

SUPPORT TO DRC ELECTIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT

July 18, 2016



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**Author:
Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
(CEPPS)**

The Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) program supports elections and political transitions. Under this mechanism, the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) empowers local partners to build resilient government institutions, political parties, and electoral processes in fragile states and developing democracies, and strengthen the resilience of democratic reforms in non-democratic countries.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From May 25 to June 17, 2016, the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) deployed an assessment team to Kinshasa to examine voter registration and election preparations. This report includes the findings of the assessment team and provides a technical analysis of the voter registration and election preparations corresponding to the time period when the team was on the ground. The ultimate goal of this assessment is to promote informed and inclusive discussion regarding election planning and timelines among electoral stakeholders.

Given the complex and multifaceted nature of the task, CEPPS developed a targeted methodology for the assessment based on the existing Electoral Integrity Assessment (EIA) and Electoral Process Diagnostic (EPD) peer-reviewed and field-tested evaluation methodologies. Specifically, the assessment team sought to assess voter registration options against five overarching electoral principles of transparency, impartiality, effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness, and to evaluate the political feasibility of options identified. CEPPS assembled an assessment team comprising Electoral Expert/Team Lead, Mrs. Carmina Sanchis-Ruescas; Voter Registration Specialist, Mr. Michel Chajes; Democratic Development Expert, Mr. Charles Djrekpo; and Inclusion Specialist, Mrs. Carole Osero-Ageng'o (See Annex 4 for team bios). Over the course of the assessment, the team held 64 meetings (see Annex 3) with electoral stakeholders including the CENI, political parties, governmental institutions, national and international civil society organizations, international development partners, and multilateral organizations.

Broadly, the CEPPS assessment team found that, at the time of writing, there exists no option that allows both for elections to be organized within a constitutional timeframe *and* for the development of a voter roll that can satisfy the demands of all political actors. Determining an “acceptable option” that navigates these two competing interests is beyond the scope of the assessment, as this is something that can only be resolved by Congolese stakeholders through dialogue.

The CEPPS team also found that while all stakeholders favor a credible voter roll, there is a multiplicity of views on the time and level of accuracy required to attain a “credible” voter roll given the tight constitutional timeframe for elections, the need to uphold the integrity of the process, and interest in holding elections as quickly as technically possible should the constitutional timeline prove untenable. Three broad options exist with regard to the voter roll:

1. use the existing voter roll (no update);
2. conduct a partial update of the existing roll, to allow newly eligible voters to participate;
and
3. conduct a full revision of the voter roll.

Each of these options represents a compromise between adhering to a constitutional timeframe¹ for elections on the one hand, and upholding the integrity of the electoral process on the other.

¹ Note that Article 76 of the Constitution does provide for up to 120 days after a presidential vacancy to organize elections. The applicability of this Article in the current situation is an element of ongoing debate on the ground. As such, throughout the report, the phrase “a constitutional timeframe” is used to denote a timeframe for elections that

By the end of the assessment mission in mid-June, the first option, using the current voter roll, is the only one of the three options that could allow presidential elections to be organized by November 27, 2016, in accordance with the Constitution. However, an audit conducted by the International Organization of La Francophonie (*Organisation internationale de la Francophonie – OIF*) in July 2015² found that the current voter roll contains serious shortcomings. In addition, using the current voter roll would disenfranchise an estimated 17 million³ newly eligible voters, internally displaced persons, and members of the diaspora. Both of these factors could impact the integrity of an electoral process based on the current voter roll. There is also no consensus amongst Congolese stakeholders on whether to move forward based on this option.

The second option, a partial update, could resolve some of the issues with the credibility of the current voter roll and allow as yet unregistered voters to participate. The CEPPS team, however, found that a partial update that includes registering new voters in substantial numbers would require logistics on a scale similar to those required for the full revision outlined in option three. A partial update of the voter roll would therefore take only slightly less than the time needed for the full revision outlined in option three. Any improvement in the integrity of a partial revision would also depend on the transparency of the process and the CENI's ability to address its current credibility shortcomings.

The third option, conducting a full revision of the voter roll, could represent an opportunity for future elections to be held using an impartial, inclusive, and transparent voter roll. Like option two, any improvement in the integrity of the process assumes that the full revision is conducted in a transparent manner, which would require that the CENI address its current credibility issues.

Despite the current lack of consensus on a way forward, in February 2016 the CENI launched a procurement process for voter registration kits needed to conduct a full revision of the voter roll. Based on working sessions with the CENI, the CEPPS team found that the CENI's internal chronogram, which sets out 12 months⁴ for the full revision of the voter roll, (from the time of signature of the procurement contract for voter registration kits) is generally reasonable and realistic.⁵ Notwithstanding the advantages of a full registration process in terms of accuracy and inclusiveness, political consensus legitimizing this action is currently absent. Furthermore, funding uncertainties preclude any guarantee that a full voter registration exercise and subsequent elections can be successfully implemented in a timely manner.

could extend to 120 days beyond the end of the current presidential term. The term “*the constitutional timeframe*” is used to specify the current legal deadline for elections, which is aligned with the end of the current presidential term. However, in May 2016, the Constitutional Court determined that the President of the Republic is to remain in office until the inauguration of the President-elect.

² *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Rapport, Mission d'Audit du Fichier Electoral de la République Démocratique du Congo, 17 juillet – 1er aout 2015.*

³ CENI Annual Report, June 2015 – May 2016.

⁴ The assessment team found considerable confusion on the ground because both 16- and 12-month timeframe had been put forward. According to information gathered by the assessment team, the 16-month timeframe begins from the time the tender for voter registration kits was launched, while the 12-month timeframe begins at the time of signature of the contract for voter registration kits. As such, the two timelines are consistent with one another.

⁵ It is worth noting that this is the first time the CENI shared its chronogram with an external assessment team. Reviewing the chronogram was a valuable exercise and source of information, and allowed the assessment team to conduct a detailed technical evaluation of the CENI's preparations to date.

It should be noted that the CENI's decision to move forward with a full revision of the voter roll without political consensus represents a missed opportunity to strengthen the credibility of the CENI as an institution. Had the CENI presented options and detailed their technical and financial implications earlier in the electoral cycle, it could have bolstered its credibility as a technical leader of the process and promoted informed discourse. Moreover, at the time of the assessment, the team found that stakeholders' perspectives on the electoral process were often characterized by a lack of information on technical and operational aspects of the process.

In addition, the CEPPS team found the following technical gaps that would need to be addressed to ensure the success of the full voter registration exercise (option 3) on which the CENI has embarked: a new central data system needs to be procured or developed; a new automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) with higher data storage and processing capacity will have to be procured; the CENI's Information Technology (IT) team likely needs additional training and support to manage its central database; and resources will need to be made available to cover the cost of additional voter registration materials and communication for the voter registration exercise.

The report outlines the findings of the assessment team. While political and technical risks and vulnerabilities to the voter registration and electoral process are considered, the essence of the report (as per the evaluation methodology developed) provides a technical analysis of various voter registration options and the current process being pursued by the CENI. The report provides a set of key recommendations for various electoral stakeholders that include the following:

- Congolese stakeholders should collectively agree on an electoral roadmap that determines the sequencing, timing, and funding of elections.
- All stakeholders should seek to create an environment that will be conducive to an inclusive discussion process focused on resolving election challenges.
- The National Assembly should pass the outstanding laws required for the organization of elections.
- The CENI should exercise its legal responsibilities of presenting an electoral calendar, and address its constitutional obligations, notably calling for elections at least 90 days before the end of the current presidential term.
- Should conditions prevent elections from being called 90 days before the end of the current term, all stakeholders should consider what accommodations need to be made in favor of an accepted electoral roadmap.
- The CENI should develop a formal communication and outreach strategy to ensure stakeholder involvement throughout the process.
- The international community should further invest in supporting the electoral process, notably by supporting the organization of upcoming elections, even if it means setting benchmarks for the CENI that would determine further financial assistance.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL CONTEXT AND ASSESSMENT RATIONALE

BACKGROUND

According to DRC's constitution, President Joseph Kabila's second and final term in office will end on December 20, 2016. The constitution also requires elections by November 27, 2016. For reasons that are beyond the scope of this analysis, delays in electoral preparations rendered elections by the end of 2016 increasingly unlikely. In November 2015, President Kabila announced a National Dialogue to address these issues, and in April 2016 the African Union (AU) appointed Mr. Edem Kodjo, the former Prime Minister of Togo, to facilitate the process. In May 2017, DRC's Constitutional Court ruled that the President of the Republic may remain in office until the inauguration of the President-elect if the presidential election is not held before the end of President Kabila's second and final term in office.

The CENI, meanwhile, embarked on a full revision of DRC's voter roll in February 2016 without broad-based support from electoral stakeholders. A full revision of the voter roll will delay presidential elections well past the constitutionally mandated deadline of November 2016, and the end of President Kabila's term in office in December 2016. In hopes of still holding elections by the end of 2016, stakeholders other than the CENI, including some opposition parties, civil society organizations, and religious groups, have outlined alternative scenarios for either using DRC's existing voter roll or completing a partial revision of the voter roll. A deeper understanding of the technical feasibility of these various scenarios will help Congolese and international stakeholders determine each option's viability, facilitate meaningful discussion, and increase the likelihood of agreement on a way forward.

Given this context, from May 25 to June 17, 2016, CEPPS deployed an assessment team to the DRC to examine current voter registration and election preparations. The assessment provides a technical analysis of options available for voter registration to better inform Congolese and international stakeholders. CEPPS assembled an assessment team comprising the following four individuals with expertise in election management, voter registration, democratic development, and inclusion: Electoral Expert/Team Lead, Mrs. Carmina Sanchis-Ruescas; Voter Registration Specialist, Mr. Michel Chajes; Democratic Development Expert, Mr. Charles Djrekpo; Inclusion Specialist, Mrs. Carole Osero-Ageng'o. Bios of the assessment team members are annexed to this report (Annex 4).

OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

The objective of this report is to provide a fuller understanding of the technical feasibility of various voter registration options to determine their viability and facilitate meaningful discourse among Congolese and international stakeholders. In addition, the report conveys the existing financial and material resource gaps that could hinder a successful voter registration operation, and makes specific recommendations on institutional support required for the CENI. CEPPS anticipates conducting outreach and sensitization on the assessment's findings with major domestic and international stakeholders as part of the achievement of the overall assessment goal of promoting discourse regarding election planning and possible timelines among key electoral stakeholders.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

CEPPS developed an assessment methodology that borrowed from CEPPS/IFES' EIA and EPD methodologies. Both methodologies employ a holistic approach to examining electoral processes while including specific tools aimed at assessing voter registration and decision-making processes. Specifically, the assessment team sought to assess voter registration options, including alternative solutions that have the potential to reduce the timeline currently proposed by the CENI, against five overarching electoral principles of transparency, impartiality, effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness.

EPD Electoral Principles	
Impartiality	Certain parties or candidates are not, and are not perceived to be, favored over others.
Effectiveness	Assets are effectively utilized to properly plan and implement mandate.
Inclusiveness	Stakeholders are as engaged as possible in the processes, and competition, which is a healthy aspect of the democratic process, is promoted.
Transparency	Planning and implementation of processes is accessible to stakeholders through a proactive discussion.
Sustainability	Electoral policies and practices are sustainable financially and institutionally by the Electoral Management Body short to medium term.

