Rights of Persons With Disabilities in Ethiopia :Critical Examination of the Law and Practice, Addis Ababa University School of Graduate Studies School of Law A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Laws (LLM in Human Rights Law) to the School of Law Addis Ababa University p.85

³⁹ Ibid, pp.85-86

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.89

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid



Eastern Ethiopia as a result ...conflict between the Somali and Oromo communities⁴⁴. Furthermore, about “2.9 million new displacements associated with conflict were recorded in 2018, the highest figure recorded worldwide.”⁴⁵ Regardless of the political, legal and economic reforms that have taken place since the past one and a half year, “old conflicts became more entrenched and new conflicts have escalated”⁴⁶ along different regional states borders. In addition, “disasters also triggered 296,000 new displacements, most of them associated with flooding and drought in the Somali region”⁴⁷. Due to lack of updated data, it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell the exact numbers of IDPs evicted as a result of ethnic conflict at this point in time. Compared to the previous year, the displacement and resettlement of IDPs is no longer headline news in the international and local media outlets.

2.5 Past elections

Since the adoption of the FDRE Constitution in 1995, Ethiopia has held five consecutive national and local elections (1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015). The sixth national election is scheduled for May 2020. In all these elections the ruling party, EPRDF, claimed victory. In the most recent 2015 election the EPRDF took all the seats in the federal House of Peoples’ Representatives. Opposition political parties have no presence in the federal parliament and in the regional state councils.”⁴⁸ “All these rounds of elections hardly contributed to genuine multiparty competition,”⁴⁹ and “none of the elections were recognized as free and fair by opposition political groups and in a number of instances by international observers. In every case, the post-election environment was characterized by questions on fairness of the election.”⁵⁰ Although the pattern of consistent elections over the last two decades can be seen as positive, failure to meet international standards remains their defining characteristics.

2.6. Civil Society Landscape

Another defining characteristic of the Ethiopian legislative elections is that except the 2005 national legislative elections, the role of civil society organizations in general and

⁴⁴ ESAT (January 29, 2018) Retrieved from <https://ethsat.com/2018/01/ethiopia-report-shows-857000-idps-oromo-somali-regions/> [accessed on 10/11/2019]

⁴⁵ International Displacement Monitoring (IDMC) Center Retrieved from: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ethiopia> [Accessed on 10/11 2019]

⁴⁶ ibid

⁴⁷ ibid

⁴⁸ Getahun Kassa (2018) Contribution to the 3rd Cycle Universal periodic Review (UPR) A Joint UPR Submission on The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’s implementation of recommendations from UPR second cycle on Civil and Political Rights pp.15-17

⁴⁹ ibid

⁵⁰ ibid



organizations engaged in right and governance related activities in particular has been insignificant. In the 2005 general election there “was an unprecedented number of voter and civic education campaigns, nationally televised| live debates among the parties, and print media features on the election. A coalition of more than 30 civil society groups conducted civic and voter education programs.”⁵¹ When it comes to the 2015 general election only six rounds of broadcast debates preceded the elections.⁵² Only the “NEBE carried out continuous voter education from 2011 mainly on the legal framework and produced manuals for training in different languages taking into consideration the diversity of languages in the country.”⁵³ NEBE has been able to reach out to “new voters as well as ensured that interaction between NEBE and potential voters were done in languages that are comfortable to the voters”.⁵⁴ While “20 local civil society groups conducted civic and voter education programs,”⁵⁵ in the 2005 general election, in the 2015 legislative election the AUOM Report indicated that its interaction with civil society was limited⁵⁶. However, the Report passed silently as to the role played by CSOs in disseminating election related information to the electorate. In the 2015 general election it seems that NEBE was the only actor engaged single handedly in voter’s education while the CSOs played minimal or little role in voter education.

⁵¹ African Union Observations Mission Report 2005

⁵² Global Security Org

⁵³ Carter Center

⁵⁴ African Union Observations Mission Report p.7

⁵⁵ Carter Center2005

⁵⁶ African Union Observations Mission Report 2015, p.9



3. Situational Analysis

3.1 Strengths, Limitations/Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SLWOT)

Four of the seven organizations constituting the Interim Coordinating Committee were provided input for the SLWOT analysis exercise. The findings of the SLWOT are presented below.

Internal Environment Analysis (Strengths and Limitations/Weaknesses)

Strengths	Limitations/Weaknesses
<p>Membership consists of broad based networks and individual organizations with many years of experience in the sector;</p> <p>Limited experience in election</p> <p>Diversity of membership (gender, disability, voters and civic education);</p> <p>Expertise in the civil society sector;</p> <p>Contextual expertise/Clear understanding of the context;</p> <p>Geographical reach/coverage;</p> <p>Knowledge of the legal framework.</p> <p>Relation with regional networks</p>	<p>Lack of experience with election work;</p> <p>Lack of trust or openness among organizations;</p> <p>Lack of experience managing resources of this magnitude (the Coalition is new);</p> <p>Minimal experience in managing large inflow of international financial resources;</p> <p>Absence of organizational structure and the necessary staff to implement the strategic plan;</p> <p>No communication strategy.</p>



External Environment Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Opportunities	Threats
<p>New Legal Framework for election; New CSO Law; Political will on the part of the government, in particular on the part of NEBE; Improved operational space exists; Enthusiasm among citizens to engage; Interest among international community to provide resources and technical support to CSOs. Opportunity to participate in the Sidama referendum</p>	<p>Time constraints, including the delay in publishing the electoral calendar; Regulation and directives to operationalize the Ethiopian Electoral and Political Parties Proclamation are not in place; Insecurity in some parts of the country, including crime, ethnic tensions, among others; Polarized political environment; Hesitation of CSOs to trust the new openness of the operating environment; Resource constraint Competition for resources. Social media in particular fake news</p>

3.2. Vision, Mission and Principles and Values

Vision Statement

Uphold democratic values to create a well-informed, empowered, responsive Ethiopian society.

