ELECTIONS COMMISSION OF MALDIVES

STRATEGIC PLAN
2016 - 2020

Elections Commission
Republic of Maldives

UNDP

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Strategic plan (2016-2020) is the road map of the Elections Commission of Maldives. Inside these pages is a vision of our future and an idea of what we work to become.

As a result, our strategic plan is not only the strategy and tactics, but the heart, the morals, and ideals that form the foundation of our institution. These strategies reflect our values; what we are and what we aspire to be. These values illustrate an election management body seeking to continue enjoying the strong public trust and confidence in administering transparent, free, fair, impartial and credible elections.

With this new strategic plan we now know the direction we want to take and who we want to be when we get there. This document is not meant to be a permanent, set-in-stone list of commandments, but a living document that will be revised and changed as we grow and meet our early goals.

On behalf of the Elections Commission of Maldives, I take this opportunity to thank UNDP who gave the technical and financial assistance to develop this plan. And additionally looking forward to see UNDP supporting us in executing and monitoring of the plan.

Thank you for taking the time to review the plan.

Ahmed Sulaiman

Chairman of the Elections Commission

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
AG	Attorney General
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (training)
CAP	Capacity Assessment Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EC	Elections Commission
ECS	Election Coordination Section
EMB	Election Management Body
EMS	Election Management System
FEMBoSA	Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia
HR	Human Resource and Professional Development Section
HRCM	Human Rights Commission of Maldives
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology Section
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LAPPR	Legal Affairs and Political Parties Regulation Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MQA	Maldives Qualification Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PG	Prosecutor General
PSA	Planning, Statistics and Archives Section
REG	Registration Section
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VE	Voter and Civic Education Section

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INTRODUCTION

1
INTRODUCTION

From the period of democratic reforms to the present day, the Maldivian political and economic system, institutions, and society at large have evolved in parallel with rapid changes in many areas of public life, and in the face of significant internal and external pressures. Uncertainty in the political sphere has been a defining feature since the country's first-ever openly contested Presidential elections in 2008.

While recent elections in the Maldives - including the second Presidential Election (2013), Parliamentary Election and Local Council Election (2014) - were positively assessed by international observers as being "well administered", the complex nature of the 2013 Presidential electoral process tested the confidence of an electorate unfamiliar with democratic processes.[1] The *16 Point Guidelines* issued by the Supreme Court in the course of the 2013 Presidential election cycle, contributed to the complexity of the election and resulted in a lack of clarity in the election legal framework.

The development of the Elections Commission of Maldives's second Strategic Plan took place in 2015, during a challenging period in the country's progress towards the consolidation of democracy and with the institution itself increasingly under scrutiny. A *Democracy Survey* conducted by Transparency Maldives in advance of the 2013 presidential elec-

tion found that over one third of people either distrusted or held no trust for the Elections Commission.[2] Allegations of vote-buying in recent elections have further called into question the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. This makes for an extremely challenging context for the Elections Commission to operate in. Going forward, a key issue is how to enhance stakeholder and public confidence in the electoral process and election administration.

The 2011 – 2020 Strategic Plan has guided the Elections Commission's operations and activities during the past five-year period. For the young Election Management Body (EMB), the key strategic focus was on how to enhance the institutional and human resource capacity of the Elections Commission. However, on review, it was found that a significant number of strategic goals were not met. The Elections Commission and stakeholders interviewed in the course of this strategic planning process agreed that the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan was too ambitious and not adequately mindful of the workload entailed in managing elections as well as the challenges facing Maldives as a new democracy. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan was not used as a management tool to measure progress towards stated goals. Nor was it reviewed and adapted to be flexible to the evolving political environment in the country during this five-year period. This

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1   EU Election Observation Mission, Final Report, Parliamentary Elections 2014

2   Transparency Maldives, Democracy at the Crossroads: The Results of 2013 Maldives Democracy Survey

perpetuated a reactive approach and negated the purpose of having adopted a Strategic Plan in the first place.

What clearly emerged in the course of the interviews conducted as part of the strategic planning process is that a credible and inclusive electoral process is of paramount importance to ensure the long-term consolidation of democracy and political stability in the Maldives. Ensuring the full participation of electoral stakeholders throughout the electoral cycle and enhancing their confidence in the electoral process and election administration, is of critical importance. Furthermore, increasing public awareness and trust in the electoral process and enhancing citizens' understanding of democratic principles is crucial for a credible election process.

The key challenges for the Election Commission going forward are:

- How to restore the confidence of electoral stakeholders in the electoral process and election administration?

- How to deliver its mandate given the fluid political context?

- How to ensure a focus on long-term institutional strengthening while administering Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections, as well as frequent by-elections?

This 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan of the Elections Commission of Maldives consists of a five-year Strategic Plan (2016-2020) and a three-year Action Plan (2016-2018). It aims to be realistic, measureable and achievable, focusing on areas that were identified as deserving special strategic prioritization. The timeline for activities takes into account the operational imperatives of the Local Council Election of 2016, the Presidential Election of 2018 and the Parliamentary Election of 2019. The document outlines the strategic foundations of the institution; its mission, vision and the values underpinning its work. It also contains a review of the 2011- 2015 Strategic Plan and an overview of the findings of a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) that provided a systematic assessment of the internal status of the Elections Commission, and the external environment in which it operates.

Going forward, the overriding strategic priority shall remain as enhancing the institutional and human resource capacity of the Elections Commission of Maldives so that the institution is able to deliver its mandate more effectively and efficiently, while also working to promote the full participation of stakeholders throughout the electoral cycle and ensuring their trust and confidence in the electoral process and election administration. Communication, cooperation and transparency will be key to its successful implementation.

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ELECTIONS COMMISSION OF MALDIVES

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ELECTIONS COMMISSION OF MALDIVES

The Elections Commission (EC) of Maldives was established on 7 August 2008 as an independent and impartial institution to conduct and supervise all state elections and public referendums as well as to monitor the regulatory framework pertaining to the functioning of political parties. Under the Elections Commission Act (8/2008) five members are appointed by the president for a five year term with approval by People's Majlis. The current Commission will serve until November 2019.

The need for an independent Elections Commission was recognized during 2004 when a series of reforms were introduced to strengthen democracy in the country. One of the key aspects of these reforms was to modernize the electoral system, ensuring that elections would be conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner, and to develop a functioning multi-party system in the Maldives.

Subsequently, under the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, the Elections Commission was established as an independent and impartial institution, to function in accordance with the Constitution and laws enacted by the People's Majlis' and the statutes governing the responsibilities, powers and mandate of the Elections Commission.

The Elections Commission's responsibilities and powers, as per the Constitution and the Elections Commission Act, include the following:

- To conduct, manage, supervise, and facilitate all elections and public referendums, to ensure the proper exercise of the right to vote, and to ensure that all elections and public referendums are conducted freely and fairly, without intimidation, aggression, undue influence or corruption;

- To prepare, maintain, and update electoral rolls, and to make all arrangements for holding elections and public referendums;

- To hold and declare the results of those elections and public referendums within periods prescribed by law;

- To compile the register of voters in each constituency, to revise it at such periods as shall be determined by law and to provide for publication of the register in the Government Gazette;

- To fix, vary, demarcate and continuously review the boundaries and names of constituencies or voting units in all elections in accordance with principles specified by law and to provide for publication of any amendments in the Government Gazette;

- To register political parties, and to perform those actions relating to

political parties as specified by law;

- To educate and create awareness among the general public on the electoral process and its purpose;

- To formulate electoral policies for all elections, public referendums and those elections assigned to the Elections Commission by the Constitution and law;

- To conduct training for employees and delegates;

- To plan and implement electoral logistics and delivery of equipment;

- To accredit domestic and international observers;

- To make all arrangements for Maldivian people residing abroad to cast vote;

- To determine polling stations for elections and public referendums; and give timely notice to the landlord or person in charge in case of failure to corporate with the Elections Commission, and discharge its duties;

- To publish a report for public inspection after each election and public referendum as specified by law;

- To perform such additional functions as may be prescribed by the Constitution and law.[3]

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3   Elections Commission Act (2008), Art. 21. Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (2008), Art. 170

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STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process for the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan was undertaken in mid-2015, with the aim of enabling the Elections Commission of Maldives to respond to the challenges or needs the institution may confront in the five year period in executing its mandate, while ensuring a continued focus on long-term institutional strengthening.

In line with the electoral cycle approach, the objective of the strategic planning process was to ensure that the Elections Commission does not focus solely on organizing and delivering elections but also, to enable the institution to "think ahead" and to proactively instigate change when needed. Furthermore, the strategic planning process aimed to analysis the internal dynamics of the Elections Commission and engage the institution in institutionalising a strategic approach so as to ensure that strategic planning processes are incorporated into management culture of the Elections Commission.

