Election Administration of Georgia Strategic Plan

2015-2019

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Abbreviations

CEC – Central Election Commission of Georgia

DEC – District Election Commission

PEC – Precinct Election Commission

EPMS – Election Processes Management Plan

IFES – International Foundation for Electoral Systems

SEC – Supreme Election Commission of Autonomous Republic of Adjara

CEC Training Center – Center of Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings

Steering Committee – Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Core Team – Strategic Planning Core Team

EDR – Election Dispute Resolution

HR – Human Resources

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

EPMS- Election Process Management System

IT – Information Technologies

PSDA – Public Service Development Agency

Introduction

At present, Georgia's CEC maintains a rather high level of public trust. The administration of recent elections, recognized for its professionalism, contributed to the increase in public trust and improved image of the CEC, both domestically and internationally. A public opinion poll, conducted by an international organization in August 2014, highlighted the CEC as the leading state institution in Georgia when it comes to the level of public trust.[1] Increased trust equates to increased responsibility, and the CEC will strive to maintain and surpass expectations by providing citizens of Georgia with professionally and competently administered elections.

The local self-government elections, held on June 15, 2014, were widely praised by local and international election observation organizations. To sustain this progress, the CEC has identified new strategic goals and objectives that build and expand upon the previous strategic plan. Following the 2014 local self-government elections, the CEC conducted an evaluation of its performance and began laying the groundwork for the next elections. Through this process, CEC leadership met with election administration representatives from all levels in order to analyze their performance, review previous strategic plan objectives and define new priorities. This process led to the development of a new comprehensive long-term strategic plan that shall become a cornerstone for Georgia's election administration and could also serve as a road map for the country's electoral stakeholders for the next five-year period.

IFES-recommended methodology, based on nine phases, was utilized to develop this strategic plan. This methodology has been successfully utilized by various election management bodies throughout the world. The steps followed during this effort are outlined below:

0. Review/Envision

1. Plan

2. Define

3. Assess

4. Identify

5. Consult

6. Strategize

7. Deploy

8. Execute

Step 0. Review/Envision – In its efforts to develop the CEC's strategy for a five-year period, the CEC Chairperson issued an ordinance to create two special working groups responsible for the strategic plan development process: a) Steering Committee and, b) Core Team. The Steering Committee was composed of 11 members - six commission members and five staffers of the CEC apparatus. The Core Team was

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[1] Public Attitudes in Georgia: Results of an August 2014 Survey carried out for NDI by CRRC-Georgia
 https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI_Georgia_August-2014-survey_Public-Issues_GEO_VF.pdf

composed of six members - two commission members and four staffers of the apparatus. Rules and procedures of these groups were also developed.

IFES Georgia facilitated the strategic plan development process.

The Steering Committee: Tamar Zhvania (Chair of the Steering Committee), CEC Chairperson; Giorgi Sharabidze, CEC Deputy Chairperson; Tamaz Sharmanashvili, CEC Member; David Gurgenidze, CEC Member; Emzar Kakulia, CEC Member; Irakli Khorbaladze, CEC Member; Ketevan Dangadze, Head of the Public Relations Department; Archil Anasashvili, Head of the Legal Department; Sopho Sichinava, Head Of the Coordination and Management Department; Elisabed Velidze, Head of Administrative Department; Natia Zaalishvili, Director of the CEC Training Center.

The Core Team: Natia Jikia (Coordinator), Advisor to the Chairperson; Tamar Sharmanashvili, CEC Member; Konstantine Kirvalidze, CEC Member; Otar Buskivadze, Head of the Planning And Procurement Department; Ketevan Dangadze, Head of the Public Relations Department; Natia Zaalishvili, Director of the CEC Training Center.

Upon creation of these groups, the CEC informed the public about the launch of a strategic plan development process. The statement highlighted that the CEC would ensure transparency and greater involvement of the electoral stakeholders in the process.

1. Plan – The Core Team, along with the Steering Committee, defined timelines, delegated responsibilities, and designed a detailed action plan for the strategic plan development process.

2. Define – The Core Team together with the Steering Committee defined and formulated the mission, vision and guiding principles of the Election Administration.