The assessment team also sought to evaluate the political feasibility of the options identified. To that end, the assessment team strove to meet as many stakeholders in the DRC's electoral process as possible, including: the CENI, ruling majority and opposition political parties, the government, national and international civil society organizations, representatives of the diplomatic community in Kinshasa, development partners of the DRC, and major multilateral organizations (United Nations – UN, African Union – AU, European Union – EU).

The assessment team had difficulty applying pre-established interview protocols and discussion questions as the majority of stakeholders were primarily interested in discussing their outlook on the political situation. When electoral matters were discussed during interviews, stakeholders' perspectives were often characterized by a lack of information on technical and operational aspects of the electoral process. Another challenge was the lack of concrete plans or operational elements to assess, although an unanticipated in-depth analysis of the CENI's draft voter registration chronogram was an extremely useful aspect of the assessment. However, the five electoral principles provided a uniform framework that allowed the team to consider various voter registration options (albeit in necessarily broad strokes), as well as the CENI's actions to date. Furthermore, the electoral principles provided a useful benchmark against which to assess political discourse and outreach undertaken to date, both of which require improvement from an inclusion and transparency perspective. The full methodology is included in Annex 2 of this report.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONGOLESE CONSTITUTION AS RELATES TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL IMPASSE

The DRC has a robust legal framework based on a constitution that was approved in 2006 and amended in January 2011. The Constitution was a result of lengthy negotiations that followed the

seven-year civil war, and sought to bring a level of legitimacy to the institutions of the DRC. The preamble of the Constitution reflects this context and provides a helpful perspective on the spirit of the Constitution and the aspirations of the Congolese people for political turnover and respect of human rights. The Constitution speaks directly to the electoral process in the third chapter, titled “The Organization and Exercise of Power.” The following articles relate directly to the presidential elections:

- *Article 70* limits the presidential term to five years renewable once and states that the President shall stay in power until the effective installation of the new president.
- *Article 73* requires that the CENI call the presidential election by 90 days before the expiration of the term of office of the serving president.
- *Article 75* states that the president of the Senate will assume provisional power in case of a permanent presidential vacancy due to death, resignation, or any other cause of impeachment.
- *Article 76* states that in case of a presidential vacancy, the presidential elections should take place from 60 to 90 days after the vacancy is announced. In case of *force majeure* preventing the timely organization of the election, the CENI can seize the Constitutional Court to extend this period by up to 120 days.
- *Article 211* gives the CENI its legal status.
- *Article 220* provides that an increase in the number of presidential terms does not constitute grounds for an amendment of the Constitution. This Article also notes that the Constitution cannot be amended to reduce the human rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution.

In April 2016, majority parties solicited the Constitutional Court to request its interpretation of Article 70, which states that the President of the Republic remains in power until the newly elected president takes over. In May 2016, the Constitutional Court determined that the President of the Republic is to remain in office until the inauguration of the President-elect.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL VULNERABILITIES IDENTIFIED

1. Lack of Political Consensus

The lack of political consensus on a path toward elections remains the single biggest obstacle to the organization of elections in the DRC. At present, there is no official electoral calendar, and the government⁶ has not committed adequate funding, in line with the approved electoral budgets for 2012 to 2016. Yet, by September 19, the CENI, which is charged with organizing elections, has the constitutional obligation to call for elections.

Despite this, the CENI, a body that has not escaped the political controversy and whose impartiality has been questioned by key actors (including opposition parties, the Catholic Church, civil society leaders, and international observers), has proceeded with procurement processes and planning for a full revision of the voter roll in an effort to move the process forward while waiting for a political consensus on outstanding issues.

⁶ Throughout the report, “government” refers to the Kabila administration. Other governmental institutions are referred to by name.

While the exact contours of an eventual electoral process remain unresolved, the CEPPS assessment team has found that at this late stage, no option allows both for elections to be organized within a constitutional timeframe *and* the development of a voter roll that can satisfy the demands of all political actors. Determining an “acceptable option” is beyond the scope of the assessment, and requires agreement among Congolese political actors on a roadmap for elections reached through an inclusive discourse.

Electoral stakeholders hold widely divergent views on a number of issues related to the upcoming electoral process. Exacerbating the situation are growing divisions even within each stakeholder group, including within the majority and opposition parties.

The political majority, a group of parties supporting President Kabila and his People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (*Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie* or PPRD), generally favors a full voter registration exercise and the organization of local elections ahead of the presidential election. They blame the opposition for refusing to participate in the National Dialogue called by the president in November 2015 and for adopting an attitude that will lead to conflict instead of to elections. There is a general consensus that international donors should invest in the organization of elections while avoiding intrusion in Congolese sovereign matters. Based on interviews conducted by the assessment team, members of the political majority tend to see electoral delays as a *fait accompli*, and generally agree that all stakeholders, including the majority, are responsible for the current political impasse and the resulting slippage.

The political opposition advocates for President Kabila to step down at the end of his second presidential term, as per the Constitution, and is critical of the Constitutional Court’s ruling that allows him to remain in office until a new president takes over. They generally favor a revision of the voter roll that would at least include voters who came of voting age since the last election in 2011, believing they can garner significant support from the youth vote. Nonetheless, opposition groups hold varying levels of understanding and opinions on how long such a revision would take and whether the presidential election should happen even if there is no time to update or revise the roll. The CENI and Constitutional Court are regarded as government controlled institutions that lack the neutrality and impartiality required to carry out their respective mandates. A number of opposition parties have refused to participate in the ongoing dialogue process, citing the need for the government to fulfill a range of preconditions, discontent with the AU dialogue facilitator, and distrust in government intentions.

The assessment team met with various ***faith-based organizations*** and ***religious groups***, all of which advocate for an inclusive discussion and are critical of politicians and their motives. Yet, the views of the Catholic Church (the largest religious denomination in the DRC) diverge from those of other religious denominations, largely along political lines. The National Conference of Bishops of the Congo (*Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo* – CENCO) a Catholic Church leadership group, advocates for presidential and legislative elections within the constitutional deadline. Meanwhile, the Electoral Integrity and Mediation Commission (*Commission d'intégrité*

et médiation électorales – CIME),⁷ an inter-religious commission to support the electoral process from which the Catholic Church in the DRC suspended its membership, defends the full voter registration exercise and the organization of local elections before any other election.

Civil society voices blame political elites for creating a political crisis for their own benefit as opposed to the country's interests. They note that elites have detached themselves from their constituencies and they fear a conflict sparked by the deteriorating economic situation, which they claim politicians are ignoring. There is a general distrust of the CENI and a perception that citizens lack basic information on the current state of affairs, and on preparations for voter registration. In talks with the assessment team, civil society organization (CSO) representatives condemned the lack of political will to resolve the impasse and regretted that the country has been held ransom by the political class. They would like a discussion to take place and for the slippage to be contained rather than used as a means to force a transition of indefinite duration.

2. The National Dialogue

Despite deep-seated differences of perspective, all Congolese stakeholders, without exception, believe a national dialogue in some form is needed to resolve the current political crisis and to prevent violent conflict. Indeed, if an acceptable electoral process is to take place, an inclusive discussion remains the only viable mechanism by which consensus on a way forward can be reached. Unfortunately, the failure on the part of stakeholders to agree on the nature and modality of such a dialogue constitutes a major obstacle to the organization of elections.

The political majority advocates for the National Dialogue called by President Kabila in November 2015 to be held. This Dialogue aims to assemble political and civil society actors to discuss the potential challenges regarding upcoming elections. The agenda includes five points: the electoral calendar, the revision of the voter roll, electoral security, financial resources for the elections, and the role of external partners in the electoral process. In an effort to make the National Dialogue a reality, the AU appointed Mr. Kodjo as the facilitator in April 2016. His role was supported by the UN and the international community at large, with UN Security Council Resolution 2277 demanding that all electoral actors engage in an inclusive dialogue to organize elections in line with the Constitution. To launch the National Dialogue, Mr. Kodjo tried to establish a preparatory committee of 30 members, 12 each from the majority and opposition, and six from civil society. By the end of the assessment team's visit, Mr. Kodjo had only succeeded in meeting with opposition leaders from the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social – UDPS), having approached them to name the 12 opposition representatives

⁷ Members include: the Church of Christ in Congo (*Eglise du Christ au Congo* – ECC), the Kimbanguiste Church, the Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community in Congo, the Salvation Army, revivalist churches, the Union of Independent Churches, and the Catholic Church (which has suspended its membership).

of the preparatory committee. The G7⁸ and *la Dynamique*⁹ coalitions question his neutrality and have consistently refused to meet with him. The G7 and *la Dynamique* felt excluded from the National Dialogue because it targeted UDPS as the main interlocutor for the opposition, and believe that the National Dialogue's agenda serves President Kabila's interests.

Opposition parties, on the other hand, push for an inclusive discussion with an agenda limited to the organization of the presidential election within the constitutional timeline. They seek guarantees that the end of President Kabila's second term will see him step down, and that a concrete roadmap towards elections will provide a framework for any necessary slippage in the electoral calendar. While all elections are important, the dialogue would prioritize the presidential election, with the other elections (parliamentary, provincial, local, etc.) organized under a new president. With respect to the format of the dialogue, the opposition rejects Mr. Kodjo as its sole facilitator, and seeks a panel of facilitators trusted by all sides.

3. Uncertain Legal Framework

At the time of the assessment, approximately six months away from the constitutionally mandated deadline for presidential and legislative elections, the legal framework for elections was still in flux. CEPPS recommends that a legal framework be set at least one year before elections, which is in line with most international and regional normative instruments. For instance, the Venice Commission *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters* states in section III that “The fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper, membership of electoral commissions and the drawing of constituency boundaries, should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election...”¹⁰ The *Handbook for European Union Election Observation* includes as a good practice that “The legal framework for elections is established well ahead of the start of the electoral process (preferably no less than one year before). If late amendments are needed, there should be broad agreement amongst electoral stakeholders, and any changes should be well publicized.”¹¹ The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) *Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance* states in Article 2 that “No substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the last six (6) months before the elections, except with the consent of a majority of Political actors.”¹²

⁸ Members include: Social Movement for Renewal (Mouvement Social pour le renouveau – MSR), Alliance for Congo's Renewal (Alliance pour le Renouveau du Congo – ARC), Congo Future (Avenir du Congo – ACO), National Union of Congolese Federalists (Union Nationale des fédéralistes du Congo – UNAFEC), Christian Democrat Party (Parti démocrate-chrétien – PDC), National Union of Democrats and Federalists (Union Nationale des démocrates et fédéralistes – UNADEF), and Alliance of Democrats for Progress (Alliance des démocrates pour le progrès – ADP).

⁹ Note that it is difficult to provide up-to-date information regarding participating parties as it is an informal grouping that is currently in flux due to recent events. Prominent members include Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (Mouvement pour la Liberation du Congo – MLC) and the Union for the Congolese Nation (Union pour la Nation Congolaise – UNC).

¹⁰ European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, Guidelines and Explanatory Report*, Adopted 2002, II.2.b.

¹¹ European Union Election Observation and Democratic Support, *Handbook for European Union Election Observation, third edition*, 2016, p. 43.

¹² Economic Community of West African States, *Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance. Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism For Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*, 2001, II.2.1.