DESK REVIEW

The Elections Commission's second Strategic Plan was initially grounded in a desk review of key documents and the legal framework for elections in the Maldives. Key documents include 2011-2015 Election Commission Strategic Plan, 2014 Election Commission Orga-

nizational Assessment[4], 2013 Transparency Maldives Democracy Survey, EU Election Observation Mission's Final Report on the 2014 Parliamentary Elections and Commonwealth Election Observation Reports. With regard to the legal framework, reference was made to the following: Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (2008), Presidential Election Regulation (2013), Presidential Election Act (12/2008), Election Commission Act (8/2008), General Election Act (11/2008), Parliamentary Elections Act (2/2009), Political Parties Act (4/2013) and the Supreme Court Guidelines (2013/SC-C/42).

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS

In planning, the process is often as important as the result. To enhance transparency and to ensure that the new Strategic Plan is reflective of stakeholders' needs and expectations, a participatory strategic planning process was employed in the development of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. Extensive consultations took place internally within the Commission and secretariat. Interviews were also conducted with a broad range of key stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organisations (CSOs), media, election observer groups, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and other independent institutions in the Maldives.

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4   IFES & USAID, Organisational Assessment, Elections Commission and Secretariat, September 2014

Preliminary findings were presented to the Commission on 2nd June 2015. Furthermore, a Strategic Planning Workshop was held with the participation of both the Commission and Secretariat on 10th June 2015. The workshop offered an opportunity for the Commissioners and Secretariat to reflect, discuss and fine-tune the institution's strategic foundations; namely the mission, vision and guiding principles. Priority strategic areas for the new Strategic Plan were identified at this workshop, with an initial outline of the action points, goals and objectives the Elections Commission planned to meet over the next five-year period. A SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) was also conducted, facilitating the development of a strategic plan through a systematic assessment of the internal status of the Elections Commission and the external environment in which it operates.

A strategic planning workshop was also held with key stakeholders on 16th June 2015 - including political parties, media, NGOs, law enforcement and other independent bodies - seeking their comments and input on the draft strategic pillars identified for the next five-year period. By involving stakeholders in the process of defining the strategic plan, the Elections Commission gained a better understanding of stakeholder expectations, while stakeholders meanwhile gained a greater awareness of the challenges faced by the Elections Commission in executing its mandate. Such collaboration early on in the strategic planning process is a prerequisite for ensuring effective partnerships in the implementation of the Strategic Plan over the next five years.

An initial draft Strategic Action Plan was presented to the Commission on 23rd June 2015. Comments and feedback received from the Commission on this first draft were then incorporated, with a revised draft provided to the Commission for approval on 8th July 2015.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure that the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan is used as a management tool - both to guide activities and to measure progress towards stated goals - continuous monitoring is of key importance. Demonstrating institutional commitment to this, an internal Strategic Planning Steering Committee was formed in June 2015, to lead this process.

This Steering Committee will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Elections Commission's performance in implementing the new five-year plan. Periodic assessments are to be undertaken with progress reported on every quarter. Regular review of progress allows for flexible planning. Through quarterly monitoring, the Steering Committee will be in a position to provide the Elections Commission with timely and substantive analysis, particularly in relation to risks and challenges, and make recommendations on modifications or corrective measures that need to be undertaken in the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will therefore be revised, when necessary, to respond and adapt to accommodate changing circumstances.

Of note is that the Steering Committee is also tasked with the important role of engaging the Elections Commission to institutionalise a strategic approach and to ensure that strategic planning processes are incorporated into management culture of the Elections Commission. For example, to establish M&E focal points

in each division and to ensure that Lessons Learned exercises are conducted after each electoral cycle, with the aim of capturing best practices and identifying areas in need of improvement etc.

As an extension of the new Strategic Plan, it is foreseen that each division and section of the Elections Commission develop its own plan, identifying the ways in which it will contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. Similarly, staffs and members should be engaged to consider their professional contributions to departmental and organisational objectives, cite personal performance indicators and monitor their own progress in their respective areas of expertise. Capacity development should include a focus on capacities that will enable staff to design, implement, monitor, adapt and ultimately, achieve their goals. The Strategic Planning Committee is expected to lead on this process.

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SWOT ANALYSIS

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SWOT ANALYSIS

As part of the Strategic Workshop for the development of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted by the Elections Commission and Secretariat. This consisted of a rigorous self-assessment by the Elections Commission of its internal strengths and weaknesses, and also a forward looking assessment of the external environment, identifying potential threats and opportunities that the institution may face in the future. What follows is a summary of the main findings of the SWOT analysis:

STRENGTHS

- **Constitutional mandate** as an independent institution under the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Maldives

- **Institutional experience** in conducting Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections, as well as numerous by-elections. Credibility on both the international and national level, in the technical administration of elections.

- **Close working relations** with other national independent institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Human Rights Commission, and law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.

- **Effective and close cooperation** with international partners

- Established **website and social media presence.**

- Progress made towards the institutionalization of a **training for the electoral workforce** with a training programme due to be hosted at a national training institute with Maldivies Qualification Authority (MQA) accreditation

- Revisions to the **organization structure** have reduced the centralization in decision-making that led to bureaucratic blockages and delays

WEAKNESSES

- Long term institutional strengthening work being sidelined due to operational imperatives of elections taking precedence

- Weak **strategic planning,** with short-term activities not always in line with long-term strategic goals.

- **Stakeholder engagement** has not been institutionalised and as a result, stakeholders, notably political parties, do not demonstrate full confidence in the Elections Commissions' policies and performance.

- Weak **internal management practices** such as poor internal communication, overly bureaucratic processes, lack of a knowledge management systems, weak integrated election management planning etc.

- Limited **budgetary autonomy** with all budgets needing to be approved by the Ministry of Finance implies degree of uncertainty in planning and programming activities.

- No **data management** system is in place to ensure consistent data tracking and enhance consistency of information delivered.

- **Office space** spread out across three separate floors, presenting challenges for the Elections Commission to work in a cohesive and co-ordinated manner and creating parallel lines of reporting. There is also insufficient office space for temporary staff taken on during election peak periods.

- Lack of permanent presence or a clear mandate for coordination at the atoll level reduces the Elections Commission's reach and accessibility. **Decentralisation** of election administration remains an unresolved issue.

- An **institutional Capacity Development Programme** is not in place**.** A training needs assessment has not been conducted.

- Weak **human resources management** with a high turnover of staff, notably in the supervisory tiers

- A number of divisions/sections are **understaffed,** putting stress on the Elections Commission's capacity for service delivery.

- No Public Outreach Policy and no Media Communications Strategy, both of which negatively impacts on the **quality and consistency of information** that the public receives.

- **Weak election dispute resolution mechanism,** undermining credibility of election administration.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** under the first Strategic Plan was not based on a system of indicators and performance benchmarks

OPPORTUNITIES

- Openness to a shared democratic culture with **high levels of political participation and turnout** for elections.

- **New technologies** enabling the Elections Commission to expand its e-services to stakeholders and enhance service delivery.

- **Electoral legal reform process** results in a stronger legal framework, notably in the areas of Election dispute resolution (EDR) and voter registration

- **Political reconciliation** is reached resulting in expansion of democratic space and increased participation.

- Elections Commission's credibility in the administration of elections acting as a positive factor to obtain **national and international support and resources**

- Strengthening south-south cooperation promotes and allows opportunity to enhance professionalism and share best practices

THREATS

- Complex nature of the 2013 Presidential electoral process tested the confidence of an electorate unfamiliar with democratic processes and may have undermined **public perception** of the Elections Commission.

- **Delays in the timeframe for promulgation of the laws** resulting from the electoral legal reform process not passed in time for next election cycle.

- Increased **tightening of democratic space** resulting in disillusionment and non-participation.

- Failure of political talks resulting in **political instability** or boycott of the election by opposition

- **Misinformation in media or on social media,** undermining credibility of electoral process.

- **Dependence on international donor support** for administration of elections creates expectations and calls into question long-term sustainability.

- **ICT security breaches** due to hacking.

5

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2015

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REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2015

The 2011 – 2015 Strategic Plan has been guiding the Elections Commission's operations and activities for the past five-year period. The planning exercise for the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 took place in 2010. As a young Election Management Body (EMB), the key priority was on building the institutional and human resource capacity of the Elections Commission. On review, a significant number of strategic goals were not met, such as the introduction of e-voting, the establishment of a mechanism for stakeholder engagement, the development of a fully integrated Election Management System (EMS) and the establishment of a regulatory system for the non-compliance of political parties with codes of conduct.

In practice, the Strategic Plan was not used to activities or as a reference for measuring progress towards stated goals or the overarching organizational objectives. No internal mechanism has actively reviewed and monitored the progress of the strategic priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. Since the Plan was drafted in 2010, it has not been reviewed to accommodate evolving or unanticipated change, take advantage of emerging opportunities or more generally to respond to events that may impact on theElections Commission's work. This perpetuated a reactive approach and defeated the purpose of having adopted a Strategic Plan in the first place. Notably, the plan does not include a thor-

ough and substantive situation analysis, or baseline indicators and goals that are clearly defined and measurable, making it difficult to demonstrate concrete achievements. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan document provides no rationale for choosing the strategic pillars and cites no clear progress indicators.