Mission Statement

To engage in voters' and civic education, election monitoring and election observations through the coordination of Ethiopian civil society organizations to promote free, fair, peaceful, and transparent election

Values

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) is committed to fulfilling its mandate and to carry out its activities by adhering to the following values:

Non-partisan	<i>Dedicated to impartiality in all aspects of activities, and not to support candidates and political parties</i>
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Inclusivity	<i>Committed to upholding the interest of marginalized people.</i>
Partnership	<i>Respect and collaborate with all stakeholders in order to create synergy in our activities</i>
Transparency	<i>Strive to be open and accountable in all aspects of activities and approaches, internal and external.</i>
Independence	<i>Maintain independence from influence of any external body</i>
Professionalism	<i>Committed to being responsible, accountable, objective, and service minded</i>

3.3. Mandate of CECO E

CECO E Mandate is:

To enhance the institutional capacity that enables civil society organizations to engage in voters and civic education and election monitoring and observations in collaboration with the NEBE, other government bodies and donors

Objectives

The objectives of the Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECO E) are as follows:

i. Coordination

To support and coordinate member's involvement and participation in electoral processes, such as civic and voter education, election monitoring and observation, and advocacy and stakeholder engagement;

To support, facilitate, and coordinate information and experience sharing among the coalition members;

ii. Capacity Building

To provide institutional capacity building support to members that enables them to implement various electoral activities;

iii. Awareness and Education

To undertake voter and civic education awareness, and increases/ encourages voter participation in the electoral processes;

To make citizens aware about their rights and obligations as well as to enable them to make an informed decision;



iv. Election monitoring and observation

To mobilize and provide the necessary support to members to actively participate in monitoring and observation of all electoral processes and referenda undertaken by NEBE;

v. Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement

To advocate towards an enabling environment for an improved electoral process;

To represent the interest of member organization with key stakeholders, such as NEBE, other government bodies, development partners/donors, and other relevant electoral stakeholders;

vi. Research/studies and Knowledge Management

To conduct research/studies to inform advocacy for electoral reforms as well as to inform programming implemented by members;

vii. Documentation/Communication

To collect, organize, document, and share information related to electoral processes as well as prepare and disseminate same;

viii. Resource Mobilization and Sustainability

To undertake resource mobilization to support activities of members, and to develop strategies to sustain the Coalition;

To develop appropriate governance structures/systems/policies to manage and sustain the Coalition;

xi. Cross-cutting objectives (Inclusion—Gender and PWDs, IDPs,

To improve the participation of women, people with disabilities, and IDPs in the electoral processes



4. Strategic Direction 2020-2022

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) strategic plan goal is to contribute to the successful conduct of credible elections which is critical for the transition to democracy and empowering citizens to make informed decisions.

4.1. The Context

In Ethiopia CSOs, in particular NGOs had very limited involvement in the electoral process prior to the 2005 legislative election. Even before the coming into force of the Charities and Societies Proclamation, the number of NGOs engaged in civic education was disproportionately small when compared with NGOs working in service delivery, development, infrastructure, relief and rehabilitation, etc. As observed by one study in early 2000 there were only “few CSOs which were involved in democratization process in Ethiopia.”⁵⁷ At the time, the number of CSOs engaged in rights and democracy related activities did not exceed 15 organizations⁵⁸. According to this study, one of the reasons, among others, for the existence of very limited number of CSOs/NGOs engaged in right related activities was government disregard for their role and contributions. Even long before the enactment of the charities and societies proclamation, CSOs/NGOs often “faced several challenges mainly from the government”.⁵⁹

As briefly discussed under section 2.6 of this strategic plan, voters’ turnout in the 2005 legislative election was unprecedented simply because the “civic education campaigns, nationally televised live debates among the parties, and print media features on the election”⁶⁰, the conduct of civic and voter education programs by a coalition of more than “20 civil society organizations”⁶¹ attributed to the record high voters’ turn out in the ballot day.

On top of their active involvement in civic and voter education, in the 2005 general elections, CSOs also formed relatively well organized and coordinated ad-hoc domestic election observation network embracing about “30 domestic organizations(which) planned to field well over 3,000 observers prior to the May 15 election date..”⁶² To the detriment of the CSOs

⁵⁷ Sisay Gebre-Egziabher (2002)The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Democratization Process in Ethiopia <http://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/The%20role%20of%20civil%20society%20organizations%20in%20democratization%20process%20in%20Ethiopia.pdf>

⁵⁸ ibid

⁵⁹ ibid

⁶⁰ Ethiopian National Elections The Carter Center Observation Mission 2005 Final Report p.17

⁶¹ Ibid Ethiopian National Elections The Carter Center Observation Mission 2005 Final Report

⁶² Ibid Ethiopian National Elections The Carter Center Observation Mission 2005 Final Report p.10



initiative, “in the weeks prior to polling day the NEBE issued a directive limiting the types of domestic organizations that could observe the May election, announcing that only those organizations with election observation identified as one of their functions in their registration documents would be granted election observation credentials.”⁶³ Fourteen members of the ad-hoc CSO network challenged NEBE’s restrictive directive at the court of law. The high court, apart from ruling that there was no legal basis for the NEBE’s Directive, decided that the “NGOs should be granted domestic observation credentials so long as such activity was generally consistent with their organizational purposes.”⁶⁴ The High Court ruling was also upheld by the Federal Supreme Court, although the ad-hoc domestic election network could not conduct effective observation since the court decision came too late. Regardless of the foregoing challenges, it was in the 2005 general elections CSOs attempted to make a difference by engaging in civic and voter education as well as domestic election observations.

The coming into force of the Charities and Societies Proclamation No.621/09 entirely closed the limited operational space for the CSOs in general and right organization in particular. The government effectively utilized the charities and societies legislation as a tool to coerce rights organizations to abandon their original mission and embrace a new identity. As a result of this pressure, while many organizations shifted to a different identity, others were dissolved.