3. Assess – The Election Administration's organizational assessment was conducted in the following stages: 1) in August 2014, post-election review meetings were conducted involving the CEC and DECs. DEC chairpersons provided their feedback on the Election Administration's strengths, weaknesses, visions and input on the future strategy from their perspectives. Questionnaires utilized during this process were analyzed and findings were incorporated in this strategic plan; 2) the Core Team met with each CEC department, the CEC Training Center and the CEC. These sessions made it possible to analyze the performance of the Election Administration and each department separately; it also identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for development, and potential threats for the Election Administration. The Core Team also reviewed all of the reports and public opinion poll results related to the Election Administration's operation and quality of elections in Georgia that were produced by local and international organizations.

4. Identify – This stage identified key trends, leading to the identification of Election Administration priorities, goals, and objectives.

5. Consult – The draft strategic planning document was disseminated among electoral stakeholders for their input. In December 2014, the CEC hosted consultations with key electoral stakeholders. Meetings were held with the representatives of local NGOs, political parties, media, and the international community. In the course of the meetings, feedback was provided on the draft strategic plan. The Core Team together with the Steering Committee carefully reviewed stakeholder input and incorporated it in the document.

6. Strategize – The Core Team in consultation with the Steering Committee, along with CEC departments, defined the strategic actions of the organization and included these in the document's narrative section. CEC departments were also involved in defining timeline for activities and parties responsible for their implementation.

A monitoring and evaluation plan, and measurable indicators of the strategic plan were also designed.

At this stage, the CEC adopted the Election Administration Strategic Plan, a monitoring and evaluation plan, and a set of measurable indicators.

7. Deploy the strategic plan – The Core Team planned how to involve staffers in the strategic plan. It envisages allocating responsibilities within the CEC in the course of implementing strategic activities. The Core Team also plans to conduct meetings with DECs in this regards.

The strategic plan will be published on the web-page of the CEC and accessible to the public.

8. Implementation – the Core Team designed a monitoring plan of the strategic plan as well as a midterm progress evaluation plan.

In the course of the strategic plan drafting process, the Steering Committee has been continuously consulted by the Core Team. As part of the process, regular working meetings were held between the Core Team and the Steering Committee in order to agree on main issues. The strategic plan drafting process is a long-term process and does not conclude upon its adoption by the CEC; it requires continuous assessment at all stages of implementation and the introductive of corrective actions, as required.

Election Administration

Mandate

The Election Administration of Georgia is an independent **administrative** body, which, within its authority, is free of any influence from other state bodies and acts according to the Constitution and the Electoral Code of Georgia.

The Election Administration ensures the preparation and conduct of referenda, plebiscites, and elections of the President of Georgia, the Parliament of Georgia, local self-government representative body – Sakrebulo, and of a local self-government executive body - Mayor/*Gamgebeli*, controls the fulfillment of requirements of the electoral legislation on the whole territory of Georgia and its uniform application.

Structure

The Election Administration of Georgia is composed of:

1. CEC and its apparatus;

2. SEC and its apparatus;

3. District Election Commissions;

4. Precinct Election Commissions.

CEC

The supreme body of Election Administration of Georgia is the CEC, which, within its authority, manages and controls all levels of election commissions. The CEC is composed of a Chairperson and 11 members. The CEC Chairperson simultaneously is a member of the CEC. The Parliament of Georgia elects five members of the CEC, on the recommendation of the President of Georgia, while the qualified parties appoint six members as defined by the Election Code. The term of office of the CEC Chairperson and CEC members appointed by the Parliament is five years.

The organization and conduct of fair, credible, transparent elections is ensured by CEC's Secretariat, which, with help of its structural units, carries out organizational, legal and technical support of election administration and support to CEC.

SEC

The Supreme Election Commission of Autonomous Republic of Adjara (SEC) ensures the preparation and conduct of elections of Supreme Council of Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and, within its authority, ensures uniform application of electoral legislation on the whole territory of Adjara.

District Election Commissions

District Election Commissions are permanent territorial bodies of the Electoral Administration of Georgia, which ensure, within their powers, the conduct of elections, referenda, and plebiscites, oversees the process of implementation of the electoral legislation of Georgia, and ensures its uniform application. There are total of 76 DECs in Georgia. A DEC is composed of 12 members; the CEC elects five permanent members, while, during election period, qualified parties which are defined by the organic law of Georgia "Election Code" appoint six members, in addition the CEC appoints one member.