The Elections Commission and stakeholders agreed that the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan was too ambitious and not adequately mindful of the challenges facing Maldives as a new democracy. Also, there was consensus that the plan did not sufficiently take into account the main mandate of the Elections Commission; to organize and administer a series of local and national level elections including frequent by-elections. What emerged clearly from both interviews and desk review is that going forward, the Elections Commission would benefit from prioritizing and focusing on specific core areas and from having SMART indicators by which to measure progress.[5]

What follows is a summary overview of the strategic areas identified in the course of the strategic planning process for the Elections Commission of Maldives 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

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5   Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound

6

STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED

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STRATEGIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

One of the strategic pillars of the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan was to "Strengthen the legislative framework of electoral management and political parties". However many of the action points highlighted in the current Strategic Plan has not been met and many of the overlaps within election related legislations have not been addressed to date. Additionally, the election legal framework also needs to be revisited in light of the 16 point Supreme Court Guideline issues during the 2013 Presidential Election. The overriding finding to emerge in the course of the consultant's consultations - with both internal and external stakeholders - is that going forward, electoral legal reform is imperative, notably in the areas of Election dispute resolution (EDR), voter registration, political party registration etc. Initial legal reform work supported by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), was started after the election symposium of August 2014. Legal reform is not only a key strategic pillar but also impacts on the effectiveness of all the areas listed below. Furthermore, integrity depends on public confidence in the electoral process and so the public needs to be kept informed of the electoral reform process.

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES/ PROCESSES

Although the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan highlights strengthening organizational structure as a strategic priority, the overall impression is that the Elections Commission's attention has been principally taken up with the conduct of elections over the past five years, with insufficient attention given to institutional strengthening with a results orientated focus. While steps have been taken to reduce the centralization that led to bureaucratic blockages and delays, the changes that have been made to the organisation chart needs to be operationalized through capacity building initiatives and training. Another factor highlighted as affecting the functioning of the Elections Commission is that the office space in Malé is spread out across three separate offices, presenting challenges for the Elections Commission to work in a cohesive and co-ordinated manner and creates parallel lines of reporting, with insufficient office space for temporary staff taken on during election peak periods. Also, the lack of permanent presence or a clear mandate for coordination at the atoll level significantly reduces the Elections Commission's reach and accessibility.

HUMAN RESOURCES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The majority of the strategies listed under the Strategic Pillar "Building a Competent Workforce" remain to be implemented or in need of improvement. An institutional Capacity Development Programme is not in place. A training needs assessment has not been conducted. Going forward, stakeholders interviewed

underlined the need for the Elections Commission to engage staff in an assessment of organizational, departmental and individual goals, identifying existing capacities as well as capacity gaps. There is a clear need for a BRIDGE training programme as well as in context specific trainings.6 Foreign Travel Guidelines should be developed so as to ensure transparency in training opportunities. Internal interviewees highlighted how the human resources policies of the Elections Commission remain in need of improvement. There was clear consensus that a more transparent system of merit-based staff recruitment needs to be put in place with a staff appraisal system that clearly outlines staff welfare policies, training opportunities, promotion policies and career development. Turnover of staff, notably in the supervisory tiers is high7. The fact that a significant number of staff is on temporary contracts poses problems in terms of the retention of staff. Furthermore, many divisions and units are decidedly understaffed putting stress on the Elections Commission's capacity for service delivery.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The actions listed in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan regarding ICT were overly ambitious. For example, the Plan committed to introducing e-voting and counting technology within the five-year period – a challenging task in a new democracy. The action to conduct a study on international best practices on ICT in electoral man-

agement has not been done. There is no integrated election management system (EMS) and insufficient budget has been allocated for upgrading technology and enhancing security. To increase efficiency of service delivery, there is a need for the Elections Commission to expand e-services to stakeholders. This could include: online candidate registration, portal for voter registration etc. There was consensus among the Election Commissions Secretariat, CSOs and political parties that e-voting is a more long term project and should be approached with a clear plan and in phases. To build confidence in the e-platform that is created, e-voting could first be piloted for political party primaries and scaled up later on.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC OUTREACH

Stakeholders interviewed noted that interaction with electoral stakeholders has taken place on an ad hoc basis with no clear mandate for its coordination and, for the most part, only during election peak periods. No regulatory mechanism for key stakeholders in the electoral process has been set up. No Media Strategy has been developed. Electoral stakeholders play a key role in creating public confidence in Elections Commission and ensuring public support for its policies and programmes. To ensure trust in the electoral process, both internal and external interlocutors were strongly of the opinion that there is a need for the Elections Commission to institutionalise stakeholder engagement and to develop an operational culture that makes it re-

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6   Building Resources in Democracy, Governance & Elections. http://www.bridge-project.org/en/

7   IFES & USAID, Organisational Assessment, Elections Commission and Secretariat, September 2014, P. 21

sponsive to the needs of its stakeholders. Furthermore, stakeholders are key partners in conducting voter education activities. There is a need to work closely with civil society organisations and other key stakeholders, in developing targeted programmes of voter education and ensuring consistent information. Going forward, there is a need for the Elections Commission to launch a significant outreach campaign that will restore enthusiasm in the democratic process and enhance the perception of the Elections Commission as a credible, professional, independent, neutral and responsive institution. The new website is an important tool and should be granted allocate resources. Social media presents new opportunities and challenges for democracy promotion. The Elections Commission needs to explore the potential of social media as a tool for engagement and to enhance participation in the Maldivian context.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Although the previous strategic plan listed the establishment of a mechanism for regular consultations with political parties as a strategic priority, interaction with political parties has taken place at best on an ad hoc basis and, for the most part, only during election peak periods. Political tensions have resulted in a sense of uncertainty about the consolidation of democracy in the Maldives and created distrust among certain parties with regard to the Elections Commission. There was consensus that engagement with political parties needs to be institutionalized.

The Commission needs to play a more significant convening role, providing a forum to address issues that may arise on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, the Commission should collaborate with political parties to support more long-term democratization processes such as the promotion of women's political participation. Yet the review and comparative analysis of laws and regulations of political parties as part of the strategic action in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, has not been undertaken. Political parties interviewed expressed their concern with regard to the registration of party members, the verification process and delays in sharing the updated membership registry. Also, a clear conclusion from the interviews with internal and external stakeholders was that there is a need for the Elections Commission to establish an effective mechanism to monitor campaign finance, with clear penalties for non-compliance. A number of these issues relate to electoral legal reform.

GENDER

Gender issues were not addressed in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. This is a major oversight and needs to be reflected in the new plan, with both an internal and external focus. At present only 5 of 85 parliamentarians are women, less than 6%. Of the 302 candidates who stood for election in the 2014 Parliamentary elections, only 23 were women.[8] A survey conducted by Transparency Maldives found that 62% of those surveyed believe men make better leaders than women[9]. This represents a major chal-

8   EU Election Observation Mission Report, Parliamentary Elections, 2014

9   Transparency Maldives, Democracy at the Crossroads: The Results of 2013 Maldives Democracy Survey

lenge for women who wish to enter politics. A clear recommendation emerging from the Organizational Assessment of the Elections Commission and Secretariat was that "it is important that the EC adopts a gender perspective to ensure the institutions' decisions work to maximize the participation of women in the electoral processes as candidates, voters, electoral administrators and observers".[10] This recommendation is backed up by interviews with stakeholders who called for the Elections Commission to play a more proactive role in promoting the political participation of women.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan specifically notes monitoring and evaluation of Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plan as a key action. However, no internal mechanism was established to actively review and monitor the progress towards the objectives listed in the Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the Plan was not subject to regular reviews to adapt to the evolving political circumstances. A formal M&E system helps staff to maintain their focus on organizational objectives underscores accountability and draws attention to areas requiring greater attention. Going forward, it is foreseen that the Strategic Planning Committee will be responsible for monitoring the Elections Commission's performance in implementing the new five-year plan. To facilitate this process, the Steering Committee should work closely with the different divisions and units in taking the Strategic Action

Plan forward. The Elections Commission needs to institutionalise a strategic approach so as to ensure that strategic planning processes are incorporated into management culture of the Elections Commission.

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10 IFES & USAID, Organisational Assessment, Elections Commission and Secretariat, September 2014. P.18

7

STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

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STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

VISION

To be recognized as an independent and impartial election institution, conducting election processes in a credible, competent and transparent manner and enjoying strong public and stakeholder confidence

MISSION

To effectively and efficiently deliver on its mandate to impartially and transparently conduct, manage, supervise, and facilitate elections and public referendums that merit public trust, while working to promote the full participation of stakeholders throughout the electoral cycle and ensuring the public's enhanced confidence in the democratic process and election administration.