The 2010 and 2015 general elections were conducted in a restrained political environment and obstructive laws such as charities and societies proclamation, press law anti-terror law, etc., Consequently, CSOs (except mass organizations) engaged in right, democracy, and governance were virtually absent in the electoral processes due mainly to the restrictive civil society law. What is more, “for the 2010 elections, the [NEBE], opted to retain exclusive competence in this field (voter’s education). The Board prepared material and disseminated it through regional and zonal offices, as well as through the media, drama and posters.”⁶⁵ According to the findings of the Carter Center Observation Mission, “a poorly communicated nation-wide program of voter education was held on the weekend prior to Election Day.”⁶⁶ The barring of CSOs and NGOs from delivering civic and voter’s education which started in 2010 had continued into the 2015 legislative elections as NEBE exclusively “carried out continuous voter education from 2011 mainly on the legal framework and produced manuals for training

⁶³ Ibid p.10

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ European Union Election Observation Mission (2010) Ethiopia Final Report House of Peoples’ Representatives and State Councils Election May 2010 p.12

⁶⁶ Ethiopian National Elections The Carter Center Observation Mission 2005 Final Report p 10



in different languages taking into consideration the diversity of languages in the country.”⁶⁷ NEBE reached out to “new voters as well as ensured that interaction between NEBE and potential voters was done in languages that are comfortable to the voters.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, the AUOM reported that in the 2015 general election “its interaction with civil society was limited”⁶⁹, although it passed silently as to the role played by CSOs in disseminating election related information to the electorate. No, less importantly, in the 2015 election “only six rounds of broadcast debates preceded the elections.”⁷⁰ Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that in the 2015 general elections NEBE was the only actor engaged single handedly in voter’s education while the CSOs played no role at all.

The legal regime regulating election and the actors that involved in the electoral process were restrictive. Unlike the repealed restrictive charities and societies proclamation and election laws, Proclamation No 1113/19(Organization of Civil Society Proclamation) and the recently adopted proclamation, the Ethiopian Electoral and Political Parties Proclamation, provide space to CSOs to engage in domestic election observation. For instance, the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation No.1113/19 in its preamble states that the purpose for the promulgation of the new CSO law is to create an enabling environment, which is essential for enhancing the role of Civil Societies Organizations in the development and democratization of the country. Same Proclamation under Article 59 (1) (b) states that CSOs may engage in any activity provided that it is not contrary to law or public moral. In addition, the Proclamation which imposes restrictions on “foreign organizations and Local organizations which are established by foreign citizens which are residents of Ethiopia from engaging in voters’ education or election observations” (Article 62(5)), impliedly recognizes domestic CSOs’ involvement in election observations. Similarly, the Ethiopian Electoral and Political Parties Proclamation⁷¹ consist of a number of provisions pertinent to the role domestic civil society organizations could play in civic and voter’s education, election monitoring and observation. The bottom line is, the new legal framework allows CSOs to involve in election monitoring and election observations. Consequently, CSOs who intend to observe/ monitor the election in the run up to the 2020 election are required to create election monitoring and observation cluster

⁶⁷ Carter Center (2009) Observing the 2005 Ethiopian National Elections: Final Report p.18

⁶⁸ African Union Election Observation Mission to the 24 May 2015 Parliamentary Elections in the Federal Democratic Ethiopia p.7

⁶⁹ African Union Election Observation Mission to the 24 May 2015

⁷⁰ Global Security Org. 2015 – Elections <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ethiopia/politics-2015.htm>

⁷¹ Since it is not published in the *Negarit Gazett* we cannot cite the proclamation number and relevant provisions for our case



to better coordinate activities, maximize coverage, and “to mounting broad observation effort for a largely rural voting population”⁷²

Following the new democratic opening the restrictive Charities and Societies law has been scrapped and progressive CSOs proclamation that recognizes CSOs freedom to engage in any activities provided that they are legal and morally acceptable including civic and voter education and election observation. Despite this positive development, the formidable challenge CSOs currently facing is that only a handful of CSOs who have been engaged in right related activities have survived the onslaught of the charities and societies proclamation. What’s more, even from among the CSOs who managed to survive the onslaught, many have lost their institutional memory and are operating under low capacity.

Conducting voter and civic education to increase the number of registered voters and improve voters’ turnout on the ballot day, as well as putting in place credible and visible mechanism for domestic election observation will certainly build confidence among electorate, political parties and other key stakeholders and in the electoral processes and considerably increases the acceptance of the election outcome. Consequently, initiating civic and voter educations programs and putting in place a mechanism for a well-coordinated and visible CSO domestic election monitoring and observation are crucial for conducting creatable elections.

4.2. Thematic Area 1: Civic and Voter Education

4.2.1. Strategic Objective: Increased access to voters’ information resulting in an informed, organized, active and peaceful citizens’ participation in the electoral process.

Objectives of CECO E:

To undertake voter and civic education awareness, and increases/ encourages voter participation in the electoral processes;

To make citizens aware about their rights and obligations as well as to enable them to make an informed decision;

The strategy envisions filling the gap in CSOs involvement in 2010 and 2015 but also put in place an effective coordination mechanism, i.e. Voter’s and Civic Education Cluster for the coordination of civic and voter education on the ground and for sharing information among CSOs. As a result, it is anticipated that cluster will be able to prepare standard voter education material (to be approved by NEBE) and pass consistent message using vernacular languages

⁷² Ethiopian National Elections The Carter Center Observation Mission 2005 Final Report p.17



on the importance of participating in the electoral process and to conduct a nationwide campaign to prompt active participation by the citizens in the electoral processes. The cluster will also embark on continuous campaign and will evolve into voter turnout campaign and civic engagement after the election.