Contrary to best practice, recent changes to the legal framework for elections, and a proposed amendment to the Electoral Law currently on hold in the National Assembly, present further vulnerabilities to the electoral process and affect the CENI's ability call for elections. Specifically, in June 2016, during the last day of the legislative session, the National Assembly passed the Law on the Identification and Registration of Voters.¹³ This law amends the previous law promulgated in 2005 and introduces some important modifications, including: the inclusion of Congolese citizens who are legal residents of foreign countries; revision of the witness system for registering voters without papers (to require them to produce written statements instead of oral statements to register); and the abandonment of continuous registration (which has not been implemented to date) in favor of an update of the voter roll at the end of each electoral cycle. While it is promising news that the National Assembly has passed the Law, neither the government nor the CENI have finalized operational or financial plans for the registration of diaspora voters.

Meanwhile, the Minister of the Interior and Security¹⁴ has put on hold proposed amendments to the Electoral Law on the grounds that key elements of the Law are subject to negotiations through the National Dialogue. With the legislature currently in recess until the fall, a special session will likely be needed if an amended Electoral Law is to pass in time to organize elections within a constitutional timeframe. Even this is already very late and poses substantial risk to the integrity of the electoral process. One of the main discussion points is whether to distribute National Assembly seats based on the number of inhabitants or the number of registered voters in each constituency, in the absence of an up-to-date census. This law is critical to the organization of legislative elections, as the distribution of National Assembly seats is a necessary precursor to legislative elections. Establishing seat allocation based on registered voters might affect representation if the voter roll does not reflect the number of eligible voters and remains inaccurate. The future of this law is not clear, and many see the introduction of an amendment as a means of delaying legislative elections. The fact that the presidential election is not affected by seat distribution has been put forward by opposition members interviewed as an argument for holding the presidential election on time using the current voter roll, separately from elections that require clarity on seat distribution.

4. Cross-Cutting Human Rights Concerns and Shrinking Democratic Space

An increasing number of cases of human rights abuses targeting the political opposition, civic activists and media professionals hinder the electoral process by reducing transparency and trust in the government and the electoral process, and constitute a further vulnerability in the electoral process. According to Human Rights Watch, arrests of opposition members "...come in the context of a broader crackdown against activists, opposition party members and others who have urged that presidential elections be organized according to the constitutional timetable."¹⁵ A lack of transparency by decision makers in the government has created a cycle of media speculation and

¹³ Note that the assessment team could not verify the content of the law as it was passed on the last day the team was in country and the team did not have access to a copy of the bill. What is included regarding the content of the law was gleaned from interviews.

¹⁴ In the DRC, proposals for laws are presented to the parliament by members of the government. Laws relating to elections fall under the authority of the Minister of the Interior and Security.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *DR Congo: Crackdown on Presidential Aspirant*, May 9, 2016

government repression. In response to speculation and bias (real or perceived), journalists face censorship, harassment, and detention.

In addition, government dissenters are often targeted, harassed, and arrested. In September 2015, seven senior political figures – whose parties later formed the G7 coalition – were expelled from DRC’s ruling coalition for signing a letter urging President Kabila to comply with the Constitution and not cling to power after his term expires. Violent clashes broke out the same month in Kinshasa, where a rally opposing an unconstitutional third term was marred by violence. In January 2015, when the government proposed an amendment to the electoral code requiring that a census be conducted prior to the presidential election, opposition and civil society groups, believing this measure to be intended to force a postponement of the presidential election, organized widespread protests, many of which turned violent. In February 2016, opposition party leaders, CSOs, and youth movements called for a *journée ville morte* (a citywide strike) in protest against delays in organizing the presidential election. This led to the arrest and detention of 38 people, including six members of the Struggle for Change (*Lutte pour le Changement* – LUCHA) who were sentenced to six months in prison. By limiting the expression of reporters and protestors, the government severely affects trust of citizens in the electoral process.

5. International Pressure and Lack of Investment

Pressure from the international community to conduct elections as per the constitutional framework, coupled with contrasting reticence to invest in the process pending an electoral calendar and a corresponding budget, draws criticism from Congolese stakeholders. The assessment team found considerable demand for international investment in the electoral process on the part of Congolese stakeholders. Ultimately, the international community’s failure to fund key aspects of the electoral process could adversely affect the credibility of both roadmap discussions and election preparations, as it adds a further element of uncertainty in an already polarized political impasse.

The international community, for its part, speaks with one voice on the need for presidential and legislative elections, respect of the Constitution, and the need for an inclusive discussion. They are also willing to support the electoral process, provided stakeholders agree on a clear calendar and the government shares a disbursement plan.

There have been different attempts by the international community to encourage and to pressure the DRC government. For example, the March 30, 2016 UN Security Council Resolution 2277 “[Notes] with deep concern the delays in the preparation of the presidential elections scheduled for November 2016, in accordance with the Constitution, and that the update of the electoral register has not yet begun.” The Resolution also calls for the promotion and consolidation of peace and inclusive and transparent political dialogue among all Congolese stakeholders, consistent with the Constitution, with a view to furthering reconciliation and democratization, ensuring the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights and paving the way for holding elections. European Parliament Resolution 2016/2609, also released in March, condemns limitations on political space and encourages stakeholders to engage in dialogue. The resolution also notes that President Kabila’s second term is to end and that presidential and legislative elections should take place as per the Constitution.

Despite the absence of an electoral calendar and an inclusive discussion, some development partners appear to have softened their positions, realizing that the CENI is achieving some key milestones and needs support as an institution to complete the voter registration exercise. However, donors continue to refrain from contributing financially to support the organization of the electoral process. Instead, they opt to provide technical experts to the CENI, as is the case for the EU and the USA, and to support voter education and domestic observation initiatives. Donors have barely begun to contribute funds to the UNDP basket fund despite 15 months of programmatic and financial negotiations among donor countries. It should be noted that public mention by prominent PPRD officials of a referendum to determine a way forward has also hindered progress on this front.

At some point, the international community will need to take decisions on whether and how to support the organization of elections. The international community's funds are needed; however, due to internal bureaucracies, some doubt they will be able to disburse funds quickly should any dialogue move forward. One approach is that taken by Canada, which has placed funds in the basket fund on hold while they monitor the situation. Other donor countries could adopt this pragmatic approach as a signal of support and to expedite access to funds should the political impasse be unlocked.

6. Low Credibility of the CENI

The CENI is the institution legally charged with the organization of elections. Equally, the CENI depends on other stakeholders to play their part in ensuring the right conditions and to provide appropriate support to carry out its mandate. This section discusses the current challenges the CENI faces as identified by the assessment team, which could result in technical vulnerabilities affecting the electoral process generally, and voter registration specifically.

Since the contested elections in 2011, citizens and stakeholders have lost confidence in the DRC's governing and electoral institutions. In 2011, irregularities during the voter registration and vote tabulation processes led to questions regarding the credibility of both the voter roll and the results, and bred widespread distrust of the electoral management bodies. Local and provincial elections should have followed in 2012, but were delayed on multiple occasions before the current 'indefinite' postponement. When the CENI released its last comprehensive local, provincial, and national electoral calendar with a \$1.2 billion price tag in February 2015, many opposition and civil society groups feared that the local and provincial polls would leave the election management body without the needed resources to organize the 2016 presidential elections on time. Others, showing little trust in the CENI, assumed this was by design. At this stage, the CENI's credibility and impartiality are under intense public scrutiny. This issue was exacerbated by the turbulence around the change in leadership in 2015, and by the ongoing polarization of the political environment in the DRC. Even if political consensus allowed the organizations of elections, CENI's lack of credibility presents a vulnerability in terms of the acceptance of election results.

Interviews the assessment team conducted with various civil society groups active in the areas of voter education and domestic observation have revealed a common view that the CENI is not sufficiently engaging stakeholders in the process. NGOs involved in public awareness raising complained that they received only sporadic information about the electoral process, insufficient to carry out effective civic and voter education campaigns. The CENI has not yet approached

observation groups to discuss their involvement in monitoring the upcoming registration process. During a group discussion with media professionals, journalists complained that the population is unable to follow developments in the electoral process due to a prevailing dearth of information and the often-confusing messages released by the CENI. These journalists hope to rely on consistent and timely communication from the CENI to benefit voters.

Women's groups and representatives of voters with disabilities also expect a high level of inclusion from the CENI in all its operations and awareness materials, and hope the CENI will adopt institutional policies to mainstream their active role throughout the electoral process. However, arrangements that would need to be put in place to enfranchise persons with disabilities in the registration process were not discussed, as operational planning had not reached that point. Additionally, there does not appear to be disaggregated data on disabilities to allow for planning in terms of registration.

7. Financial Constraints

The obligation to provide financial means to the CENI falls on the National Assembly, which makes annual provisions for elections in the national budget. The government makes disbursements to the CENI once the budget is approved. Unfortunately, over the past several years, the CENI has not received the full allocated budget as approved by the National Assembly. Since 2013, the annual approved budget of \$250 million was only partially disbursed to the CENI. In 2016, the government has committed to disburse only \$300 million over the course of the year out of the approved budget of \$613.5 million. Thus far, the CENI has only received \$80 million. According to stakeholders interviewed, the prime minister has expressed doubts that the government will be able to fulfill its commitment to the CENI.

According to the CENI, the required budget for the full revision of the voter roll it is currently implementing is \$389.8 million. This amount includes a logistics budget of over \$100 million that the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) has committed to cover, and an additional \$40 million that UNDP's Project to Support the Electoral Cycle in Congo (PACEC) is planning to contribute. However, the funding for the basket fund has yet to materialize given donors' reticence to invest because of CENI's inability to meet certain conditions (revised electoral calendar, budget plan, etc.), as well as the current political uncertainty.

Nevertheless, the CENI has already undertaken procurements for the voter registration exercise worth \$67 million for the registration kits, \$8.4 million for the voters' cards, and \$12.9 million for generators. Year-to-date, CENI has publicly announced that it has contracted for \$103 million worth of elections-related materials.

It is obvious that electoral operations require considerable financial means. If the National Assembly does not ensure disbursement of the approved electoral budget and/or if the government prioritizes other projects over the elections, and does not fulfill its obligation to disburse funds in accordance with the electoral budget, the CENI will not be able to carry out its mandate. The CEPPS team strongly encourages the National Assembly and the government to put in place effective mechanisms for timely disbursement of approved funds to the CENI.

8. Lack of an Electoral Calendar

Generally, the electoral calendar should be fixed early in the electoral cycle to allow the electoral institution to effectively plan for elections. At the time of the assessment, less than three months before the CENI has the constitutional obligation to call for elections, the sequence of elections remained a key point of contention in the ongoing political impasse. This is preventing the CENI from preparing an electoral calendar that would be accepted across the political spectrum. The uncertainty surrounding the type of elections to be organized and their corresponding timelines is a key obstacle to the CENI's planning, as the operational requirements and calendars for the different types of elections differ considerably. Unless the discussion moves forward and the sequence of elections is decided upon, the CENI will, at most, only be able to provide illustrative electoral calendars based on different sequencing options.

9. Lack of Clarity Regarding Legal Obligations

A firm legal electoral framework is essential for the operationalization of elections. Laws affecting the electoral process need to be approved by the National Assembly and in place in sufficient time to guarantee effective organization and legitimate elections. As discussed previously, a proposed amendment to the Electoral Law has been on hold until the political dialogue takes place. A critical provision in the proposed amendment would allow for the distribution of seats based on registered voters, instead of based on overall population. In the absence of a census of the population, the proposed modification will need to pass if legislative elections are to take place in the coming months, since an accurate distribution of seats based on population is impossible without an up-to-date census. Therefore, in this scenario, the presidential election could go ahead, but legislative elections would need to wait until the National Assembly approves the seat distribution.