VALUES

- **Transparency** - ensure accessibility and open communication with stakeholders and public
- **Independence** - be a service-orientated, self-governing institution free from undue influence
- **Integrity** - demonstrate honesty and professionalism in all functions
- **Impartiality** - be non-partisan and fair in decisions and functions
- **Credibility** - engender trust through consistency, competence and professionalism
- **Accountability** - take full responsibility for actions and be answerable to public

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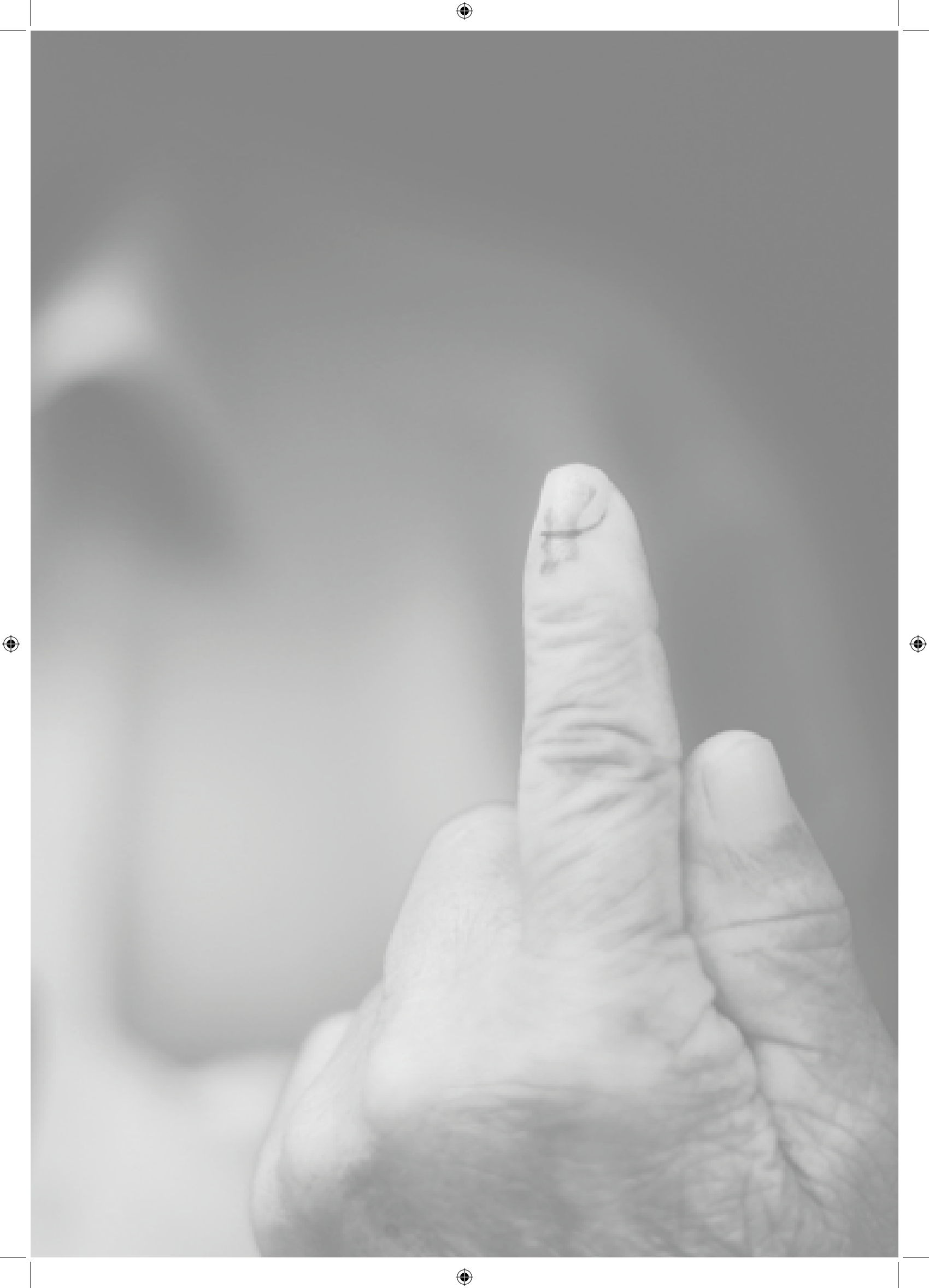
STRATEGIC PILLARS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

8

STRATEGIC PILLARS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

STRATEGIC PILLAR 1: LEGAL REFORM

STRATEGIC GOAL

EC engagement in the electoral legal reform process to be guided by the principles of neutrality and transparency, with the overall aim of enhancing the credibility and integrity of the election process.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1.1 Establish institutional framework for EC's activities on electoral legal reform

1.2 Draft and propose amendments to electoral legal framework based on a comprehensive review of the existing legal framework

1.3 Engage key stakeholders throughout the electoral reform process

OUTPUTS

Revised legal framework with improved electoral laws to promote credible elections

OUTCOMES

- Stakeholders have better understanding of electoral legal framework.

- Enhance clarity and integrity of the electoral legal framework

STRATEGIC PILLAR 2: INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE & PROCESSES

STRATEGIC GOAL

To strengthen institutional structure and internal management practices and processes, with a view to strengthening the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the election management

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.1 Seek to correct structural weaknesses in the institution with a view to better reflect and serve the strategic priorities of the institution.

2.2 Enhance internal management practices and structures to enhance institutional efficiency and effectiveness and to ensure institutional memory.

2.3 Create an enabling environment and explore options to ensure election administration presence both at HQ and atoll level

2.4 Strengthening the internal structure for administering a transparent, impartial and credible election

OUTPUTS

Better internal management practices and structures, including the establishment of an EC archive System, data management system etc.

OUTCOMES

- Increased sustainability of the EC as an institution due to enhanced internal management systems and practices

- Greater institutional efficiency and effectiveness

STRATEGIC PILLAR 3: HUMAN RESOURCES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC GOAL

To build a competent EC workforce and strengthen the professional development and retention of staff

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

3.1 Training and awareness building of Commissioners and secretariat on election related issues

3.2 Strengthen the Human Resource Management System of the EC

OUTPUTS

- New Institution level and individual level EC capacity development plans to address capacity gaps

- New Human Resources Management System (HRMS), incorporating a staff appraisal system that clearly outlines staff welfare policies, training opportunities, promotion policies and career development

OUTCOMES

- Enhanced institutional efficiency and competence due to capacity development of EC Commissioners and staff

- Enhanced staff professionalism and motivation leading to increase in stakeholder and beneficiary satisfaction

STRATEGIC PILLAR 4: INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

STRATEGIC GOAL

To strengthen information and communication technology as a strategic resource to improve efficiency of election management and enhance internal and external communications.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4.1 Strengthen the EC's ICT capacity and expand e-services to electoral stakeholders

4.2 Enhance stakeholder confidence, especially that of Political Parties, in E-voting

OUTPUTS

• Secure, integrated Election Management System

• Secure Data Management System

OUTCOMES

• Increased staff acceptance and understanding of new and existing software and systems

• More responsive and efficient service delivery due to increased ICT capacity of staff

STRATEGIC PILLAR 5: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC OUTREACH

STRATEGIC GOAL

To promote participation of all stakeholders in electoral activities and enhance public trust and confidence in the electoral process and election administration

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

5.1 Institutionalize engagement with electoral stakeholders and promote their sustained participation throughout the electoral cycle.

5.2 Enhance the EC's capacity in media relations to improve information flow between EC and the public

5.3 Support role and engagement of media in the electoral cycle, promote the professional and responsible media coverage of electoral processes

5.4 Enhance public perception and confidence in the EC and promote engagement in the democratic process

5.6 Create awareness and understanding among citizens of the electoral process through an extensive voter education campaign

5.6 Effective management of the accreditation process for Election Observers for enhancing the credibility of the election process.

OUTPUTS

- Stakeholder Dialogue Platform established with codes of conduct signed with key electoral stakeholders

- Training manual produced and training programme for electoral observers implemented

OUTCOMES
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- More accurate, independent and professional media coverage of electoral matters

- Strengthened public confidence in the EC due to enhanced understanding of electoral process

- Enhanced communication and cooperation between EC & electoral stakeholders

- Increased transparency leading to enhanced trust and confidence of stakeholders in the electoral process and election administration

STRATEGIC PILLAR 6: POLITICAL PARTIES

STRATEGIC GOAL

Strengthening engagement with political parties through-out the electoral cycle for enhanced trust and confidence in the electoral process and election administration

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

6.1 Institutionalize engagement with political parties and promote their sustained participation throughout the electoral cycle

6.2 Support the capacity development of political parties and party agents

6.2 Support the participation of women as candidates through engagement with political parties

OUTPUTS

• Training manual produced and training programme on electoral processes for political parties implemented

• Observation training programme for party agents implemented

OUTCOMES

• Enhanced communication and cooperation between EC & political parties

• Increased transparency leading to enhanced trust and confidence in the electoral process and election administration

• Increased understanding of the electoral process through training programmes for Political parties

STRATEGIC PILLAR 7: GENDER

STRATEGIC GOAL

To pro-actively promote inclusive participation, with a focus on women, in EC's internal management and also their participation in democratic processes

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

7.1 Conduct overview of gender environment

7.2 Mainstream gender perspective in election management, with electoral policies and practices that pro-actively promote the participation of women in the electoral process and with an increased gender balance at all levels of the EC.