Precinct Election Commissions

Precinct Election Commissions are temporary territorial bodies of the Electoral Administration of Georgia, which, within their powers, ensure the conduct of elections, referenda, and plebiscites in an electoral precinct, implementation of the electoral legislation of Georgia, compliance of the procedures under the electoral legislation of Georgia during polling, exercise and protection of the rights of voters, representatives, and observers guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia and Electoral Code. There are around 3.700 PECs created during electoral period in Georgia. A PEC is composed with 12 members; the relevant upper election commission elects six members and the qualified political parties which are defined by the organic law of Georgia "Election Code" also appoint six members.

Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles
of the Election Administration

Mission

To conduct impartial, transparent and professionally administered elections, as set forth by the legislation, and to create an environment where voters and electoral stakeholders can freely exercise their electoral rights.

Vision

Election Administration aims to: provide equally accessible electoral services; ensure integrity of electoral process; ensure high level of trust within the society; continuously act innovatively and develop initiatives oriented toward the improvement of the electoral environment; continuously work to increase management effectiveness and the professional capacity of the election administration.

Guiding Principles

In order to ensure the conduct of free and democratic elections, the Election Administration shall be guided by the following principles:

Independence

Election Administration is an independent institution, which operates within the legal framework and free from political influence.

Transparency

Election Administration ensures transparency of its work and accessibility of information to voters and electoral stakeholders.

Professionalism

Election Administration conducts its activities through qualified, competent human workforce.

Accountability

Election Administration is accountable for its actions and reports to voters and relevant institutions on a regular basis.

Inclusiveness

Election Administration ensures creation of an inclusive electoral environment.

Election Administration of Georgia
Strategic Plan for 2015-2019

Strategic Pillar 1: Institutional Strengthening

Strengthen independence, professionalism of and confidence in the Election Administration; establish a system with an effective budget policy and continuous organizational and professional development. Contribute to the development of democratic processes.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Goal #1: Ensure effective EMB management Improve organizational policies, structure and procedures. Improve planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes. Improve internal communication.	**Objective #1.** Improved performance of the Election Administration.	**Activity #1.** Improve-review current rules for drafting and reporting on action plans; **Activity #2.** Establish new mechanisms for audit, monitoring and evaluation; **Activity #3.** Increase role of commission members in the implementation process of the strategy.
	Objective #2. Capacity of the Election Administration systematically increased in periods between elections.	**Activity #1.** Develop concept of work for the CEC.
	Objective #3. Improved organizational structure.	**Activity #1.** Develop the CEC's apparatus's effective organizational structure; **Activity #2.** Design evaluation system for effectiveness of organizational structure.
	Objective #4. Internal communication plan developed.	**Activity #1.** Review and improve communication system between the CEC and DECs during non-election period; **Activity #2.** Develop a communication system among the CEC's structures.
	Objective #5. Effective financial-budget policy established.	**Activity #1.** Establish system for constant cost effective analyses for elections; **Activity #2.** Improve process of financial management, procurement, accounting and inventory management at the DECs.

	Objective #6. Improved risk management system.	**Activity #1.** Develop and establish organizational risk management procedures; **Activity #2.** Develop and establish regular system for monitoring risk management.
	Objective #7: Ensured Informational Security	**Activity #1**. Develop Informational Security Policy Document
Goal #2: Human resources development Introduce modern system of HR management, increase professional capacity of staff, ensure efficient working environment.	**Objective #1.** Effective HR management policies of Election Administration developed.	**Activity #1.** Establish effective mechanisms for attracting/retaining professional staff;
	Objective #2. Professional development of Election Administration's staff capacity increased on continuous basis.	**Activity #1.** Develop system for vocational training of staff; **Activity #2.** Establish mentoring practice; **Activity #3.** Elaborate orientation training system; **Activity #4.** Participate in conferences and workshops; **Activity #5.** Participate in monitoring missions.
Goal #3: Improve infrastructure Develop modern infrastructure and utilize innovative information technologies.	**Objective #1.** Improved DEC infrastructure.	**Activity #1.** Ensure VPN support to the DECs; **Activity #2.** Provide treasury electronic system to DECs; **Activity #3.** Develop plan for funding and renovating of DECs.
	Objective #2. Electoral accessibility ensured.	**Activity #1.** Work with local self-government bodies on a regular basis to adapt PECs; **Activity #2.** Take PWDs' needs into consideration while equipping PECs; **Activity #3.** Adapt the CEC's web-page to the needs of blind voters.