10. Logistical Challenges

The size and the limited infrastructure of the DRC pose an immense logistical challenge in the organization of elections in comparison with other countries. Since the first democratic elections in 2006, effective logistical execution of elections in the DRC has relied heavily on the support of the UN. For the current registration process, MONUSCO has committed to provide logistical support for the transport of materials to 15 of the 16 provincial hubs (as Kinshasa, would not require this support), and from the hubs to over 110 difficult to reach areas. The UNDP has also committed to cover the rental of provincial warehouses to store materials.

The complexity of the Congolese electoral system, which features 11 elections, six of which are direct, adds to the logistical complexities of elections in the DRC. Regardless of sequencing or coupling of elections, enormous resources are needed to implement all 11 elections required by the Constitution in a country counting 169 legislative districts and 750 local electoral districts, spread throughout a country roughly the size of Western Europe and with extremely limited transport and communication infrastructure.

11. The International Community's Reluctance to Engage in the Current Process

The international community has contributed technically and financially to Congolese electoral processes since 2006. The original plan to cover up to 10 percent of the overall budget for the upcoming elections has been hampered by the uncertainty stemming from the current political impasse. The international community has demanded the adoption of a comprehensive electoral calendar, budget and a plan for disbursement of funds as a precondition for their investment. In

the meantime, their contribution has been limited to providing technical experts to the CENI and to supporting other aspects of the electoral process, including civic and voter education and domestic election observation.

Congolese actors have criticized the international community's reticence to support the electoral process. These actors believe the international community should contribute to the process and assist the CENI, while at the same time leveraging its influence to apply pressure on political parties and the government. The overall cost of the electoral process, the pace of CENI expenditures to date, and uncertainty over the government's disbursement capabilities, highlight the importance of the international community's contribution to account for any shortfall. In this context, the international community's reluctance to contribute funds at this stage may result in international funding coming too late to have the desired impact; it could take time for financial disbursements to move through donor bureaucracies if the political situation improves.

OUTLINE OF VOTER REGISTRATION OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The following section outlines the assessment team's technical findings as they relate specifically to voter registration. The section begins with a discussion of the three generic voter registration options available in any context, followed by a discussion of specific challenges facing the CENI in the DRC electoral context and a detailed description of the CENI's proposed registration chronogram and registration system. Finally, this section outlines key gaps that need to be addressed if the registration process is to succeed.

THE ASSESSMENT

The assessment team found that all stakeholders, no matter how disparate, favor a credible voter roll. However, there are diverse views on the time and level of accuracy required to attain a sufficiently credible register in light of the tight constitutional timeframe for the organization of the upcoming elections, as described earlier in the report.

Based on comparative experience, there are three generic options for approaching a voter registration exercise: (1) use the existing voter roll (no update); (2) conduct a partial update of the existing roll; and (3) conduct a full revision of the voter roll, which entails a full-fledged voter registration process in which all eligible voters would need to enroll. The choice of voter registration methodology, as well as other important preparations, should be made early in the electoral cycle to allow countries and election management bodies to effectively prepare financially, operationally, and legally to execute their decisions well in advance of Election Day. In addition, these decisions are best made in close collaboration with all electoral stakeholders so that the ultimate decision makers can make informed, transparent and legitimate decisions.

In the DRC, these discussions on the modality of the registration of voters and the sequence of elections are taking place too late in this electoral cycle. Decisions that are technical in nature have turned into a heated political debate. A few months before elections ought to be held, as mandated by its Constitution, the DRC faces some difficult decisions. Therefore, at this point in time, consensus among stakeholders is critical for the electoral process not only to move forward, but also to be legitimate, credible, and peaceful. In other words, the inclusivity of the process through which decisions are made is at least as important as the voter registration methodology itself.

The following provides more detail on the three generic voter registration options available regardless of the electoral environment, and how they would play out in the DRC context. It is worth noting that these same options were also outlined in the recent UN/OIF electoral evaluation report. Further, it is important to highlight that based on previous electoral practices in the DRC, preparations for presidential and legislative elections would take around 3.5 to four months and six months, respectively, once the voter roll is ready, assuming prior parliamentary approval of the distribution of seats in the case of the legislative elections. This should be taken into account when assessing the timeframe required for various voter registration options.

Option 1: Use the Existing Voter Roll (No Update)

To adhere to the constitutional timeframe for elections, the use of the current register is the only potentially realistic option, as of the end of the assessment mission in mid-June. Recognizing that the Congolese Constitution reflects the voices and the will of the Congolese people and, as any constitution, represents the highest law of the country, this consideration should not be taken lightly. At the same time, an accurate voter roll that includes all eligible voters is an essential part of a credible electoral process. This option would ultimately prioritize the obligation to respect the constitutionally mandated deadline for elections over the accuracy and inclusivity of the voter register. The following chart outlines the assessment team’s observations regarding this option’s adherence to the five overarching electoral principles from the evaluation methodology.

Analysis of Option to Use Existing Voter Roll Against EPD Electoral Principles	
Impartiality	<p>The current voter roll lacks credibility, as pointed out in the OIF audit.</p> <p>The current voter roll contains an estimated 300,000 duplicates and 1.6 million deceased persons, leaving room for suspicion of manipulation.</p> <p>Widespread suspicions that fraudulent voter cards are in circulation also affect the impartiality of the current voter roll.</p>
Effectiveness	<p>Using the current voter roll is the only option that potentially allows elections to take place within a constitutionally mandated timeframe. However, the choice to use this option must be made immediately for this to remain true.</p> <p>There is no additional financial cost associated with this option.</p>
Inclusiveness	<p>An estimated 17 million newly eligible voters and citizens living abroad would be disenfranchised.</p> <p>Participation of displaced persons would be called into question.</p> <p>Several stakeholders hold that this is the only option that properly enfranchises the 30 million voters who are already on the list.</p>
Transparency	<p>All options would require additional stakeholder outreach in order to secure broad acceptance and understanding prior to implementation.</p> <p>The current flaws with the existing list are publicly well known.</p>

Sustainability	Lack of credibility of current voter roll indicates poor sustainability – use of the current roll should only be a temporary measure. A full update would still be required in future.
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The team found that the Congolese stakeholders favoring the use of the existing voter roll prioritized the voting rights of the 30 million registered citizens who expect to elect a new President of the Republic within the constitutional timeframe, even at the expense of the estimated 17 million voters that are not included on the current voter roll. This latter group includes new voters, eligible voters in the diaspora, and voters who have relocated within the country since the last election, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). The stakeholders favoring this option particularly stressed the urgency of holding the presidential election, with a view to avoiding the potential for a prolonged *glissement* that sees President Kabila hold on to power.

Congolese stakeholders opposing this option argue that the credibility of the current register is questionable. While stakeholders initially accepted the cleaned list that was ready to be used for the provincial elections, the 2015 OIF audit found that it contained serious shortcomings in terms of inclusiveness and accuracy which, according to some of the stakeholders interviewed, was a major factor in the cancelation of those elections.

The positive aspects of this option, such as the respect of the constitutional timeframe for presidential elections and the obvious financial and logistical advantages, would need to be reconciled with the implications of an inaccurate roll that would disenfranchise millions of voters. These considerations highlight the need for political consensus for elections organized using the current roll to be credible and their results accepted. It should also be noted that the viability of this option would require that a consensus be reached quickly to allow the CENI to carry out electoral operations in time.

There are examples of countries in the region, which, due to various national circumstances, opted to use existing over updated voter rolls, including Mali and Senegal. In both cases, a political consensus was found, and inherent trade-offs were accepted by all stakeholders to mitigate the negative aspects of this option.

Option 2: Conduct a Partial Update of the Register

A partial update of the voter register could entail a variety of options that could strengthen the current voter list. These include conducting a deduplication exercise, removing deceased persons from the roll, updating voter information and adding new voters, which in the DRC context includes up to 17 million eligible citizens comprised of newly of-age citizens, displaced persons and citizens living abroad. The exact scope of a partial update would need to be determined by political agreement, and could introduce substantial improvements to the voter roll, particularly as relates to inclusion.

However, because all options for a partial update would be based on the current roll, ensuring that the credibility deficit affecting the current roll is not transferred to the updated roll would present a substantial challenge. Overall, a partial update option would only address some of the issues with the credibility of the current list while taking only slightly less time than a full revision. Notably, a partial update that includes registering new voters in substantial numbers would involve a

logistical exercise on a similar scale to that required for a full revision. Therefore, such a partial revision would not allow elections to take place within a constitutional timeframe. The following chart outlines the assessment team’s observations regarding this option’s adherence to the five overarching electoral principles from the evaluation methodology.

Analysis of Option to Conduct a Partial Update Against EPD Electoral Principles	
Impartiality	<p>A partial update would not resolve all issues over the lack of credibility of the current voter roll. However, a partial update could resolve the issue of duplicate entries if a deduplication process is included in the partial update.</p> <p>This option does not address issues of fraudulent voter cards allegedly in circulation, as old voter cards will still be valid.</p> <p>The registration criteria for newly eligible voters and displaced persons are clear.</p> <p>The issue of the diaspora is still under discussion. The CENI plans to enroll only those with legal residence status in a foreign country who hold a Congolese passport exclusively.</p>
Effectiveness	<p>Time required and cost for a partial revision would be slightly less than that required for a full revision.</p> <p>This option would necessitate a postponement of the elections beyond the constitutional deadline.</p>
Inclusiveness	<p>Newly eligible voters, displaced persons, and citizens living abroad may be able to participate, depending on the scope of the revision.</p> <p>Participation of displaced persons could be called into question if only newly eligible voters are registered.</p>
Transparency	<p>All options would require additional stakeholder outreach to secure broad acceptance and understanding prior to implementation.</p> <p>Significant voter education will be needed to ensure citizens understand exactly what is being updated, and what is not, as well as the difference between the two types of voter cards.</p>
Sustainability	<p>By nature, a partial update is usually an interim solution before a full update is undertaken; hence, the investment in this option does not support sustainability.</p>

The stakeholders favoring a partial update seek a more inclusive choice that would allow for the participation of newly eligible voters, eligible voters living abroad, and/or relocated voters. However, this option needs to be carefully considered given the logistical complexities inherent in working in the DRC and the time required to complete a partial update, which may be only slightly less than the time needed for a full registration process. Furthermore, a partial update does not address issues with the credibility of the current list. Therefore, the constitutional timeframe would be compromised without necessarily resulting in a more credible voter roll.

Stakeholders opposed to this option argue either in favor of using the current register, allowing for the constitutional timeframe to be respected, or warn against the shortcomings of a partial update, which would still contain the 1.6 million deceased voters and the seven million relocated voters, as estimated by the OIF audit. In addition, failure to address allegations that fraudulent voter cards were distributed and are currently in circulation and the confusion that could result from the simultaneous use of old and new voter cards, were mentioned as deterrents to a partial update.

Option 3: Conduct a Full Registration Process

Conducting a full registration process, if done in a thorough and transparent manner, could result in an up-to-date, credible and complete voter roll, free of the residual public mistrust that characterizes the existing voter roll. However, this option requires more human, financial, and material resources, as well as more time than the other two. There would also be increased voter education needs. For example, already registered voters would need to be informed of the need to re-register and get new voter cards (i.e. that their current voter cards would no longer be eligible). If this option were selected at this point in time, elections would be pushed back beyond the constitutional timeframe. The following chart outlines the assessment team’s observations regarding this option’s adherence to the five overarching electoral principles from the evaluation methodology.