7.3 Promote the political participation of women, at the local and national level, as voters, candidates and observers

7.4 Raise awareness among voters on the importance of gender equality in decision-making processes

OUTPUTS

- Electoral processes and policies that pro-actively promote the participation of women in the electoral process and with an increased gender balance at all levels of the EC

OUTCOMES

- Increased political participation of women, both at the local and national level, as voters, observers, election staff, candidates and elected representatives

- Gender perspective incorporated throughout electoral cycle

STRATEGIC PILLAR 8: MONITORING & EVALUATION

STRATEGIC GOAL

To institutionalize M&E strategy, implement strategic planning processes in internal management and foster collective and individual responsibility for organizational objectives

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

8.1 Institutionalize M&E strategy to monitor and report on the implementation of the EC's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan

8.2 Strategic planning processes to be incorporated into management culture of the EC

OUTPUTS

• Internal monitoring & evaluation capacity enhanced, including the development of institutional and individual M&E plans, a risk management framework, lessons learned reports etc.

OUTCOMES

• Strategic Plan used as management tool to monitor progress, helping staff to maintain their focus on organizational objectives, and with clear lines of accountability established within the management structure

• Increased accountability and transparency of the strategic planning process leading to enhanced trust in the election administration.

9

ELECTIONS COMMISSION OF MALDIVES STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 - 2020

Strategic Pillar 1: Legal Reform

Strategic Goal: EC engagement in the electoral legal reform process to be guided by the principles of neutrality and transparency, with the overall aim of enhancing the credibility and integrity of the election process.

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
1.1	Establish institutional framework for EC's activities on electoral legal reform	1.1.1	Establish Electoral Legal Reform Committee to lead EC's advocacy on electoral legal reform.	LAPPR	i. ToRs drafted outlining role and responsibilities of the Electoral Legal Reform Committee (advocacy, legal drafting, technical support etc.) ii. Electoral Legal Reform Committee established and operational, with membership from across the different divisions of the secretariat	Jan. – March 2016
		1.1.2	Assign portfolio responsibility at Commission level for EC's role in electoral legal reform	LAPPR	i. Portfolio responsibility for electoral legal reform assigned at Commission level	Jan. 2016
		1.1.3	Electoral Legal Reform Committee to develop an electoral legal reform advocacy plan with specific targets and objectives.	LAPPR	i. Prioritization of key electoral legal reforms conducted ii. Electoral legal reform advocacy plan developed and implemented	Jan 2016 – June 2016

1.1.4	Legal Unit to provide technical support for operationalization and implementation of electoral legal reforms in EC's work plan and activities	LAPPR	i. Service-orientated technical support provided by the LAPPR across the EC with regard to the implementation of legal reforms. ii. Operationalization and implementation of electoral legal reforms.	Jan 2016 – Dec. 2018
1.2	To draft and propose amendments to electoral legal framework based on a comprehensive review of the existing legal framework			
1.2.1	Draft and propose amendments to the electoral legal framework guided by the recommendations of the "Symposium towards strengthening the electoral process through lessons learned during Presidential, Local and Parliamentary elections" of August 2014	LAPPR	i. Draft amendments have been submitted to Attorney General's office to ensure that proposals are in line with country's existing constitutional and legal framework.	Jan 2016 – Dec 2016
1.2.2	Conduct review of existing laws and regulations and identify areas requiring electoral legal reform, focusing on areas not yet addressed in the current legal reform process (post-al voting, e-voting etc.)	LAPPR	i. Review of election related laws conducted.	Jan. 2016 – Dec 2018

	1.2.3	Advocate for reform of the Political Parties Act to guarantee the full participation of political parties in election processes and to ensure a level playing field	LAPPR	i. Advocacy conducted calling for amendments to the Political Parties Act.	June 2016 – June 2017
	1.2.4	Advocate for reform of the Elections General Act to strengthen the capacity and independence of the Election Dispute Resolution (EDR) mechanism	LAPPR	i. Advocacy conducted calling for amendments to the Elections General Act to strengthen the EDR mechanism of the EC.	June 2016 – June 2017
1.3 Engage with key stakeholders throughout the electoral legal reform process	1.3.1	Work closely with Media Relations Officer to promote public awareness of the electoral reform process.	Media Unit	i. Close working relationship established with Media Relations Officer. ii. Media Relations Officer included in the Electoral Legal Reform Committee. iii. Regular updates on electoral legal reform process to be provided to the public (newsletter/social media/media interviews, press releases, public meetings etc.) iv. Promulgated laws published on EC website	March 2016 – Dec. 2016

1.3.2	Foster good working relations with decision-makers in Parliament and conduct an advocacy campaign to sensitize them to the need for reform.	Bureau	i. Advocacy campaign undertaken, targeting key cross-party decision-makers in national parliament, sensitizing them to the need for electoral reform. ii. EC to be available to provide input, to electoral reform debates if needed.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
1.3.3	Work in close collaboration with Attorney General's Office throughout electoral legal reform process	LAPPR	i. All proposals reviewed by Attorney General's Office in advance of their submission to Parliament to ensure that proposals are in line with country's existing constitutional and legal framework.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
1.3.4	Engage with Political Parties on electoral legal reform through the EC inter-party dialogue platform.	LAPPR	i. Political Parties actively engaged in the electoral reform process through the EC Inter-party dialogue platform ii. Cooperation and collaboration between EC and Political Parties in taking forward advocacy measures, targeting decision makers in national Parliament.	Jan. 2016-Dec. 2018

Strategic Pillar 2: Institutional Structure & Processes

Strategic Goal: To strengthen institutional structure and internal management practices and processes, with a view to strengthening the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the election management

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
2.1	Seek to correct structural weaknesses in the institution with a view to better reflect and serve the strategic priorities of the institution.	2.1.1	Clarify roles and responsibilities of all secretariat divisions and sections.	HR	i. Review undertaken of existing divisions and sections, with functions and mandates of all divisions and sections clarified and documented and in line with the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan	Jan. 2016 – March 2016
		2.1.2	Expand capacity of Commissioners' Bureau to include an administrative support capacity	Bureau	i. Commissioners' Bureau strengthened to include administrative support, equipped with capacity to prepare meetings agendas, minutes, correspondence and general clerical support.	Jan. 2016 - June. 2016
2.2	Enhance internal management practices and structures to enhance institutional efficiency and effectiveness and to ensure institutional memory.	2.2.1	Develop and implement an EC archive policy to ensure better internal management of data and to protect the EC's institutional memory	PSA	i. Archive policy developed and implemented ii. Election data, reports, codes of conduct, MoUs and general election documentation - to serve as a reference guide for the election officials in future election planning - compiled and archived. iii. Archive published on EC website for public access.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018

2.2.2	Establish a transparent and secure data-management system	PSA	i. Transparent and secure data management system established ii. Data collection and analysis used to improve evidence based policy-making and tracking of progress.	July. 2016 – June. 2017
2.2.3	Develop an integrated Election Management Plan outlining clear milestones; the interdependence of activities, time frames and division and section re-sponsibilities.	ECS	i. Integrated Election Management Plan used as a management tool, updated on a regular basis, taking into account any changes to timeline or funding cycles.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
2.2.4	Develop an EC Operation Manual to codify opera-tional processes and pro-cedures	HR	i. EC Operation Manual developed to act as an institutional reference tool and to ensure institutional memory.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
2.2.5	Define and document lines of authority within the in-stitution	HR	i. The position of the Secretary General given clear scope to manage the secretariat on a day-to-day level, resulting in timely decision-making and less bureaucratic blockages.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018

No.	Activity	Responsible	Output	Timeline
2.2.6	Formalization of communication between Commission and the Secretariat	Bureau	i. "Secretary General's Report" to be a standard feature on agenda of Commission meetings ii. Systematic documentation of all Commission meetings iii. Minutes of Commission meetings - noting decisions reached and actions for follow up - made available to all secretariat staff on the internal server. iv. Electronic database of Commission directives and decisions created, noting those requiring action of the SG and with updates on status provided.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
2.3	Creating an enabling environment and exploring options to ensure election administration presence both at HQ and atoll level			
2.3.1	Develop budgeted proposal on a new adequate-sized, integrated office premises that would facilitate the EC to work in a more cohesive and coordinated manner.	Admin Section	i. Budgeted proposal on new office space submitted to President's Office.	Jan. 2017 – June 2017
2.3.2	Organize a series of consultations with stakeholders on the different modalities for expanding EC operations to the atoll level - including the financial, operational and geographic/demographic reach cost/benefits.	Admin Section	i. Recommendation paper, including a budgeting of the various modalities and feasibility analysis.	Jan. 2017 – Dec. 2017