4.2.1.1. Specific Objective 1: To increase turnout at registration

In the 2015 general election, 93.2 percent of Ethiopia's 36.8 million registered voters participated in the parliamentary elections.⁷³ One of the objectives of Civic and Voters education, among others, is to increase voters' turnout to 95%, particularly targeting intermittent voters, first-time voters, youth, disabled persons, and women. Data is not available on intermittent voters, the first time voters, the youth, and disable persons. When it comes to women available data show that out of the 36.8 million voters that were registered for the 2015 elections and "99.5% of eligible voters in these elections.... 48% of the registered voters are women"⁷⁴ Due to unavailability of disaggregated data on the ratio of urban and rural population registration it is difficult to speak whether there were discrepancies between rural and urban areas. As indicated in the 2015 AU Observation Mission Report "the NEBE for registering up to 99.5% of eligible voters."⁷⁵ The strategy envisions maintaining the 2015 turnout at registration at 99.5%.

4.2.1.2. Specific Objective 2: To increase voter turnout at Election Day

In the 2005 general election the voter turnout was high, attracting about 90% of the registered voters to the polls⁷⁶ and almost everywhere people waited patiently even though the queues were very long. Some voters had to wait for half a day, as most polling stations had only one voting booth. Polling hours were extended by two hours in order to remedy this situation.⁷⁷ In 2010 general election 90% of eligible voters participated in the election.⁷⁸

The 2015 general elections were also "characterized by high voter turnout." About 93.2 percent of Ethiopia's 36.8 million registered voters participated in the parliamentary elections.⁷⁹ This strategy aims to exceed voters' turnout observed in the 2005, 2010, and 2015 general election and reach 96 % of the registered voters.

⁷³ 2015 Ethiopian general election https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Ethiopian_general_election

⁷⁴ AUOM (p.7)

⁷⁵ ibid

⁷⁶ 2005 Ethiopian general election https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_Ethiopian_general_election

⁷⁷ Spen Pettersen and Elisabeth Salvesen ETHIOPIA: PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION MAY 2005

⁷⁸ Elections in Ethiopia https://infogalactic.com/info/Elections_in_Ethiopia

⁷⁹ 2015 Ethiopian general election https://wiki2.org/en/2015_Ethiopian_general_election



4.2.1.3. Specific Objective 3: To reduce cases of spoilt/rejected votes

In the 2005 general election “very significant shares of ballots were considered ‘invalid’ during counting. Reports revealed that in many polling stations 10 per cent and in some cases between 20-30 per cent ballots were invalid⁸⁰. Data is not available on the percentage of spoiled ballot invalid in the 2010 and 2015 general elections. Equally there is no statistical data or evidence indicating a decrease in the number of spoiled ballots in the elections held in 2010 and 2015. Apparently the spoliation of ballot for the most part stems from absence of assistance to illiterate voters and persons with disabilities who require assistance to participate in the voting process. The aim of the CVE strategy is to reduce the number of spoilt ballots to 2% of the total cast votes.

4.1.1.4. Specific Objective 4: To increase participation of disable persons, intermittent voters, the first time voters, youth, and women in the 2020 general election

Baseline data is not available on the number of intermittent voters. However a cursory look at the past two general elections tells us considerable number of urban educated segment of the society who actively participated in the 2005 election, did not take part in the subsequent in 2010 and 2015 general elections.. Voter and civic education aims to significantly increase intermittent voters in ballot day. Millions of children who were under 18 of age in 2015 are now eligible to vote. Educating first time voters to go to polling station on the ballot day is one way of increasing youth participation in election.

NEBE claimed to have registered “up to 99.5% of eligible voters” in 2015 election of which “48% of the registered voters were women|.”⁸¹ The World Report on Disability, published jointly by the World Bank and WHO in 2011, estimated that there were 15 million persons with disabilities in Ethiopia, representing 17.6% of the total population at the time. Unfortunately, data is not available on the number of disable persons who cast votes at least in the last general election. The strategy aims at increasing the participation of disable persons, women, first time voters, youth, and women in the in the upcoming election and cast their vote in voting day.

Data indicating the participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in past general elections is not available. Interestingly, the draft Electoral and Political Parties Registration Proclamation under Article 17(1) explicitly states that the Board will establish polling station to ensure the

⁸⁰ EU Final Observation Report

⁸¹ African Union Observation Mission 2015



participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in elections at or near the place where the voters are to be found. The strategic plan intends to ensure IDPs participation in the election in the 2020 general elections and cast their votes at or near the place where they are found

4.1.1.5. Specific Objective 5: To reduce cases of electoral violence and fraud

In the 2005 general election cases suggesting serious irregularities were observed. In the constituency where election office favored the ruling party, candidate election results varied significantly from those registered in polling stations. In some other polling stations, results were implausible, while others marked 100 per cent turnout and 100 per cent vote for the ruling party⁸².

Similarly, in 2015 general election strikingly similar incidences had been observed. In some polling stations the number of votes cast exceeded the number of registered voters at the stations.⁸³ The CVE strategy aims to have a zero tolerance for electoral fraud and violence in the upcoming 2020 harmonized election. In addition, the strategy seeks to address the fear factor and intimidation used sometimes through traditional and community leaders.

4.2.7. Specific objective 6: To increase awareness on and promote education on democratic citizenship

Individual citizens can hold power to account by bringing new and relevant facts into the public light. People can serve as watchdogs, activists for truth, and monitors of governance. Individual people can serve as more credible truth tellers than other parts of society that are viewed as beholden to special interests or lobbying. From photographing police violence to tracking public documents online... to ensuring that elected officials maintain their campaign promises, individuals can become purveyors of truth and put pressure on institutions and elected officials⁸⁴ Study findings show that in Ethiopia “meaningful civic engagement is currently very limited”⁸⁵ Equally, study findings revealed “the government and civil society organization (CSO) stakeholders identified that putting in place civic engagement policy as a priority.⁸⁶ They also affirmed enacting this policy is “a response to public demand for increased Government accountability and citizen voice and participation in public life.⁸⁷ The strategic plan envisions a continuous awareness and education on democratic citizenship, and

⁸² EU

⁸³ AUOM

⁸⁴ Hollie Russon Gilman(2017)_For democracy to survive, it requires civic engagement Retrieved from: <https://www.vox.com/polyarchy/2017/1/31/14458966/democracy-requires-civic-engagement>[Accessed on 1/10/2019

⁸⁵ OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER(2019) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY ASSESSMENT REPORT(Draft) p.5

⁸⁶ ibid

⁸⁷ ibid



advocate for the enactment and implementation of civic engagement policy to enhance citizens' active participation in public life.