	Objective #3. Improved E-management system.	**Activity #1.** Create the Election Administration's Information bank (searchable database);
		Activity #2. Establish system of electronic file-management at the Administration;
		Activity #3. Develop, introduce and utilize electronic programs in election process;
		Activity #4. Election Administration's officials certification program under the CEC's base;
		Activity #5. Define rules for storing and deleting information in an electronic format;
		Activity #6. Improve online process for property registry at the Administration;
		Activity #7. Update online system for casework.
		Activity #8. Update EPMS system for managing elections;
		Activity #9. Update server and increasing possibilities for storing information;
		Activity #10. Full coverage of Wi-Fi connection at the CEC.
	Objective #4. Improve infrastructure for ensuring informational security.	**Activity #1**. Improve system against cyber attacks.
	Objective #5. PEC mapping plan developed.	**Activity #1.** Establish mechanism for cooperating with state authorities for the selection of venues for PECs;
		Activity #2. Define alternative ways for placing PECs.
Goal #4: Strengthen the image Increase level of trust toward the Election Administration among stakeholders and voters. Position the CEC as a regional thought leader, offering its assistance in the election management field.	**Objective #1.** Effective PR campaign carried out.	**Activity #1.** Develop and implement an effective PR campaign. **Activity #2.** Update the CEC's web-page;

	Objective #2. CEC positioned as a regional Election Administration thought leader.	Activity #1. Implement projects and programs through cooperating with other Election Administrations and international organizations; Activity #2. Host annual conference of Election Management Bodies (EMB).

Strategic Pillar 2: Civic and Voter Education

Increase the level of civic engagement through educational programs; increase voter turnout and increase the number of informed voters.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Goal #1: Civic and voter education initiatives Increase awareness among the citizenry and increase civic and electoral participation through effective and continuous educational campaigns.	**Objective #1.** Citizens informed and educated at a higher level.	**Activity #1.** Carry out informational campaign during election periods; **Activity #2.** Elaborate and implement informational/education programs for first-time voters; **Activity #3.** Provide special election-education course for specific higher academic institutions; **Activity #4.** Elaborate and implement project "Election Development School"; **Activity #5.** Establish Election Administration employee schools; **Activity #6.** Design and implement informational programs for voters residing in mountainous regions; **Activity #7.** Provide timely and comprehensive information to voters residing abroad; **Activity #8.** Design and implement informational/educational programs for ethnic minorities; **Activity #9.** Design and implement informational/educational programs for persons with disabilities.

Goal #2: Increase level of electoral culture	Objective #1. Study programs for stakeholders and voters developed and implemented.	Activity #1. Design and implement informational/educational programs for political parties/election subjects;
Design and implement creative civic education projects that engage stakeholders and the general public; increase awareness about the electoral process and contribute to the development of political culture among the public.		Activity #2. Design and implement informational/educational programs for NGOs and local observer groups;
		Activity #3. Design and implement informational/educational programs for other state institutions;
		Activity #4. Design and implement informational/educational programs for media outlets.
		Activity #5. Support conduct of internal elections at various organizations/establishments.
	Objective #2. Contribute to popularization of elections.	Activity #1.Organize contests;
		Activity #2. Organize events on election topic;
		Activity #3. Organize open house days at the Election Administration.
Goal #3: Encourage and support engagement of civil society in electoral processes	Objective #1. Civil society engaged in electoral processes.	Activity #1. Improve rules for organizing contests;
		Activity #2. Define priorities;
Increase capacity of civil society to take an active role in the electoral process.		Activity #3. Improve mechanisms for monitoring funded projects.
	Objective #2. Consultative mechanisms between Election Administration and civil society strengthened.	Activity #1. Improve working format with international and local organizations, and the Election Administration's working groups (persons with disabilities, gender, ethnic minorities).

Strategic Pillar 3: Electoral Environment

*Create an inclusive electoral environment **through** the **active** participation of stakeholders in election processes, support improved legislation.*

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Goal #1: Support improved legal framework	Objective #1. Technical advice and assistance provided to legislative drafting processes.	Activity #1. Make legal analyses and elaborate recommendations on recent elections;
Work towards ensuring that electoral legislative framework complies with international standards; develop legislative initiatives.		Activity #2. Analyze reports on elections, produced by international/local organizations and elaborate recommendations.