Analysis of Option to Conduct a Full Registration Process as Proposed by the CENI Against EPD Electoral Principles	
Impartiality	<p>The registration criteria are clear.</p> <p>The issue of the diaspora is still under discussion. The CENI plans to enroll only those with legal residence status in a foreign country who hold a Congolese passport exclusively.</p>
Effectiveness	<p>A new register allows for a credible and accurate register. Switching from two-fingerprint deduplication to 10-fingerprint deduplication adds cost and time required with minimal added security.</p> <p>The CENI’s chronogram anticipates needing 12 months for this exercise from the signature of the contract for the kits. As such, this option would necessitate a postponement of the elections beyond the constitutional deadline.</p>
Inclusiveness	<p>A full registration process could allow for a highly inclusive voter roll, depending on design and implementation.</p> <p>Full revision presents opportunity to collect data on disabilities</p>
Transparency	<p>All options would require additional stakeholder outreach to secure broad acceptance and understanding prior to implementation.</p> <p>This option would likely require increased voter education, as already registered voters would need to be informed of the need to re-register and get new voter cards because their current voter cards would no longer be valid.</p>

	A sensitization campaign is planned but funds are limited.
Sustainability	The CENI plans to load the 2011 data on to the kits to speed up data entry, indicating a level of sustainability.

Based on previous electoral practices in the DRC, preparations for presidential and legislative elections may take around 3.5 to four months and six months, respectively, once the voter roll is ready. Therefore, pursuing a full revision would delay the elections well past the constitutional deadline. As such, any benefits to the integrity of the process must be weighed against the impact of a potential constitutional crisis. It is also worth mentioning that any improvement in the integrity of the process assumes that the full revision is conducted in a transparent manner, which would require that the CENI address its current credibility issues. This is particularly acute in the current context because the voter roll faces a public credibility deficit. It is critical that political parties and observer groups have access to the entire registration process. The CENI should, in particular, make full use of the display period and make the preliminary voter roll widely and easily available for external stakeholders and voters, thereby increasing public confidence in the voter roll, as well as enabling the CENI to fix any errors prior to Election Day.

It should also be noted that a full revision of the voter roll process does not have to start from scratch. It is common practice to use an existing voter list which is uploaded in the voter registration kits. When a voter registers, the existing accurate data is transferred to the new voter registration list and the new information along with the fingerprints are taken. This practice is effective as it saves time, cost, and it is more sustainable in that the existing data is of benefit. This approach was used in Kenya and is under consideration in Zimbabwe.

It is worth restating here that using the current voter roll is the only option that could allow for adherence to a constitutional timeframe for presidential elections, while a full revision is in many ways the most responsive option to overarching electoral principles. Nevertheless, only agreement among political actors, reached following an inclusive process, can determine the most appropriate option.

IMPORTANT REGISTRATION CONSIDERATIONS

This section provides an overview of voter registration processes regardless of context, and provides an indication of the logistical challenges inherent in registering voters in the DRC. This will provide background for the detailed analysis of the voter registration system the CENI is seeking to implement in the next section.

The *Principles for Election Management, Monitoring, and Observation in the SADC Region*, endorsed by the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC, which includes the DRC CENI, states, “There should be sufficient time for eligible voters to register, for public inspection of the voter roll, for objections and for the adjudication of appeals.”¹⁶ In *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis*, a study conducted by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) in 2010, key findings from the case studies, which included the DRC, comprised the following:

¹⁶ Electoral Commissions Forum, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, *Principles for Election Management, Monitoring, and Observation in the SADC Region*, Adopted 2003, p. 16.

- Political reality determines the necessary security features of a system.
- Confidence in the voters' register is dependent on confidence in the impartiality and independent decision-making of the [Election Management Body (EMB)].
- Transparency of the system, regular communication and stakeholder participation is crucial for acceptance of the process.
- Efficient timing is critical: a delay in voter registration can jeopardize the whole electoral process; lead times for equipment purchase need to factor in potential delays in supply.
- A balance is needed between providing enough time for data processing and cleaning, and holding voter registration close to the election date.
- Systems need to be tested rigorously before being implemented nationally.¹⁷

The registration process in any country is a complex exercise comprising a number of operational phases:

1. Pilot test of equipment;
2. Deployment of equipment;
3. Training of Registration Officers;
4. Deployment of Registration Officers;
5. Registration of voters;
6. Consolidation of voter registration data and deduplication;
7. Printing and exhibition of provisional voter roll;
8. Challenges and objections period;
9. Treatment of accepted objections; and
10. Preparation of final voter roll.

The CENI has the experience and capacity, with international assistance, to conduct an acceptable voter registration process. However, any voter registration process is a challenging endeavor, especially when implementing a hi-tech biometric voter registration (BVR) solution. A detailed Operational Plan that is well understood by all sections of the EMB and external stakeholders will be essential to the success of the registration exercise. The latter is currently not in place in the DRC. Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the coordination of operational complexities between CENI headquarters and the decentralized branches to ensure robust command and control capacity from Kinshasa supported by an effective and timely reporting mechanism from the field. This will enable the CENI to take corrective measures when facing logistical problems, be it opening registration centers, replacement of BVR kits, underperforming registration officers, or data control.

One of the main challenges facing an EMB during a nation-wide registration drive is to track the data generated from the registration centers. While the CENI appears to have a reasonable plan for this, a solid tracking system must actually be in place integrating the different steps in the process, from the registration data upload into the USBs and their physical movement until the data is uploaded at the antenna level to CENI's national data center.

¹⁷ Astrid Evrensel, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis*, 2010, p. 51-52.

While these phases are generally common to all countries conducting a partial or full registration process, the time required to complete the registration process will vary depending on the specific conditions of each country (i.e. number of eligible voters, size of the country, status of transport and communications infrastructure, number of kits used to register voters, and financial resources available).

The following regional examples compare voter registration operations in three countries to the current situation in DRC, representing diverse conditions.

Year	Country	Voters (million)	kits	Asphalted roads (km)	Time
2015	Tanzania	23	8,000	7,900	6 months
2010-11	Benin	4.5	3,000	2,400	5 months
2012	Sierra Leone	3	800	900	4 months
2016	DRC	41	20,000	1,500	12 months

Civil and Voter Registries: Lessons Learned from Global Experiences, highlights several global case studies, and speaks to the challenges conducting a registration exercise in fragile states. In Kosovo in 1999-2000 and in Afghanistan in 2003-2004, the process took more than a year,¹⁸ while in Iraq in 2005 the process took about one year.¹⁹

The following table contains comparative voter registration data for the past DRC elections as well as estimates for the upcoming elections.

Year	Registration Centers	Kits	Voters (million)	Cost (\$ million)	Time (months)
2006	9,105	10,000	25.7	110	13
2011	8,163	15,493	32	221.6	13
2016	18,000	20,200 ²⁰	41 ²¹	389.8	12 (estimated by CENI)

THE CENI'S REGISTRATION PROCESS

In February 2016, the CENI launched a procurement process and, at the time of writing this report, was on the verge of signing the contract with the supplier of voter registration kits needed to conduct a full voter registration process. Notwithstanding the advantages of a full registration process in terms of accuracy, the CENI's action is seemingly a *fait accompli* prior to establishing a political consensus legitimizing the action.

¹⁸ Michael Yard, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, *Civil and Voter Registries: Lessons Learned from Global Experiences*, 2011, p. 38 and 47.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

²⁰ The CENI has increased the number of kits and registration centers to shorten the time required for registration. Despite the more than 10 million more voters expected for the current electoral cycle, 2016 CENI envisages a 12-month registration process, when in 2011 it took 13 months.

²¹ Note that estimates for number of voters that will be registered vary throughout the report. This reflects variations in estimates at various stages in the electoral process.

At the beginning of 2016, the CENI proposed a chronogram for the registration process with an estimated duration of 16 months to register 49 million voters with 20,200 kits. This chronogram took the launch of the four-month procurement phase in February 2016 as the starting point of this 16-month registration process; the actual process of registering voters and completing the full revision of the list would take 12 months from the signature of the contract for the registration kits.

Roughly broken down, the 12 months includes: 2.5 months from signature of the contract to the deployment of BVR equipment and staff in the first operational area; around 7.5 months for deployment of materials, training and deployment of personnel, and registration of voters in all four operational areas; and an additional two months from the end of voter registration for the full consolidation and global deduplication of voters. The CENI's chronogram of 12 months, from the time of signature to the full revision of the voter roll, as expressed to the CEPPS team in June 2016, would appear reasonable.

The assessment team estimates a 30-day post-registration phase for global consolidation could be sufficient if a progressive deduplication process is employed, thus saving one month on the full process. The assessment team therefore estimates the time required for completion of the voter roll to be around 11 months from the signature of the contract. The CENI expressed its objective to conduct the voter registration process in the minimum time without compromising the accuracy of the final voter roll.

The following table²² illustrates the registration phases and estimated timelines based on the assessment team's analysis of the CENI's chronogram.

²² Note that the information contained in the tables relating to voter registration timelines, are based on the assessment team's notes taken at the time of the consultative meetings with the CENI. The CENI did not hand over any materials directly to the assessment team. Any changes made by the CENI since the time of the consultative meetings will not be reflected in the tables contained in this report.

ID	Task Name	Start	Finish	Duration	Q3 16			Q4 16			Q1 17			Q2 17		Q3 17
					juil.	août	sept.	oct.	nov.	déc.	janv.	févr.	mars	avr.	mai	juin
1	Signature of contract with provider of kits, voter cards, generators	29/06/2016	29/06/2016	1d												
2	Delivery of five hundred kits for Pilot tests	29/07/2016	29/07/2016	1d												
3	Training of 2000 BVR operators for Pilot tests	31/07/2016	05/08/2016	6d												
4	Deployment of BVR equipment and staff in NORD UBANGUI province	06/08/2016	12/08/2016	7d												
5	Pilot tests for voter registration	13/08/2016	18/08/2016	6d												
6	Evaluation of Pilot tests	19/08/2016	22/08/2016	4d												
7	Taking in account of the findings of the evaluation by the kits provider	23/08/2016	25/08/2016	3d												
8	Continuation of voter registration for NORD UBANGUI	19/08/2016	16/09/2016	29d												
9	Delivery of the 1st batch of kits for OA1	16/09/2016	16/09/2016	1d												
10	Deployment and training for OA1	17/09/2016	12/11/2016	57d												
11	Delivery of the 2nd batch of kits for OA2	15/10/2016	15/10/2016	1d												
12	Deployment and training for OA2	17/10/2016	12/12/2016	57d												
13	Delivery of the 3rd batch of kits for OA3	15/11/2016	15/11/2016	1d												
14	Deployment and training for OA3	16/11/2016	12/01/2017	58d												
15	Delivery of the 4th batch of kits for OA4	15/12/2016	15/12/2016	1d												
16	Deployment and training for OA4	16/12/2016	11/02/2017	58d												
17	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation, area deduplication OA1	14/11/2016	21/02/2017	100d												
18	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation, area deduplication OA2	14/12/2016	23/03/2017	100d												
19	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation, area deduplication OA3	13/01/2017	22/04/2017	100d												
20	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation for OA4	12/02/2017	02/05/2017	80d												
21	Global centralization, treatment and consolidation of BVR data	03/05/2017	01/06/2017	30d												
22	Full AFIS deduplication of registered voters, all areas against all areas	02/06/2017	01/07/2017	30d												
23	Validation of the results of the full AFIS deduplication	02/07/2017	06/07/2017	5d												

It is important to note that, for operational optimization purposes, the CENI plans to divide the country in four operational areas (OA). The operational areas will comprise of the following provinces:

- OA1: Kongo, Central, Kwango, Kwilu, Mai-Ndombe, Maniema, Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu
- OA2: Équateur, Haut-Katanga, Haut-Lomami, Lualaba, Mongala, Nord-Ubangi, Sud-Ubangi, Tanganyika, Tshuapa
- OA3: Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Ituri, Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Lomami, Sankuru, Tshopo
- OA4: Kinshasa and the diaspora

In addition to the four OAs, the logistical deployment will rely on 16 distribution hubs, 171 transmission antennas, 225 training centers, and 18,000 registration centers throughout the country.