4.2.8. Specific objective 7: To promote election peace education

Changed attitudes, increased tolerance, reduced prejudices, weakened stereotypes, changed conceptions of self and of "other", reinforced sense of collective identity, and the like are the goals of peace education⁸⁸. Elections are considered a process necessary for a political solution to violent conflict and a basis for a durable peace⁸⁹. Conversely, elections can also catalyze violence and destabilize states, in particular if the conditions or results of elections are contested, which is an additional reason to support their organization.⁹⁰ The regular and fair organization of elections is supposed to contribute to a stable and legitimate framework that facilitates discussions about the desired political schemes for the country⁹¹. The strategic plan intends to prevent election related violent through the promotion of peace education to avert or at least mitigate election related violent conflicts.

4.3. Thematic area 2: Election Monitoring and Observation

Strategic Objective 2: Enhance the capacity of domestic observers to enable them provide objective observation across electoral processes and political frameworks to detect and deter voter fraud, election malpractice, and identify, investigate, and reduce election-related violence

Objective of CECO E

To mobilize and provide the necessary support to members to actively participate in monitoring and observation of all electoral processes and referenda undertaken by NEBE;

4.3.1. Specific Objective 1: To provide an independent observation of the electoral process

The cluster will deploy non-partisan observers to gather information on all elements of the electoral cycle and provide an impartial and objective assessment. This will include the production of evidence-based assessments and reports that are distributed amongst key actors such as NEBE, political parties, the media, the international community and the

⁸⁸ ibid

⁸⁹ Gavriel Salomon (2003) Does Peace Education Make a Difference in the Context of an Intractable Conflict University of Haifa, Center for Research on Peace Education

⁹⁰ Electoral Processes & Political Parties: Elections, Political Parties, Democracy & Peace building Retrieved from <http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index6ca3.html?pageId=1943>[Accessed on 10/11/19]

⁹¹ Electoral Processes & Political Parties: Elections, Political Parties, Democracy & Peace building Retrieved from <http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index6ca3.html?pageId=1943>[Accessed on 10/11/19]



electorate. Also the cluster will deploy observers to assess the legal framework as well as monitor the following phases of the election, the electoral environment before, during and after the election, the mapping and setting up of polling stations, registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, the election day, and the post-election activities. A coordinated approach to monitoring will be put in place and this will include production of standardized checklist, training manuals and public statements and reports. Recruitment, training and deployment plans will be developed by the cluster for use by its cluster members. The cluster will also develop comprehensive deployment mapping plans to avoid double deployments by cluster members. A command center, (this will be turned into a situation room a few days before the election), will be set up to coordinate the production of materials, recruitment, training and deployment of observers. The cluster will deploy long term observers in all wards and short-term observers at polling stations on Election Day.

4.3.2. Specific Objective 2: To deter, detect electoral fraud and malpractices.

The presence of the cluster election observers will not only provide additional safeguards in the electoral process complementing the control mechanisms that are put in place by NEBE but also deter attempts of fraud and defuse potential areas of conflict. Consequently, the cluster will develop specialized monitoring approaches that are designed to detect and deter fraud and malpractices. The starting point will be a comprehensive assessment of the voter register. A voters' roll audit expert will be contracted on behalf of the cluster to assist the cluster set up a framework for the audit of the voter's roll. Statistical testing to assess the quality of the voters roll through the "list to voters" and/or the "people to list" methods will be employed. The audit of the roll will be at three levels, at the end of the first cycle of registration, after voters roll verification and after the certification of the voters' roll. The information obtained from this exercise will help detect deliberate attempts to skew the registration for political purposes. Findings of the audit will be used by the cluster to engage with key stakeholders and NRBE to address any shortcomings identified in the exercise. Work with international organizations for technical support and expertise to develop risk assessments and electoral integrity or open data tools relevant to Ethiopia.

While observers shall not interfere in the polling process, they have a role in advocating for improvements in the electoral framework. By formulating concrete recommendations and highlighting options for reform, the cluster will fulfill a key policy role, conducting advocacy with NEBE, the parliament and political parties.



In addition, the cluster will conduct post-election monitoring or observation and evaluation with the aim of taking stock of what worked well and what did not work well. The findings will be used to influence the post-election discourse on electoral reforms.

4.3.3. Specific objective 3: To prevent/mitigate election-related violence and incidence through monitoring and observation

Deployment of local and international monitoring and observer missions is one of the strategies for managing and preventing electoral violence. The presence of monitors can be instrumental in preventing electoral violence through naming and shaming mechanisms and by creating awareness of tensions building up.⁹² Electoral violence needs to be continuously addressed⁹³. Particularly, monitoring... needs to be carried out on a long-term basis and continue between general elections⁹⁴. The strategic plan aims monitoring activities between general elections⁹⁵ on long-term basis.