2.4	Strengthening the internal structure for administering a transparent, impartial and credible election			
	2.4.1	Conduct an assessment on the technicalities of proposed changes to ECB, voter registration, campaign finance, and ICT interstation, in light of the recommendations from the symposium.	LAPPR	i. Assessment conducted and implementation plan executed.	Jan 2016 – June 2016
	2.4.2	Administer the mandated elections in the election cycle (2016-2019), implementing the new modalities.	ECS	i. Elections Gantt chart published in advance ii. E-voter registration process executed. iii. Case management system implemented for ECB and law suits. iv. Integrated EMS implemented.	July 2016-Dec 2017

Strategic Pillar 3: Human Resources & Professional Development

Strategic Goal: To build a competent EC workforce and strengthen the professional development and retention of staff

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
3.1	Training and awareness building of Commissioners and secretariat on election related issues	3.1.1	Develop an Institutional Capacity Development Strategy and Plan, with specific objectives and targets for internal management and institutional development	HR	i. Training needs assessment (TNA) conducted with EC human resources capacity gaps / weaknesses identified to form basis of Capacity Assessment Plan (CAP) ii. Commissioners and staff engaged in an consultation to assess organizational, departmental and individual goals, identifying existing capacities as well as capacity gaps iii. Capacity gaps & required trainings mapped in terms of context specific trainings (Public Finance Act) and general election management trainings (BRIDGE trainings) (see 3.1.6) iv. Capacity Development Plan developed and specifically tailored to needs of Commissioners on policy-level election management.	Jan.2016 –Dec. 2018

v. Induction training programme developed and provided to all new secretariat staff, including Value-Based training to ensure that all staff have a sound understanding of democratic principle and the values that underpin the institution

vi. In conjunction with colleagues in Gender, ICT etc., the Human Resources & Professional Development Section, range of context specific institutional training modules developed

| 3.1.2 | Develop individual capacity development plans for both Commissioners and Staff, and incorporate into the staff appraisal system | HR | i. Online training programmes - such as the UNDP, EC and International IDEA web-based e-learning programmes specifically tailored for EMBs and electoral practitioners – incorporated into staff members individual capacity development plans

ii. Individual capacity development plans to be incorporated into staff appraisal system | Oct. 2016 – March. 2017 |

3.1.3	Professionalization and certification of electoral polling officials.	HR	i. Maldives Qualification Authority (MQA) accredited EC's polling official training programme to be launched and implemented, with 100% certification of electoral workforce in advance of the 2016 Local Council elections.	July 2016 – Dec. 2017
3.1.4	Develop EC Training Opportunity Guidelines to ensure transparency in training / observation opportunities	HR	i. Training Opportunity Guidelines developed and implemented ii. Training justification template developed, for Commissioners and staff to explain how courses relate to their work plans and the achievement of organizational objectives.	July. 2016 – Dec. 2016
3.1.5	Include a budgeted training space component in the budgeted proposal for a new adequate-sized, integrated office premises (see 2.3.1)	HR	i. Budgeted proposal on integrated office premises submitted to President's Office includes options on proposed EC training space.	Jan. 2017 – June 2017
3.1.6	Develop Bridge training curriculum that is customised to Maldivian context	HR	i. BRIDGE training programme, customised to Maldivian context, undertaken at all levels of the EC	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018

3.2	Strengthen the Human Resource Management System of the EC	3.2.1	Develop a transparent system of merit-based recruitment, integrating a staff appraisal system that clearly outlines staff welfare policies, training opportunities, promotion policies and career development	HR	i. Transparent Human Resources Management System developed, incorporating a staff appraisal system.	Jan. 2016 – Jan. 2018
		3.2.2	Develop Terms of Reference (ToRs) on a continuous basis for all employee positions in EC	HR	i. All staff in possession of ToRs clearly outlining their role and responsibilities.	April. 2016 – Oct. 2018
		3.2.3	Develop Employee Discipline and Grievances System	HR	i. Employee Discipline and Grievances System developed	Jan. 2017 – June 2017

Strategic Pillar 4: Information Communication Technology

Strategic Goal: To strengthen information and communication technology as a strategic resource to improve efficiency of election management and enhance internal and external communications.

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsi-ble Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
4.1	Strengthen the EC's ICT capacity and expand e-services to electoral stakeholders	4.1.1	Conduct ICT capacity assessment of the EC	ICT	i. ICT capacity assessment conducted, with EC ICT capacity gaps /weaknesses identified	Jan.2016 – June 2016
		4.1.2	Develop an EC ICT Strategy and work plan, with specific objectives and targets for institutional development, network security and the expansion of e-services to electoral stakeholders	ICT	i. Stakeholder consultation meeting held on the EC's draft ICT Strategy, with particular attention paid to addressing issues related to expanding e-services to electoral stakeholders and ensuring network security ii. EC ICT Strategy adopted by the Commission	Jan. 2016 - Sept. 2016
		4.1.3	Develop a separate, detailed ICT budget proposal, costing the continuous upgrading of EC's ICT and network/system security for submission to the Commission	ICT	i. Budget proposal approved by Commission and incorporated into EC's annual budget proposal to the Ministry of Finance	July 2016 – July 2018

4.1.4	Conduct ICT training programme for EC Commissioners and staff	HR	i. ICT training conducted with Commissioners and staff acquiring necessary skills to efficiently use new and existing ICT software systems	Oct. 2016 – June. 2017
4.1.5	Expand e-services to electoral stakeholders, in key areas such as candidate applications, political party membership registry, voter education etc.	LAPPR/REG/VE/ECS	i. E-services expanded to electoral stakeholders, in key areas such as candidate applications, political party membership registry etc. in line with the ICT Strategic Plan	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
4.1.6	Introduce ICT system to improve data access and data management	ICT	i. Data management system established ii. Training conducted for staff in new data management system	April 2017 – Sept. 2017
4.1.7	Work to establish one secure, integrated Elections Management System (EMS)	ICT	i. Secure integrated Election Management System established and operational	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
4.1.8	Provide continuous technical support to Commissioners and Secretariat staff on all ICT related matters	ICT	i. Full-time ICT technical support available to Commissioners and secretariat ii. ICT staff trained in EMS security	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018

	Activity	Resp.	Indicator	Timeframe
4.1.9	Conduct study on options for effective EC management and ownership of Political Party Membership and Voter Registry	REG	i. Study conducted – including comparative analysis of other EMBs - outlining options and recommendations for EC's in-house management of the Political Party membership and registry	Jan. 2017 – Dec. 2017
4.1.10	Develop general ICT module to be incorporated in EC's induction training programme	HR	i. ICT training module incorporated in EC's induction training programme	April. 2016 – Sept. 2018
4.2	Enhance stake-holder confidence - especially Political Parties' confidence - in E-voting.			
4.2.1	Conduct piloting of e-voting for political party primaries	ECS	i. -E-voting for political party primaries piloted as a trust building and capacity development measure	Jan. 2017 – Jan. 2018
4.2.2	Conduct familiarization/ training on E-Voting and Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) for Political Parties	VE	i. Training on e-voting and EVM conducted for political parties	July 2017 - Sept. 2018
4.2.3	Conduct feasibility study on Internet, postal and SMS voting in the Maldives	ECS	i. Study conducted with clear recommendations on how to proceed in the Maldivian context	April 2017 – Dec. 2017

Strategic Pillar 5: Stakeholder Engagement & Public Outreach

Strategic Goal: To promote full and informed participation of all stakeholders in electoral activities and enhance public trust and confidence in the electoral process and election administration

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
5.1	Institutionalize engagement with electoral stakeholders and promote their sustained participation throughout the electoral cycle.	5.1.1	Conduct a mapping of electoral stakeholders	PSA	i. Database of electoral stakeholders created.	Jan.2016 – March 2016
		5.1.2	Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (including media, political parties etc.) with specific objectives and targets.	PSA	i. Strategy for stakeholder engagement developed and implemented. ii. Consultation held with stakeholders to receive their input on the draft Strategy for Stakeholder Engagement	Jan. 2016 – Sept. 2016
		5.1.3	Formulate a Memorandum of Understanding for signature by stakeholders through a participatory consultation process.	PSA	i. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), outlining cooperation, developed in consultation with stakeholders ii. MoU signed with each electoral stakeholder.	April 2016 – Sept. 2016

5.1.4	Establish a stakeholder dialogue platform to foster closer cooperation, increase transparency and garner stakeholder support in the electoral process	PSA	i. Joint monthly meetings conducted with all stakeholders (including media, CSOs, NGOs, AG Office, PG, Police, ACC, HRCM etc.) to share information, build a base for cooperation and amplify EC messages to larger audiences. ii. More regular meetings held during election peak periods	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
5.1.5	Enhance cooperation with international partners including UNDP, IFES, JICA, International IDEA and FEMBoSA	Foreign Relations Unit	i. Quarterly coordination meetings held with international partners	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
5.1.6	Nominate an EC Focal Point in each stakeholder organization and also a Stakeholder Focal Point within the EC	Bureau	i. EC focal point selected in electoral stakeholder organizations to facilitate relations and with EC. ii. Stakeholder Focal Point selected in EC, with clear channels of communication established.	Jan. 2016 – June 2016