Transport from Kinshasa to the hubs and to around 110 difficult to reach training centers will be undertaken mainly by air with the support of MONUSCO. Transport from the training centers to the registration centers will be the responsibility of the CENI with expected support from UNDP. This will require donor investment in the basket fund.

In relation to human resources, the CENI plans to recruit and train 100,000 registration officers. A cascade training methodology will be adopted whereby the provincial trainers (*Formateurs électoraux provinciaux – FEP*) trained in Kinshasa will in turn train the territorial trainers (*Formateurs électoraux territoriaux – FET*) at the hub level who will then train the registration center officers (*Membres des Centres d’Inscription – MCI*) in the 225 training centers.

The training will take place in each OA, where deployment of equipment and training of staff will be synchronized. It will take two months for full deployment of BVR equipment and training and deployment of staff in each area. The diagram on the next page illustrates the process in OA1.

ID	Task Name	Start	Finish	Duration	sept. 2016		oct. 2016				nov. 2016							
					18/9	25/9	2/10	9/10	16/10	23/10	30/10	6/11	13/11	20/11	27/11	4/12		
					1	Deployment of BVR equipment	17/09/2016	17/10/2016	31d									
2	Training of the FEP in Kinshasa	05/10/2016	12/10/2016	8d														
3	Deployment of the FEP in the hubs	13/10/2016	15/10/2016	3d														
4	Training of the FET in the hubs	18/10/2016	25/10/2016	8d														
5	Deployment of the FET at training centers	26/10/2016	30/10/2016	5d														
6	Recruitment of MCI	15/10/2016	30/10/2016	16d														
7	Training of the MCI in the training centers by the FET	02/11/2016	06/11/2016	5d														
8	Deployment of the MCI at their registration centers	08/11/2016	12/11/2016	5d														

Following their training and deployment, the FET becomes Territorial Technical Controllers (*Contrôleurs techniques territoriaux* – CTT) responsible for collecting BVR data coming from the kits on a weekly basis and taking it to the antenna level.

Given the material and logistical limitations, the deployment of materials and registration activities in the OAs will not run fully concurrently. Instead, deployment to each area will begin at one month intervals (i.e. deployment in area 1 will take place first, deployment in area 2 will begin one month later, deployment of area 3 one month after that, and another month later, deployment will begin in area 4).

In each operational area, voter registration follows immediately after the deployment of BVR equipment and training and deployment of staff. Since there will be a one month interval between deployment to each OAs, voter registration will also begin at one month intervals in each OAs.

This period and process are outlined in the first table on the next page. The second table illustrates voter registration sub-tasks in each area (first area is given as example).

ID	Task Name	Start	Finish	Duration	sept. 2016			oct. 2016			nov. 2016			déc. 2016			janv. 2017			févr. 2017			mars 2017			avr. 2017			mai 2017					
					11/9	18/9	25/9	2/10	9/10	16/10	23/10	30/10	6/11	13/11	20/11	27/11	4/12	11/12	18/12	25/12	1/1	8/1	15/1	22/1	29/1	5/2	12/2	19/2	26/2	5/3	12/3	19/3	26/3	2/4
1	Deployment and training for OA1	17/09/2016	12/11/2016	57d	[Gantt bar from 17/09/2016 to 12/11/2016]																													
2	Deployment and training for OA2	17/10/2016	12/12/2016	57d												[Gantt bar from 17/10/2016 to 12/12/2016]																		
3	Deployment and training for OA3	16/11/2016	12/01/2017	58d												[Gantt bar from 16/11/2016 to 12/01/2017]																		
4	Deployment and training for OA4	16/12/2016	11/02/2017	58d												[Gantt bar from 16/12/2016 to 11/02/2017]																		
5	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation, area deduplication OA1	14/11/2016	21/02/2017	100d												[Gantt bar from 14/11/2016 to 21/02/2017]																		
6	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation, area deduplication OA2	14/12/2016	23/03/2017	100d												[Gantt bar from 14/12/2016 to 23/03/2017]																		
7	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation, area deduplication OA3	13/01/2017	22/04/2017	100d												[Gantt bar from 13/01/2017 to 22/04/2017]																		
8	Voter registration, challenging period, consolidation OA4	12/02/2017	02/05/2017	80d												[Gantt bar from 12/02/2017 to 02/05/2017]																		

ID	Task Name	Start	Finish	Duration	nov. 2016			déc. 2016			janv. 2017			févr. 2017			mars 2017				
					6/11	13/11	20/11	27/11	4/12	11/12	18/12	25/12	1/1	8/1	15/1	22/1	29/1	5/2	12/2	19/2	26/2
1	Voter registration and collection of BVR data - OA1	14/11/2016	29/12/2016	46d	[Gantt bar from 14/11/2016 to 29/12/2016]																
2	Management of claims – OA1	14/11/2016	29/12/2016	46d	[Gantt bar from 14/11/2016 to 29/12/2016]																
3	Litigation of claims – OA1	30/12/2016	12/01/2017	14d												[Gantt bar from 30/12/2016 to 12/01/2017]					
4	Collection of BVR data – OA1	14/11/2016	12/01/2017	60d	[Gantt bar from 14/11/2016 to 12/01/2017]																
5	Consolidation of BVR data – OA1	31/12/2016	19/01/2017	20d												[Gantt bar from 31/12/2016 to 19/01/2017]					
6	Archiving of BVR data at antennas level – OA1	13/01/2017	01/02/2017	20d												[Gantt bar from 13/01/2017 to 01/02/2017]					
7	Deduplication of BVR data – OA1	02/02/2017	21/02/2017	20d												[Gantt bar from 02/02/2017 to 21/02/2017]					

It will take three months for the full voter registration exercise in OAs 1, 2, and 3. It will take 2.5 months in area 4, because local deduplication for area 4 will be rolled into the full national deduplication at the end of consolidation of the BVR data of the four areas.

Note that based on previous electoral practices in the DRC, preparations for presidential and legislative elections would take around 3.5 to four months and six months respectively once the voter roll is ready, assuming prior parliamentary approval of the distribution of seats in the case of the legislative elections.

TRANSMISSION OF BVR DATA FROM REGISTRATION CENTERS TO THE CENI'S NATIONAL DATA CENTER (*CENTRE NATIONAL DE TRAITEMENT* OR CNT)

There are two modes of BVR transmission, standard and alternative. The CENI will employ a combination of the two modes. Where possible, alternative BVR data transmission will be used. Where network connectivity does not allow for alternative data transmission, which includes most of the country, standard BVR data transmission will be employed.

The following are the steps for the standard BVR data transmission:

1. The BVR data are exported daily on USB flash disks or external hard drives from the kits.
2. The CTT collects the USB devices containing the exported BVR data on a weekly basis and brings them to the antenna level (169 antennas in the country equipped by VSAT).
3. The antenna officer uploads the encrypted and compressed BVR data from the USB devices to the CENI's sub-system installed at the antenna level.
4. The BVR data is transferred between the antenna and the national data center in Kinshasa using VSAT transmission. This data will be transmitted to the teleport hub at National Data Center then to the CNT BVR central system FTP server.

The following are the steps for the alternative BVR data transmission for the voter registration centers with good network coverage:

1. The BVR data are backed up daily to USB flash disks.
2. The BVR data are transmitted automatically through 3G wireless transmission in data mode to the teleport hub at National Data Center then to the CNT BVR central system FTP server. The BVR kits in these locations are equipped with GSM Modems 3G.

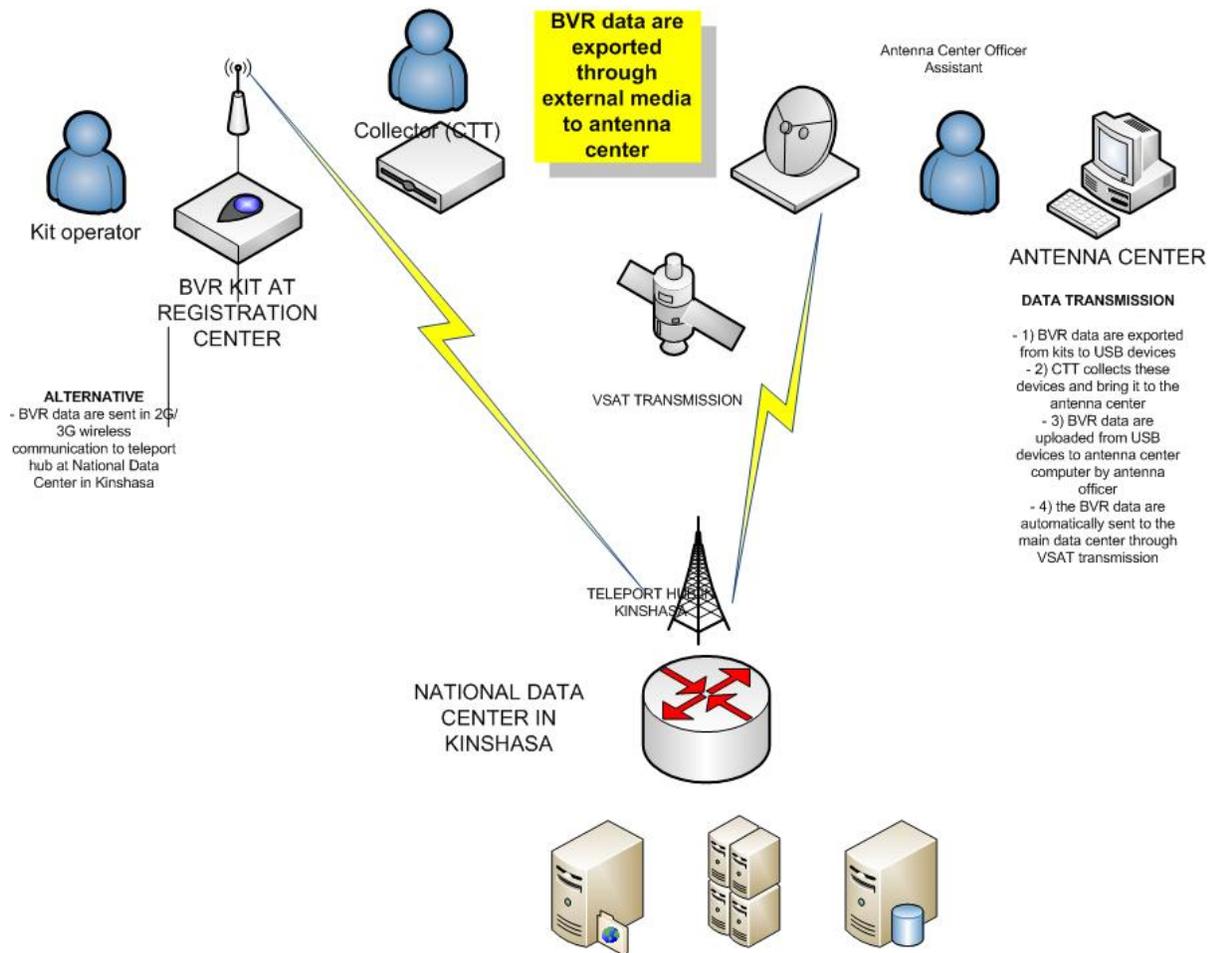
After the data has been transmitted, the data will be processed at the National Data Center:

- The BVR data received will be uncompressed and decrypted, then inserted into the BVR central database.
- Following data consolidation, the BVR data will be sent for AFIS de-duplication. This de-duplication will not be done against the full national AFIS database, but will be limited to the partition of the database dedicated to the population in the concerned area.
- The duplicate cases found will then be adjudicated by verification operators.
- After verification, a consolidated list of voters will be generated for each antenna, in PDF format, and sent back to the concerned antenna.