	Objective #2. Increased level of harmonization of legislative framework and compliance with international standards and best practices.	**Activity #1:** Reveal existing needs/ study the best practices; **Activity #2**: Envisage best practices and international standards into legislative acts.
	Objective #3. EDR process improved.	**Activity #1.** Increase capacity of administrative proceedings of DEC/CEC with regard to EDR; **Activity #2.** Ensure training programs at all level of election administration on legislative issues and election disputes.
Goal #2: Ensure electoral integrity Ensure integrity of electoral process by addressing vulnerabilities and mitigating risks.	**Objective #1.** Integrity of electoral processes strengthened.	**Activity #1.** Develop and implement Election Integrity Management Plan.
Goal #3: Ensure an inclusive electoral environment Ensure an equal and accessible electoral environment and improve existing mechanisms for disseminating election-related information to stakeholders.	**Objective #1.** Level of accessibility of electoral process increased.	**Activity #1.** Carry out information campaign targeting persons with disabilities, including available services.
	Objective #2. Increased participation of ethnic minorities.	**Activity #1.** Design and implement informational/ educational programs for ethnic minorities; **Activity #2.** Discuss annual action plan of the Election Administration within the working groups; **Activity #3.** Develop election administration resources in the regions densely populated with ethnic minorities; **Activity #4.** Design special training module aiming at involving representatives of ethnic minority groups in the DECs/PECs.
	Objective #3. Election Administration's consultative mechanisms with stakeholders improved.	**Activity #1.** Discuss annual action plan of Election Administration within the working groups; **Activity #2.** Improve working format with stakeholders (parties/subjects, media, other state institutions, international and local organizations).

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Goal #4: Support the development of an environment with greater gender equality Develop and implement the Election Administration's gender equality policy; encourage women's participation in political and public life.	**Objective #1.** Election Administration's gender equality policy developed.	**Activity #1.** Elaborate gender equality policy at the Election Administration.
	Objective #2. Women's participation in political and public life supported.	**Activity #1.** To design training programs for female candidates.
	Objective #3. Increased awareness among the citizenry on gender equality issues.	**Activity #1.** Take gender equality into consideration while organizing grant competitions.
Goal #5: Improve DEC and PEC delimitation processes Voters to exercise their active voting rights without impediments.	**Objective #1.** Systematic coordination with relevant institutions in the process of delimitation and addressing established.	**Activity #1.** Close cooperation with local authorities/PSDA/Public registry re delimitation of DEC/PECs.
	Objective #2. Mechanisms to enable DECs to address problematic issues on the spot developed.	**Activity #1.** Elaborate guidelines for DECs.

Strategic Pillar 4: Electoral Operations

To ensure Election Day is organized on a highly professional level; to inform society of ongoing election processes and results in an efficient manner;

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Goal #1: Increase qualification standards of DEC and PEC members Increase theoretical and practical knowledge of Election Administration's staff on election procedures. Develop election administration resources.	**Objective #1.** Organized and conducted elections.	**Activity #1.** Acquire necessary inventory/materials for conducting elections;

	Objective #2. Update training programs for DEC and PEC members	**Activity #1.** Develop and implement training programs; **Activity #2**. Develop evaluation system on conducted training programs and elaborate recommendations; **Activity #3**. Create pool of potential PEC members.
	Objective #3. Election administration training programs developed and implemented in ethnic minority communities.	**Activity # 1:** Develop election administration resources in the regions populated with ethnic minorities; **Activity # 2:** Develop a special training module for the ethnic minority DEC and PEC members in order to encourage their participation in administering elections.
Goal #2: Ensure the expeditious announcement of election results Improve the process of sharing election results within the Election Administration; deliver election results to the public in an expeditious and efficient manner.	**Objective #1.** Improved election results management by streamlining procedures and utilizing technological innovations.	**Activity #1.** Analyze existing approach and elaborate Recommendations; **Activity #2.** Take into consideration recommendations from stakeholders' reports; **Activity #3.** Additional module to the election management system EPMS on aggregation of results at DECs in regards to receiving/processing election related data.
Goal #3: Provide stakeholders with timely and accurate election-related information Provide timely and exhaustive information to the public; ensure high level of transparency.	**Objective #1.** Improved CEC webpage to be more user-friendly.	**Activity #1.** Create unified statistic database on election information/regularly publishing it. **Activity #2.** Publish election results and other statistical data in a user-friendly format.
	Objective #2. Increase online presence and increased utilization of social media.	**Activity #1.** Regularly update the CEC's and Chairperson's Facebook and web-pages;
	Objective #3. Maintain complaint database.	**Activity #1.** Take into consideration issues related to confidentiality of personal information; **Activity #2.** Improve process of managing the complaint database at DECs.