			Timeframe
5.1.7	Develop a management culture that is responsive to the needs of electoral stakeholders.	VE	Jan 2016 – Dec. 2018
			i. An open-door approach adopted, encouraging two-way communication. ii. Increased consistency in communication/information provided to stakeholders iii. Biannual newsletter shared with electoral stakeholders, proving updates on the electoral process and Elections Commission and stakeholder activities. (ref. 5.1.4).	
5.2	Enhance the EC's capacity in media relations to improve information flow between the EC and the public		
5.2.1	Based on the stakeholder Strategy, develop an EC Media action plan, including a social media strategy and management plan, combined with a risk management strategy that takes into account the challenges presented by social media.	Media Unit	April 2016 – Dec. 2016
			i. Stakeholder consultation meeting held and feedback sought on the EC's draft Media Strategy ii. EC Media Strategy adopted, including specific objectives and targets for internal management and institutional development. iii. Allocation of a social Media Officer during Election peak periods with the objective to build a better understanding of election process and enhancing participation	

No.	Activity	Responsible	Indicator	Timeframe
5.2.2	Establish an EC Spokesperson role to act as the contact point for all media enquiries and to ensure consistency in messaging	Media Unit	i. Spokesperson role established and operational	June 2016
5.2.3	Produce biannual newsletter to share with stakeholders	Media Unit	i. Biannual newsletter shared with stakeholders	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
5.3	Support role and engagement of media in the electoral cycle, promote the professional and responsible media coverage of electoral processes			
5.3.1	Conduct media mapping	Media Unit	i. Database of media in the Maldives (print/online/radio/TV)	Jan - Feb. 2016
5.3.2	Conduct training programme for media (radio, TV, electronic and print media) to promote professional and responsible coverage of elections	Media Unit	i. Training programme for media conducted to promote the professional and responsible coverage of elections, and equip media practitioners with skills to perform their watchdog role in the election process. Training should include a specific module on equitable media coverage of women in the election process.	Jan. 2016 – Sept. 2016

5.3.3	Develop a Code of Conduct for Media	Media Unit	i.	Code of conduct signed with media, clearly outlining role and responsibilities of media in reporting on election campaign and processes	April 2016 -June 2016
5.3.4	Establish mechanism to monitor media compliance with Code of Conduct, with authority to issue penalties for non-compliance	Media Unit	i.	Consultation held with Media party with regard to the establishment of the Media compliance mechanism.	June 2016 – Dec. 2018
			ii.	Compliance mechanism established to monitor fairness of media coverage of elections	
5.3.5	Institutionalize EC engagement with media	Media Unit	i.	Media participate in monthly stakeholder meetings held by EC.	Jan. 2016
			ii.	Use monthly meeting with stakeholders to amplify EC messages to a larger audience, notably with regard to the electoral reform process.	
5.3.6	Design and set up an EC Media Centre for election period	Media Unit	i.	Media Centre established and operational from launch of campaign period to announcement of results	Sept. 2016 – Oct. 2016

5.4	Enhance public perception and confidence in the EC and promote engagement in the democratic process	5.4.1	Launch nationwide Public Outreach campaign to promote identity of the EC and to restore enthusiasm in the democratic process.	VE	i. Consultation held with media and stakeholders to develop campaign plan and content ii. Campaign conducted across via radio TV, print media, social media	July. 2016 – Dec.. 2018
5.5	Create awareness and understanding among citizens of the electoral process through an extensive voter education campaign	5.5.1	Conduct voter education campaign to provide public with information on the election process, covering everything from the voter registration process to how to file a complaint.	VE	i. Develop voter education strategy. ii. Voter education programme revised based on the lessons learned and feedback received on previous voter education activities. iii. Stakeholders engaged in voter education content/message development. iv. Rollout of voter education programme continued.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
5.6	Effective management of the accreditation process for Election Observers for enhancing the credibility of the election process.	5.6.1	Develop manual and training programme on the electoral process for domestic and international election observation missions	Foreign Relation Unit / PSA	i. Manual for election observation missions developed, with accompanying training programme implemented. ii. Manual translated into Dhivehi for domestic observation groups	March 2016 – Dec 2016

5.6.2	Design and develop application and accreditation procedures, for domestic and international election observers	PSA/ Relation Unit	i. Application and accreditation procedures for election observers designed and developed	March – Sept. 2016
5.6.3	Manage accreditation process for domestic and international observers and establish an observer database.	PSA	i. In close collaboration with the ICT, an election observer web-based management system has been developed allowing observers accreditation applications to be submitted remotely. ii. Accreditation of domestic and international observers successfully managed for each electoral event.	Jan. – Sept. 2016

Strategic Pillar 6: Political Parties

Strategic Goal: Strengthening engagement with political parties throughout electoral cycle for enhanced trust and confidence in the electoral process and election administration

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
6.1	Institutionalize engagement with political parties and promote their sustained participation throughout the electoral cycle	6.1.1	Create dedicated Political Parties focal points within EC, with overall responsibility for liaison with political parties.	LAPPR	i. Political Parties Focal Point position established. ii. Clear mandate outlining the roles and responsibilities of Political Parties position	Jan. 2016 – June 2016
		6.1.2	Formulate a code of conduct for political parties through a participatory consultation process.	LAPPR	i. Code of conduct developed in consultation with political parties. ii. Code of conduct signed iii. EC to ensure observance of Code of conduct by Political Parties.	July 2016 – Dec 2018
		6.1.3	Establish an inter-party dialogue platform to foster closer cooperation, increase transparency and garner political party support in the electoral process	LAPPR	i. Joint monthly meetings conducted with all political parties to share information, build a base for cooperation and work on political reform ii. More regular meetings held during election peak periods	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018

				Timeframe
6.1.4	Nominate an EC Focal Point in each political party	LAPPR	i. Political parties selected EC focal point to facilitate relations and with EC, with clear channels of communication established.	Jan 2016–June 2016
6.1.5	Develop a management culture that is responsive to the needs to political parties as the EC's key stakeholders.	LAPPR	i. An open-door approach adopted, encouraging two-way communication. ii. Political Parties clear on who to approach in EC iii. Increased consistency in communication/information provided to Political Parties iv. Public funding to be provided to Political Parties within timeframe stipulated in Art. 34 of the Political Parties Act (within first three months of the financial year) v. Political Party membership registry to be regularly updated and accessible online	Jan 2016 – Dec. 2018
6.2	Support the capacity development of political parties and party agents			
6.2.1	Develop training manual and training programme on voter education for political parties	VE	i. Voter education training manual for political parties developed, with accompanying training programme implemented ii. Sharing of voter education materials, in support of voter education activities carried out by political parties for their members	July 2016 – Dec. 2018

	6.2.2	Implement training pro-gramme for party/candi-dates agents on election processes.	VE	i. Training provided to party/candidate agents to equip them with skills to effectively monitor the polling process	Oct. 2016 – Dec. 2018
6.3		Support the partici-pation of women as candidates through engagement with political parties			
	6.3.1	Advocate for the promo-tion of women's participa-tion in political life through voluntary party quotas, thereby committing Po-litical Parties to a specific percentage of women among the candidates they nominate.	VE	i. Voluntary party quotas - committing to at least 25% of women candidates – adopted by all political parties	Oct. 2016 – Dec. 2018

Strategic Pillar 7: Gender

Strategic Goal: To pro-actively promote inclusive participation, especially of women in EC's internal management and also their participation in democratic processes

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
7.1	Conduct overview of the gender context	7.1.1	Conduct gender mapping including an assessment of the electoral system	HR	i. Database of gender provisions in legal framework ii. Database of CSOs & NGOs working on gender issues iii. Identify all impediments to women's participation as voters, candidates and observers and an understanding of the underlying factors for this in the Maldivian context	Jan. 2016. – March 2016
7.2	Mainstream gender perspective in election management, with electoral policies and practices that pro-actively promote the participation of women in the electoral process and with an increased gender balance at all levels of the EC.	7.2.1	Conduct gender capacity assessment of Elections Commission to establish baseline	HR	i. Gender capacity assessment conducted, with gender gaps/ weaknesses identified.	Jan. 2016 - June 2016

	Activity	Responsible	Indicator	Timeframe
7.2.2	Develop and adopt an EC Gender Policy with specific objectives and targets for internal management and institutional development, as well as external activities and electoral operations.	HR	i. EC Gender policy developed - with input from women's organizations - and adopted.	Jan. 2016 –Sept. 2016
7.2.3	Allocate dedicated EC Gender Focal Point to advance women's participation in all the EC's internal and external operations.	Bureau	i. EC Gender Focal Point allocated	Jan. 2016
7.2.4	Develop internal recruitment guidelines and targets to ensure gender equality at all levels of election management, including temporary electoral/polling staff and allocate formal role for the Gender Focal Point in EC recruitment processes	HR	i. Expand pool of female applicants through outreach activities conducted through CSO partner organizations	July 2016 – Dec 2018
7.2.5	Formalization of institutional coordination on gender	HR	i. Quarterly internal gender meetings with the aim of sharing information and providing technical advice on gender sensitive policies, procedures and activities.	March 2016 – Dec. 2018