- The list for each antenna will be printed and sent to the concerned voter registration centers to be displayed.

As mentioned earlier, data transmission in an environment that relies heavily standard BVR data transmission, as is the case in the DRC, represents a point of vulnerability that must be addressed. A solid tracking system must be in place integrating the different steps in the process from the registration data upload in the USBs and physical movement until the data is uploaded at the antenna level to CENI’s national data center.

The following chart illustrates the transmission and management of data:



ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Conditions conducive to conducting credible elections are lacking. Further delays to the process have the potential to provoke far-reaching political, constitutional, and social consequences that must be weighed against the technical obstacles to holding elections. An inclusive discussion resulting in consensus on the sequencing and timing of elections, on the funding of the electoral process, and on the adoption of a complete legal framework is necessary for this process to move forward. In the event electoral stakeholders agree to an electoral timeframe that pushes elections beyond the constitutional deadline for presidential elections, consensus will also be needed to

decide on transitional power-sharing arrangements. The voter registration option adopted is inextricably linked with these political decisions, and is a key technical factor in determining the length of the electoral calendar. Conversely, political decisions, notably the length of the electoral delay, will impact the technical dimension of elections, as the CENI will need to know how long it has to prepare for elections.

To promote conditions conducive to the conduct of credible elections, stakeholders could consider the following with respect to any kind of consultative and inclusive discussion:

1. clarification of the positions and priorities of stakeholders (including the incumbent);
2. determination of roadmap to the next elections, including the methodology for voter registration;
3. agreement on the sequence of elections (presidential, legislative, provincial, and local) and consensus on timing;
4. agreement on transitional power-sharing arrangements until elections can be held (if stakeholders agree to extend the election date); and
5. determination of the legal changes and financial resources required.

Despite political uncertainties, and notwithstanding the need for discussion, the CEPPS assessment team recommends that the CENI exercise its legal responsibilities of presenting an electoral calendar, and address its constitutional obligations, notably “convoking the electorate” at most 90 days before the end of the current presidential term. Should conditions prevent elections from being called 90 days before the end of the current term, all stakeholders should consider what accommodations need to be made in favor of an accepted electoral roadmap.

The CENI’s credibility has been affected due to various factors such as rejections of calendars, changes in leadership, insufficient outreach capacity, and the politically charged atmosphere, which has led to mistrust among stakeholders. It is imperative that the CENI regain its legitimacy, and the CENI must engage stakeholders throughout the electoral process to do so.

To address this, the CENI should reposition itself vis-à-vis other electoral stakeholders. It should be strengthened in the areas of communications, stakeholder engagement, inclusiveness, and voter education. Specifically, the following support should be provided to the CENI:

- Communications policy development and training on proactive and reactive communication, media relations, and web and social media.
- Robust stakeholder engagement ensuring the CENI works with other electoral stakeholders in a collaborative manner. Stakeholders include political parties, civil society, minorities, and journalists.
- Gender and disability policy development and outreach (ideally the CENI should collect data on disabilities to prepare for the elections, such as ensuring adequate facilities and personnel that accommodate disabled voters).
- Voter education coordination with CSOs, including development of materials with inputs from CSOs and a mapping exercise by geographic area and by target group.
- Support in the coordination and administration for observation for the registration process, including facilitation of agreement on data access and monitoring.

- Support for media outreach, including journalist workshops relating to the legal framework, electoral developments, and the role of journalists as a broker between the CENI and the public for awareness raising, as a platform for discussion, and as a safeguard the integrity of the process.

The following are recommendations specific to each stakeholder group to establish the right conditions for discussion to take place and for the organization of credible elections:

FOR THE CENI

- The CENI should provide technical input/guidance in the discussion on the key issues of the electoral calendar, including by providing technical analyses of various options being discussed.
- The CENI should continue to make meaningful efforts to invite stakeholders to cooperate closely in every phase of the process to promote credibility and transparency and benefit all stakeholders.
- The CENI should develop a stronger and more formal communication and outreach strategy to ensure national stakeholder involvement throughout the process.
- The CENI should exercise its legal responsibilities of presenting an electoral calendar, and address its constitutional obligations, notably calling for elections at least 90 days before the end of the current presidential term.
- The CENI should take into consideration the special needs of certain categories of voters, including persons with disabilities. The CENI should engage with disabled persons' organizations to collect data during the voter registration process on specific needs of persons with disabilities to enhance operational planning for Election Day.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DRC

- The government should seek to create an environment that will be conducive to an inclusive dialogue process.
- The government should publish and publicly commit to providing the necessary funds to the CENI for elections.
- The National Assembly should pass the outstanding laws required for the organization of elections.
- As international support diminishes, sustainability challenges should be considered by the government to allow for the organization of future electoral processes as mandated by the Constitution, some of which are already overdue, including local elections.
- The government should ensure a conducive environment for fair and credible elections and the respect for the rights of all actors and participants in the electoral process.

FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

- Majority and opposition parties should identify concessions they can make as confidence-building measures to favor an inclusive dialogue process on upcoming elections.
- Majority and opposition parties should agree on an inclusive and transparent dialogue process for resolving elections-related challenges. This should include representation that ensures the needs of women, persons with disabilities, and displaced persons are taken into account.

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) should assist the CENI with voter and civic education outreach efforts to ensure geographical and target group coverage of the country.
- CSOs should coordinate efforts among themselves, closely monitor outreach efforts, and adjust their strategies to fill existing gaps in geographical and target groups coverage.
- CSOs should have an advocacy strategy towards the CENI and political parties to safeguard the transparency and integrity of the electoral process.
- Domestic observation organizations should actively engage the CENI in identifying key access areas to be observed, including during the voter registration process.

FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- The international community should invest in supporting the electoral process, even if it means setting benchmarks for the CENI that would determine further financial assistance.
- The international community should make funds readily available to invest in the process should their demands be met. This could include putting mechanisms in place for rapid disbursement of funds into the basket fund, should the situation become conducive to their financial involvement.
- The international community should consider supporting the long-term institutional capacity of the CENI as a governance institution in charge of organizing elections in the DRC. Such support should encompass training/sensitization for all components of CENI (legal, operational, and technical) to cover inclusion.
- The international community should continue to support civil society and religious organizations to undertake comprehensive civic and voter education for the benefit of the population in an inclusive manner.
- The international community should continue to support civil society and religious organizations to undertake long and short-term domestic election observation activities to enhance the credibility of the electoral process.
- The international community should support the CENI's efforts to invite national stakeholders to cooperate closely in every phase of the process in order to promote credibility and transparency and benefit all stakeholders.

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF ACRONYMS (in alphabetical order)

AFIS: Automated Fingerprint Identification System (biometric identification methodology)
ACO: Congo Future (*Avenir du Congo*)
ADP : Alliance of Democrats for Progress (*Alliance des démocrates pour le progrès*)
ARC: Alliance for Congo’s Renewal (*Alliance pour le Renouveau du Congo*)
AU: African Union
BVR: Biometric voter registration
CENCO: National Conference of Bishops of the Congo (*Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo*)
CENI: National Independent Electoral Commission (*Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante*)
CEPPS: Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CIME: Electoral Integrity and Mediation Commission (*Commission d’intégrité et médiation électorale*)
CSO: Civil society organizations
CTT: Territorial Technical Controllers (*Contrôleurs techniques territoriaux*)
DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECC: Church of Christ in Congo (*Église du Christ au Congo*)
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States **EIA:** Electoral Integrity Assessment
EISA: Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
EMB: Electoral management body
EPD: Electoral Process Diagnostic
EU: European Union
IDP: Internally displaced persons
IT: Information technology
LUCHA: Struggle for Change (*Lutte pour le changement*)
MLC: Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (*Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo*)
MONUSCO: UN stabilization mission
MSR: Social Movement for Renewal (*Mouvement pour le Renouveau du Congo*)
NGO: Non-governmental organization
OA: Operational areas
OIF: International Organization of the Francophonie (*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*)
PACEC: UNDP Project to Support the Electoral Cycle in Congo
PDC: Christian Democratic Party (*Parti Démocrate Chrétien*)
PPRD: People’s Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (*Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie*)
SADC: Southern African Development Community
UDPS: The Union for Democracy and Social Progress (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*)
UNADEF: National Union of Democrats and Federalists (*Union Nationale des démocrates et fédéralistes*)
UNAFEC: Union of Congolese Federalists (*Union Nationale des fédéralistes du Congo*)
UNC: Union for the Congolese Nation (*Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo*)

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

USAID: (United States Agency for International Development)



CEPPS Assessment Methodology Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

I. CONTEXT AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE

There is growing concern that mounting technical challenges, time pressure, and a lack of funding to the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) will result in a delayed presidential election in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). A key obstacle is updating (or recreating) the existing voter roll, in particular to register over seven million young and first-time voters – a serious gap in the current roll that should be addressed. These updates may not be complete prior to the constitutionally mandated electoral timeline of late 2016, as the CENI did not launch a tender for voter registration kits until February 10, 2016, and according to their estimates, a complete revision would take between 17 and 18 months from the tender date. Meanwhile, there is public distrust of the current voter roll, and revision is critical to allow seven million youth²³ and 1.6 million internally displaced persons,²⁴ to vote. Public suspicion is increasing that protracted revisions will lead to a constitutional crisis. With tensions running high ahead of elections, it is imperative that the electoral process be conducted in an inclusive and credible manner to mitigate the threat of election-related violence or a political crisis in DRC.

Stakeholders other than the CENI have outlined alternative scenarios for a partial revision of the voter roll that would take less time and still, in theory, allow November elections to occur on schedule. This would help mitigate growing unease around potential election delays. However, a full understanding of the technical and political risks associated with these alternative scenarios is necessary to determine their viability. Clarity on the technical feasibility of the various proposed approaches, and identification of any additional options, could also facilitate meaningful dialogue and increase the likelihood of agreement on a way forward. **Given this context, the goal of the proposed assessment is to examine current election preparations, in particular the process of voter roll revision, and provide an analysis of relevant and applicable alternatives to the CENI proposed operational plan, in order to better inform Congolese and international stakeholders.**

This assessment will address the following over-arching questions related to the voter registration update and general electoral process in DRC:

²³ <http://www.undispatch.com/elections-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-could-mean-trouble/>

²⁴ <https://www.wfp.org/countries/congo-democratic-republic>

QUESTIONS

Assessment Question 1: To what degree is the CENI prepared to organize and hold elections this year, and what technical challenges remain?

Assessment Question 2: What voter registration options provide the CENI with the most feasible route to a credible voter's list, especially in terms of registration of youth and first-time voters?

Assessment Question 3: What are the barriers to, and opportunities for participation of marginalized groups (women youth, IDPs, minorities) in the DRC electoral process?