4.4. Thematic Area 3–Advocacy & Stakeholder Engagement

Strategic Objective: Improve the promotion of sustained civic education, election observation and implementation of the existing electoral laws and the ones to be promulgated

Objectives of CECO E:

To advocate towards an enabling environment for an improved electoral process;

To represent the interest of member organization with key stakeholders, such as NEBE, other government bodies, development partners/donors, and other relevant electoral stakeholders

4.4.1. Specific objective 1- To promote civic engagement and participation

Civic education is conceived as a public, socially oriented system of continuous education and upbringing aimed at building civic competence, democratic culture, satisfying the needs for socialization in the interests of the individual, civil society and the rule of law⁹⁶. Its main goal can be considered as the formation of civil qualities on the basis of new knowledge, skills and values that help individuals to solve emerging problems, adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions, represent and protect their rights and interests, respecting the interests and rights of others.⁹⁷ As a matter of fact, the government through its formal

⁹² Anna Jarstad and Kristine Höglund (2010) Strategies to prevent and manage electoral violence Retrieved from <https://www.accord.org.za/publication/strategies-to-prevent-and-manage-electoral-violence/>[Accessed on10/11/2019]

⁹³ ibid

⁹⁴ ibid

⁹⁵ ibid

⁹⁶ What is civic education and its importance <https://www.legit.ng/1147087-what-civic-education-importance.html>

⁹⁷ ibid



education system has been delivering civic and ethical education from the primary schools all the way to colleges. NEBE has also been voter's education as well. As noted elsewhere in this document, most CSOs who used to cater civic educations were relegated from the civic education activity. In the new democratic dispensation the crucial role CSOs play in the electoral processes has got recognition. NEBE also has affirmed that CSOs play a crucial role in civic and voter education. Against this backdrop the strategic plan aims at promoting civic education in sustainable manner year after year.

4.4.2. Specific objective-2 To oversee the implementation of the electoral law

Ethiopian election board re-establishment proclamation and The Ethiopian Electoral and Political Parties Proclamation were adopted in the past few months. Regulation and directives are expected to be in place in the coming months. As things stand now, it is too early to identify legal gaps and challenges arising from the new legislations since testing the enacted laws and the regulation and directives to be issued will require sometime. The new strategy aims to identify gaps in the course of implementation of the newly enacted legislations and carryout advocacy activities to fill gaps to be identified and amend provisions that may obstruct the effective implementation of these laws.

4.4.3. Specific objective-3 To gaining insight and identify future change

Reflection is a mental exercise wondering through where we have been and to try to make some sense out of it. Post-election reflection sessions help election practitioners, more particularly, CSOs to look back before moving forward. CSOs will take a break from what they have been doing, step away from their work, and ask them what they have learned from involving in the electoral processes. Discussions, interviews, questioning, journals, etc., are some of the strategies to guide the post-election reflection. The strategic plan aims at not only organizing post-election discussions immediately after the election result is declared (before issues emerging in the electoral processes are forgotten) but also developing post-election strategy by learning from the successes and failures of the past election.

4.4.4. Specific objective-4 To improve engagement with different stakeholders

One of the intervention areas envisioned in this strategic plan is election monitoring and election observations to be conducted by local civil society organizations as well as international elections observation missions. Findings of the monitoring and observations reports and recommendations to be forwarded will serve as important action points for the CECOIE to engage with different stakeholders including the executive, the parliament, NEBE,



donors. The strategic plan envisions identifying and preparing list of action points that will emerge from the election monitoring and observation reports to engage the various stakeholders.

4.4.5. Specific objective 5 To promote peace building/conflict resolution

Election-related violence can occur at different stages of the electoral cycle. Ethiopia is not new for electoral violence too. During the 2005 general elections, the country experienced electoral violence that led to loss of lives, injuries and incarcerations of tens of thousands of people. The response to electoral violence more specifically, the designing of interventions to address them depends predominantly on the understanding of their causes. Election-related security and security sector reform, election monitoring, media monitoring, voter education and public awareness, civil society and public engagement initiatives, legal framework reforms , electoral dispute resolution, social and economic support are among the long list of measures that are available to prevent and reduce electoral violence⁹⁸. The strategic plan aims at identifying and implementing interventions that fall within the mandates of civil society organizations to prevent and reduce electoral violence.

4.5. Thematic Area- 4 Research and Capacity Building

Strategic Objective: Improve the capacity of generating, capturing, documenting information and enhancing the knowledge environment and facilitate and support the development and strengthening of the institutional capacities of CECOIE and its members for the effective implementation of the strategic plan

Objective of CECOIE:

To conduct research/studies to inform advocacy for electoral reforms as well as to inform programming implemented by members;

To provide institutional capacity building support to members that enables them to implement various electoral activities;

4.5.1. Specific objective-1 To make readily available data on civic and voters educations, election observation, and electoral laws

Research is instrumental in generating the necessary information and relevant evidences to identify gaps, flaws, irregularities, and limitation in existing laws, policies, institutions and

⁹⁸ Sumedh Rao(2014)Dealing with election-related violence in fragile and conflict-affected states Helpdesk Research Report www.gsdrc.org/helpdesk@gsdrc.org



practices. The government enacted Proclamation No.1133/2019, a Proclamation to Establish the National Electoral Board and Ethiopian Electoral and Political Parties Registration Proclamation and their implementation is currently underway. Particularly, Electoral and Political Parties Registration Proclamation enshrined a provision entailing the enactment of Regulation which elaborates on the substantive provisions and laydown procedural standards and rules for its implementation. Also NEBE will issue about 35 Directives for the effective implementations of the proclamations and the Regulation. Voters' and civic education, as well as election monitoring and observations will also be carried out in the coming months and years. The strategic plan aims at assessing the strengths and weakness as well as the legal gaps of the National Electoral Board Establishment Proclamation, Electoral and Political Parties Proclamation, the Regulation and Directives to be issued so as to use the findings to undertake advocacy work for law reform. Moreover, the strategic plan also envisions assessing the effectiveness of voters' and civic education with the view to using the findings to improve the contents and mode of delivery of the civic and voter's education programs. In addition, the strategic plan will assess how the implementation of election monitoring and observations plan matches operational expectations, as well as the effectiveness of the method in which the activities was conducted, and measure the level of engagement of the Coalition and its members in the monitoring and observations to draw lessons for future intervention.