7.2.6	Conduct gender sensitive training for EC Commissioners and Secretariat staff	HR	i. BRIDGE training module on gender to be conducted ii. Gender module to be included in induction training.	Oct. 2016 – June. 2017
7.2.7	Establish data collection system to track institutional progress towards gender targets and collate gender-disaggregated data for all electoral activities.	HR	iii. Gender data system established, tracking institutional progress towards gender targets &in electoral activities. Used as management tool to identify where remedial action needs to be taken.	Oct. 2016 – Dec. 2018
7.3	Enhance the political participation of women, at the local and national level, as voters, candidates and observers.			
7.3.1	Conduct a study of best practices on methods to increase women's representation in elected bodies and examine how the respective options would play out in Maldivian context	HR	i. Study conducted, identifying options most feasible/effective in Maldivian context – positive incentives vs. non-compliance/penalties. ii. Consultation held with Political Parties to agree on the most effective measures to increase women's political participation in Maldivian context.	April 2016 – Sept. 2016
7.3.2	Advocate for gender balance measures to be included as part of the electoral legislative reform process - notably with regard to temporary legal quotas / "special measures" requiring political parties to nominate a set percentage of women candidates	LAPPR	i. Electoral Legislation reformed to include legal quotas.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018

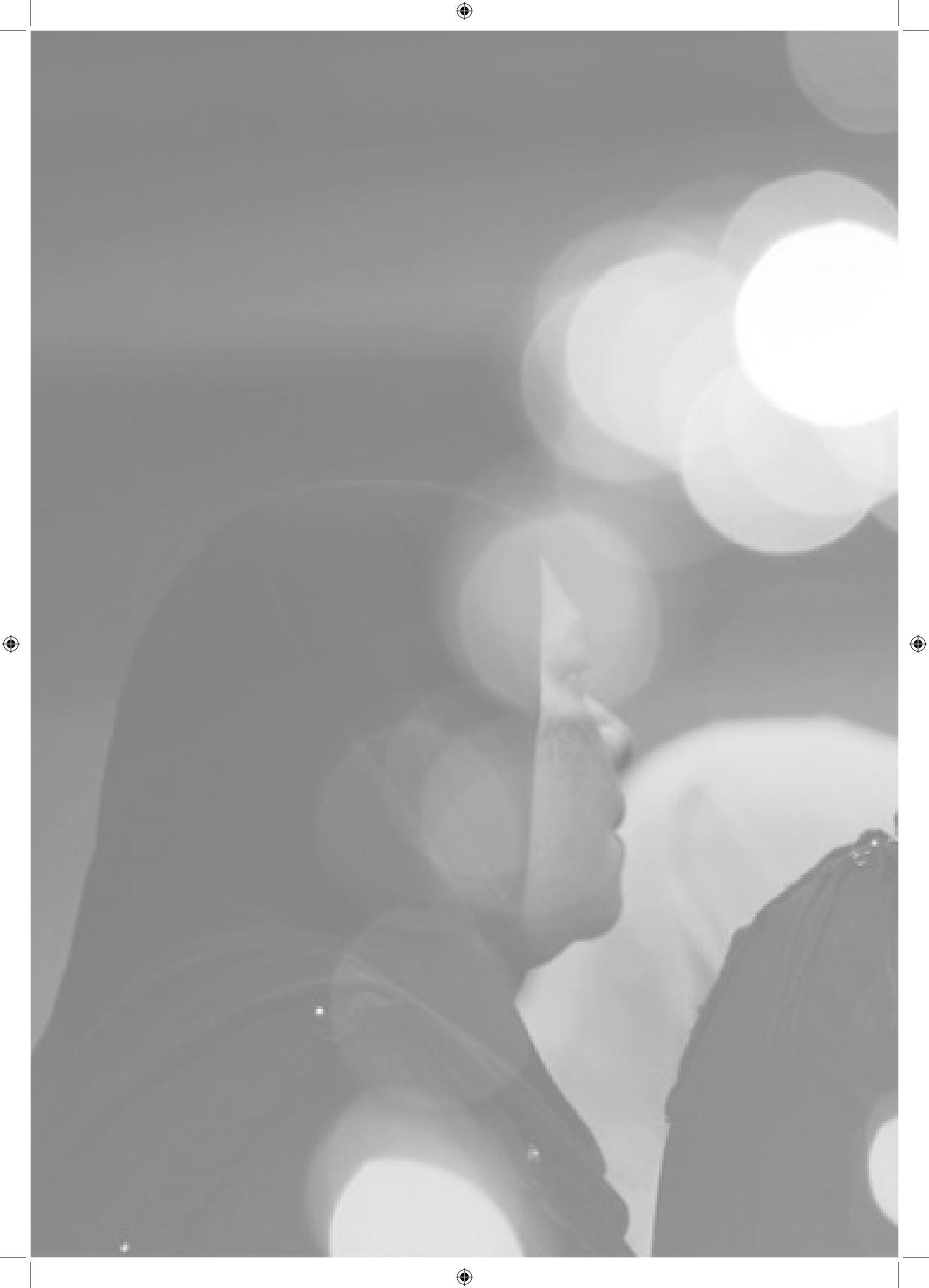|				
7.3.3	EC regulation calling for gender balance in domestic election observation teams	LAPPR	i. Consultation held with NGOs and CSO participating as observers, to underline importance of gender balanced observations teams ii. All domestic election observation missions are gender balanced.	July. 2016 – Dec. 2018
7.4	Raise awareness among voters on the importance of gender equality in decision-making processes.			
7.4.1	Launch media campaign to combat stereotypes and inform electorate on importance of women's political participation	VE	i. Consultation with media to develop campaign plan and content ii. Campaign conducted across via radio, TV, print media, social media iii. Celebrity champions	Oct. 2016 – March 2017

Strategic Pillar 8: Monitoring & Evaluation

Strategic Goal: To institutionalize M&E strategy, implement strategic planning processes in internal management and foster collective and individual responsibility for organizational objectives

No.	Strategic Objective		Strategic Actions	Responsible Actors	Performance Indicators	Timeline
8.1	Institutionalize M&E strategy to monitor and report on the implementation of the EC's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan	8.1.1	Establish Strategic Plan Steering Committee	PSA	i. ToRs drafted outlining role and responsibilities of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee ii. Strategic Plan Steering Committee established and operational iii. Strategic Plan used as a guide to measure progress towards institutional objectives, with progress reports issued quarterly	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
		8.1.2	Strategic Plan Steering Committee to develop an overall EC M&E Strategy with specific objectives and targets for internal management and reporting	PSA	i. 2016-2020 EC M&E Strategy adopted and implemented	Jan.2016 – Sept. 2016

	8.1.3	Formalize EC's M&E insti-tutional structure	PSA	i. M&E focal points designated in each secretariat division with responsibility for collating information on their respective division's progress towards strategic goals and providing it to Strategic Plan Steering Committee	Jan. 2016
	8.1.4	Establish clear lines of ac-countability for the Strate-gic Plan within the EC	PSA	i. Portfolio Responsibility allocated at Commission level	Jan 2016 – June 2016
	8.1.5	Annual meeting to be held with electoral stakehold-ers, updating on EC's progress towards Strategic Plan	PSA	i. Annual stakeholder meeting held, with electoral stakeholders kept informed of performance and progress in line with the Strategic Plan	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
8.2 Strategic planning processes to be incorporated into management culture of the EC	8.2.1	Conduct systematic Les-sons Learned exercises	PSA	i. Conduct a Lessons Learned exercise after each electoral cycle, with the aim of capturing best practices and identifying areas in need of improvement. ii. Lessons learned from previous election cycles to be consistently documented and implemented. iii. Based on the outcome of these Lessons Learned exercises, propose recommendations for the Strategic Plan to be modified accordingly.	Jan 2016 – Dec. 2018

8.2.2	Foster collective responsibility for organizational objectives and support secretariat staff to maintain progress towards individual and organizational objectives	PSA	i. Individual work plans aligned to organizational objectives, to be incorporated into staff appraisal system with staff performance evaluated on progress towards individual and organizational objectives	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018
8.2.3	Establish a risk management framework	PSA	i. Risk framework used as a "live" tool and regularly updated.	June 2016 – Dec. 2016
8.2.4	Promote a culture of transparency regarding internal M&E processes	Media Unit	i. Prompt public disclosure of the results of the audit – including audited financial statements - on website. ii. Demonstrate how audit findings have been addressed and keep stakeholders informed of the corrective actions being taken.	Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018