4.5.2. Specific objective-2 To provide reliable and secure information, as well as make it readily available for immediate use

Knowledge is an important and valuable resource that requires a strong knowledge management capacity to exploit the knowledge residing in the organization⁹⁹. It exists in organizations at both individual and collective levels¹⁰⁰. Knowledge Management is described as the methodology, tools and techniques required to gather, integrate and disseminate knowledge within an organization¹⁰¹.CECOE aims at implementing knowledge management systems through assessing the required knowledge for the Coalition and its members, and the degree to which the organization shares and retains knowledge, design integrated system of tools and technologies through pilot (During the pilot stage, the knowledge management program is first tested and deployed on a limited basis)¹⁰² and roll-out (During the roll-out

⁹⁹ Trevor Vernon (2014) An evaluation of knowledge management practices in nonprofit community services organizations in Australia, Downes Southern Cross University Retrieved from <https://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1388&context=theses>[Accessed on 10/13/19]

¹⁰⁰ ibid

¹⁰¹ ibid

¹⁰² Steve Morrissey (2005) The Design and Implementation of Effective Knowledge Management Systems Ford Motor Company MBA Fellowship, Retrieves from <https://mackinstitute.wharton.upenn.edu/wp->



stage, the firm first expands its knowledge management system to the firm as a whole)¹⁰³ stages, the internalization stage where the knowledge management program will have coverage of the Coalition in its entirety, and designing incentives for use of knowledge management program through the mechanism of performance evaluation and organizing training to employees on how to effectively use the knowledge management tools at their disposal and how to share knowledge¹⁰⁴.

4.5.3. Specific objective-1 To strengthen the institutional capacity of CECOIE and its members

SECOIE is a newly established coalition. For SECOIE to effectively operate and effectively implement its strategic plan and attaining its goals, it is mandatory to put in place organizational structure, policies, systems and procedure, enhance the capacity (human and financial resources) of SECOIE and its members to plan and implement activities, strengthen their capacity in project management, technical skills, and knowledge in electoral works, as well as enhance their capacity to carry out lobbying and advocacy work at various levels, improve their capability to identify and effectively respond to electoral fraud, malpractices that compromise electoral integrity. The strategic plan aims to undertake the foregoing activities.

The legitimacy of an election depends largely on the actual and perceived integrity of the electoral process. In the contemporary world technological intervention is being increasingly utilized to ensure electoral integrity for voter's registration, identification and reporting. Although technology has its own limitations as witnessed in the 2017 Presidential election in Kenya, "which was annulled due to irregularities and illegalities inter alia, in the [electronic] transmission of results"¹⁰⁵, more and more countries around the world, "including many developing democracies, increasingly embrace technology to strengthen their electoral processes"¹⁰⁶... as technology matures, some expect that, sooner or later, fully automated elections will become unavoidable and even a requirement for a credible and transparent electoral process"¹⁰⁷ As things stand now "only very few countries (about 11%) conduct elections largely without technology...) and using at least some technology is already now a

[content/uploads/2013/01/2005_2006_Morrissey_Steve_The_Design_and_Implementation_of_Effective_Knowledge_Management_Systems.pdf](#) [Accessed on 10/13/19]

¹⁰³ ibid

¹⁰⁴ ibid

¹⁰⁵ Peter Wolf (2017) Election technology: precondition for transparent elections or pretext for questioning electoral integrity? Retrieves from <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/election-technology-precondition-transparent-elections-or-pretext-questioning>[Accessed on 10/13/19]

¹⁰⁶ ibid

¹⁰⁷ ibid



reality for most election administrations”.¹⁰⁸ This strategic plan aims at advocating for the introduction of technology to strengthen the electoral processes and ensure electoral integrity.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*



5. Organizational and Governance Structure

5.1. Governance structures

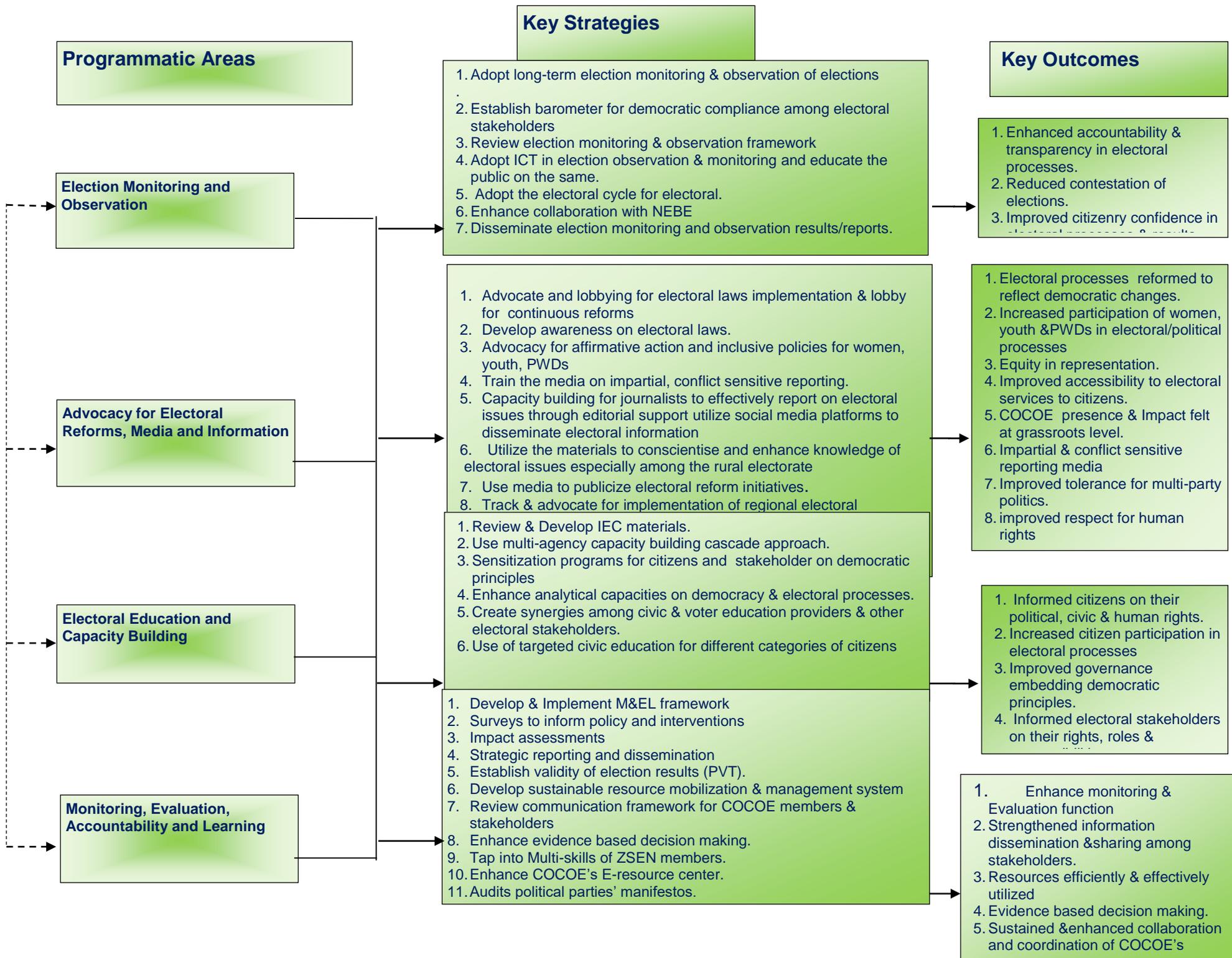
The CECOIE is a coalition of networks and individual non- governmental organizations (expressed their commitment to join the Coalition in writing) that have a focus on electoral support in Ethiopia. CECOIE derives its legitimacy from its membership through a structure that facilitates democracy, inclusivity, transparency and accountability and guided by its values outlined under section 3.2. The General Assembly (GA) which embraces all members of the Coalition is the highest decision-making body. The Board which consists of electees from the 9 regional states, the two city administrations and seven CSOs from the federal level to be elected by the by the GA serves the Coalition for a three-year term and eligible for re-election to a second term. CECOIE' will have 11 regional chapters including the 9 regions and Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations that would be led by CSOs represented in the Board. The Currently the Interim Coordinating Committee which is serving as a Board, provides strategic leadership through policy formulation and oversight of implementation of all programs and activities, ensuring resources are utilized in an economic and efficient manner (to enhance value for money) whilst the institution retains its relevance. Regional CSOs enhance effectiveness of activities through decentralized operations in order that all members can easily access and contribute to CECOIE's core mandate. The Coalition secretariat is established to manage and facilitate the day today operation of the Coalition keeps all the organs together by providing the 'glue' that ensures all plans are implemented through effective monitoring, resource mobilization, collaboration and strategic partnerships. The Secretariat is headed by a Director who oversees the day to day running of the CECOIE is structured in four program areas, notably, Civic and Voter Education, Election Monitoring and Observation, Advocacy & Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Capacity Building. CECOIE will implement the strategic plan, more specifically the four programs through regional chapters. There is also a cross cutting issues like gender, inclusivity and, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Program, which does not stand on its own but whose mandate and responsibilities spread in all the other four programs.

5.2. Resource Mobilization/Management

CECOIE relies mainly on two sources of funding, resources from its membership and development partners who are interested in the various strategic focus areas of the Coalition.



During the strategic period 2020-2023, the programmatic and operational costs are expected to be considerably high for a couple of reasons. The first reason is that since CECOÉ' is a newly established network. Putting in place appropriate structure, systems, policies and the necessary human resources is vital for the effective operation of the Coalition in general and the Secretariat in particular. Adequate resources are required to address the Coalition's institutional capacity gaps. Equally, the Coalition needs adequate resources to fulfill its goals and fully implement this strategic plan.





5.3 Key Assumptions and Risks

5.3.1 Key Assumptions

The implementation of this plan will depend on key assumptions. These include:

1. **Political Environment:** It is assumed that the political environment in Ethiopia will continue to improve to accommodate democratic growth thus giving CSOs a conducive environment to achieve its goals.
2. **Sustained Funding:** The strategy assumes that the funding trends will be sustained as projected and there will be no gap that will drastically affect the budgetary process for the Coalition for the next five years. It is also hoped that CECOIE will attract new funding partners during the period.
3. **Sustained Commitment:** It is hoped that CECOIE members will continue their commitment and support to the Network.

5.3.2 Key Risks

The major risk to the implementation of this plan remains the fragile political environment and security.

5.3.3 Risk Management

CECOIE will develop and implement a risk management framework that will assist the Network to continuously assess and manage risks that could affect the achievement of its objectives in the 2019 – 2023 strategic plan. This will be achieved through:

- (i) Training staff on how to design and implement effective risk management framework.
- (ii) Risk identification/profiling, monitoring and response/mitigation.
- (iii) Linking risk management framework to the strategic plan.
- (iv) Setting out action plans on how to implement the risk management framework.

Table 1: Risk Analysis

Nature of Risks	Mitigation Measures
High level expectation of COCOIE by the public	- Develop and implement a communication strategy to manage public expectation.
Unfavorable political environment including infuriation	- Continue implementing the collaborative approach rather than confrontation. - Increase liaison with state agencies.
Inadequate funding	- Lobby for more funding from members and development partners. - Establish strategic partners



	- Align activities with areas of interest to funding agencies.
Lack of or low level collaboration from strategic and key stakeholders	- Enhanced stakeholder engagement and management
Security threats to board and staff members	- Develop and implement policies that address personnel security, motivation and general welfare
Information security and management	- Implement high level data security infrastructure and conduct periodic reviews.

5.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of this strategic plan will be carried out in four levels. These are:

- i. **Performance monitoring-**: This will be carried out as a follow up to track progress of activities outlined in the program areas and individual work plans against set targets.
- ii. **Compliance monitoring-**: This will entail establishing the level of compliance with CECO E's set policies and procedures in the implementation of the plan.
- iii. **Midterm review-**: will be carried out in 2021 to facilitate review of strategies and outcomes and to accommodate any emerging issues that need to be addressed.
- iv. **Evaluation-**: The final evaluation will assess the extent to which the set objectives were met, and the impact made through the strategies outlined.