Assessment Question 4: How can the best voter registration alternatives identified through the assessment gain broad political acceptance?

The assessment will utilize consideration of five key electoral principles as a framework through which to assess the effectiveness of the CENI to address the voter registration update and other issues related to the voter registration process. The electoral principles of impartiality, effectiveness, inclusiveness, transparency, and sustainability are generally accepted principles that should be adhered to in the management of elections. The assessment will utilize structured questions to address conformity with these electoral principles in DRC, and which will also provide data and information to address the overarching questions outlined above.

II. ASSESSMENT TEAM

1. **Electoral Expert/Team Lead (Carmina Sanchis-Ruescas):** The Electoral Expert/Team Lead will be responsible for synthesizing findings and recommendations from the assessment team into a cohesive framework, ensuring those findings and recommendations are appropriate to the political and electoral context. The Electoral Expert/Team Lead will also be responsible for providing general leadership and direction throughout the assessment mission and will act as the primary point of contact for the assessment mission.
2. **Voter Registration Specialist (Michel Chajes):** A Voter Registration Specialist will assess the feasibility of various options for revising the voter roll from a technical perspective and analyze risks associated with various voter registration options.
3. **Democratic Development Expert (Yaovi Charles Djrekpo):** Generally, issues surrounding the revision of the voter roll tend to increase the level of political risk in every electoral process significantly. A Democratic Development Expert will assist in assessing this risk and identifying confidence-building measures and milestones that could be integrated into the team's technical recommendations. The purpose of such measures would be to assist in maintaining momentum toward the conduct of timely and credible elections.
4. **Inclusion Specialist (Carole Osero-Ageng'o or Baya Kara):** Similarly, inclusion in the electoral process, particularly of displaced persons and young people who have reached

adulthood since the last revision of the voter roll, will introduce significant political risk in the Congolese context. The assessment team will include an Inclusion Specialist to analyze this political risk, assess the responsiveness of various scenarios for revising the voter roll to inclusivity criteria, and make recommendations to promote access of marginalized groups to the electoral process, including voter registration.

III. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

CEPPS will divide the assessment process into seven distinct steps:

1. **Desk study** – to serve as a briefing document and a resource in developing interview protocols and discussion guides, and it will facilitate the drafting of the final assessment report.
2. **Preparation for Deployment** - CEPPS will communicate with the USAID mission to refine the assessment methodology, ensuring that data collected meets USAID’s needs. In addition, CEPPS will initiate communication with the CENI and other electoral stakeholders to ensure buy-in and transparency regarding the objectives of the assessment.
3. **In-Brief with USAID** - Upon arrival, the assessment team will hold an in-brief with USAID to discuss the goals of the assessment further and finalize areas of focus.
4. **In-Country Data Collection** - Assessment team members will refer to the finalized interview protocols and discussion guides during interviews and focus groups, which will allow sufficient flexibility to ask probing or clarifying questions as discussions progress while ensuring that team members gather the necessary information from each stakeholder in a uniform way.

The assessment team will be deployed for a total of three weeks in DRC. During the first two weeks, the team will meet with a range of electoral stakeholders for structured interviews and group meetings to gather data on the key questions being addressed through this assessment. The interviews will be organized by CEPPS/NDI staff and will allow the assessment team to gather data from a range of viewpoints on the voter registration and general election process. Meetings will be arranged prior to arrival in-country, with the following stakeholders:

- The CENI (in-depth discussion with HQ-based staff)
- Officials in key government ministries
- Female and male political party officials from both the presidential majority and the opposition (to include individual parties and independent members of the National Assembly and the Senate, as well as coalitions);
- A diverse and representative group of civil society and citizens’ movements
- Notable organizations representing the interests of women, youth, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities;
- Faith-based groups (including *Conférence épiscopale*, COMICO, and ECC); and
- Representatives of the international community (MONUSCO, UN Agencies, embassies).

During the assessment, the team will utilize structured lists of questions for each electoral principle (listed below) as the basis for interview guides and focus group discussion guides. The

team will also collect relevant electoral data on voter registration and relevant electoral data that may not have been obtainable or identified during the desk study phase to inform the assessment.

5. **Analysis** – The primary method of analysis for this assessment will be collective team review of interview and focus group notes to identify key challenges and vulnerabilities related to the voter registration update process, as well as possible avenues to address these challenges and vulnerabilities. The assessment team will analyze the frequency and intensity with which specific issues are identified during the data collection process to identify vulnerabilities, and use their own electoral expertise as well as input from electoral stakeholders to identify prioritized approaches to addressing these vulnerabilities. Data from the interviews and focus groups will be supplemented by electoral data and other secondary data in the analysis stage.

During the in-country data collection period, the assessment team will meet periodically (ideally every 2-3 days if schedules allow) to review notes and start to develop key findings. Findings will cover key aspects of voter registration and other electoral processes, political considerations that will need to be taken into account for a revision of the voter roll, demographic and population-specific variations in data collected, and issues related to the inclusion of marginalized groups in the revision of the voter roll and the electoral process. Specific focus will be placed on challenges related to registration of young (18-25) and first-time voters, and the viability of various options to address under-registration of this significant population of voters (around 8 million). These periodic reviews will also focus on the operationalization of various options for revising the voter roll and the extent to which they conform to the five electoral principles guiding the assessment.

The analysis process will be completed during the third week of the in-country visit by the assessment team and will build on key findings, vulnerabilities, and solution options developed during the periodic meetings. During this period, the assessment team will also interact with CEPPS programs teams to gain feedback on the key findings before they are incorporated into the assessment report.

6. **Drafting of Assessment Report** - Appropriate timelines will be agreed upon with USAID and updated as necessary after the mission has been completed. The final report will conform to an agreed-upon report template, and CEPPS will conduct a technical review of the draft final report to ensure consistency with international norms and methodological rigor.
7. **Preliminary Stakeholder Review and Out-Brief with USAID** - CEPPS will hold a validation meeting with the CENI to summarize findings and potential action items, and crosscheck factual information, timelines, and options against the CENI's analyses. This meeting will also serve to gauge the CENI's receptiveness to the assessment findings and inform a strategy for the circulation of the report. CEPPS will also hold an out-brief with USAID to review findings and recommendations of the assessment and establish a list of participants for a preliminary stakeholder review of the findings and recommendations.

IV. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Principles

The assessment team will assess voter registration options, including alternative solutions that have the potential to reduce timeline currently proposed by the CENI, against five overarching electoral principles of transparency, impartiality, effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness.²⁵

Electoral Principles	
Impartiality	Certain parties or candidates are not, and are not perceived to be, favored over others.
Effectiveness	Assets are effectively utilized to properly plan and implement mandate.
Inclusiveness	Stakeholders are as engaged as possible in the processes, and competition, which is a healthy aspect of the democratic process, is promoted.
Transparency	Planning and implementation of processes is accessible to stakeholders through a proactive dialogue.
Sustainability	Electoral policies and practices are sustainable financially and institutionally by the EMB short to medium term.

The assessment team will also evaluate the political feasibility of options identified. This will include assessing the effectiveness of various options in promoting the inclusion of marginalized groups (with a specific focus on young people, first-time voters, and IDPs) in the electoral process, as well as identifying confidence-building measures and milestones. For example, during interviews and focus groups, the assessment team would address political factors that could introduce delays or uncertainty into electoral preparations and stakeholders’ reaction to such events. These discussions will also examine how youth, IDPs, and stakeholders from marginalized groups could participate in the electoral process as outlined by the CENI and how political actors could demonstrate their commitment to a timely and credible process.

Evaluation approach

Data obtained through the questions outlined under the five principles will be used to frame an analysis focused on vulnerabilities of (1) the voters’ register and (2) voter registration process, both for the existing process and for other options being put forward to update the register. Vulnerabilities will be determined by assessing the conformity of the voter register and the voter registration process with the five key electoral principles that provide the framework for analysis (listed above). Given the current political and electoral context in DRC, at each stage, the assessment team will ensure a specific focus on vulnerabilities relating to the under-registration of young people, first-time voters, IDPs, and other marginalized voters.

Stage one: the analysis will be structured to first identify and rank the principles to which the voter register and voter registration process is least likely to conform because of significant

²⁵ These principles are drawn from the CEPPS Electoral Process Diagnostic (EPD) methodology. This methodology has been peer reviewed and field tested

vulnerabilities. This analysis will be conducted for the process as it currently stands, as well as the alternative options being considered.

Stage two: within each principle, the analysis will highlight the key vulnerabilities which challenge conformity of the voter registration process with the principle. This analysis will be conducted for the process as it currently stands, and for each of the alternative options.

Stage three: finally, considering the vulnerabilities identified in the first two stages, the analysis will identify the viability of a comprehensive solution for the update of the voters' register in time for the late 2016 deadline. This analysis will consider the viability of a solution given the current registration process as well as the alternative options being considered. For each of these options, the analysis will evaluate the viability of the option given the vulnerabilities identified for it and the actions which would have to be taken to address the vulnerabilities.

Interview protocols

It is essential that the evaluation team be introduced properly at the beginning of each meeting, whether with existing partners or new contacts. During the introduction an emphasis should be placed on:

- CEPPS' approach to sensitive electoral assessments. We will not make public statements without a mutual determination that such an approach would be beneficial.
- CEPPS' focus on process as opposed to the political outcomes of elections, i.e. emphasis on the legal and technical aspects of elections and the protection of voting rights;
- CEPPS' commitment to neutrality and respect for the country's sovereignty and its appreciation of cultural and social norms as well as an understanding of the political sensitivities surrounding international cooperation on electoral process;
- CEPPS' reliance on international principles, comparative models and best practices;
- CEPPS' previous work in the country or region (as applicable).

Overarching Questions and Discussion questions

The assessment will address the four overarching assessment questions that are important in developing possible options for the voter registration update that is feasible and able to address existing concerns related to the electoral principles:

1. To what degree is the CENI prepared to organize and hold elections this year, and what technical challenges remain?
2. What voter registration options provide the CENI with the most feasible route to a credible voter's list, especially in terms of registration of youth and first-time voters?
3. What are the barriers to, and opportunities for participation of marginalized groups (women youth, IDPs, minorities) in the DRC electoral process?
4. How can the best voter registration alternatives identified through the assessment gain broad political acceptance?

In addition to the overarching questions, the following questions should be used to guide analysis of the voter registration process conformity to the five electoral principles. While the assessment team can supplement questions as necessary based on data it obtains and findings it develops in the field, these questions should be addressed in the analysis.

Impartiality

- Is the registration process and registration system in accordance with the legal framework for elections in the country?
- Do restrictions on voter eligibility violate international human rights or political rights commitments/ obligations/ standards? Have well-defined requirements been put in place to establish residency and eligibility? Do these residency and eligibility requirements place undue demands on voters and hamper access to the voter registration process? What type of documentation is required for registration? Do these requirements place undue obstacles for registration for specific segments of the population (particularly young people and first-time voters)?
- Are the criteria and processes for voter registration – and updates to the register – clearly established by election rules? Is the framework complete? And how would these rules and procedures be impacted by the various options under consideration?
- Is the electoral roll perceived to be credible or reasonably accurate (that is, is it compiled and maintained in a way that maintains confidence) by public and political stakeholders (election/ registration authorities, electoral contestants, domestic monitoring groups, international election observers, the media, voters)? During recent past election cycles, have eligible voters been denied registration/ disenfranchised?

What factors have been identified for the under-registration of young people and first-time voters?

- If the voter registry is not perceived to be accurate, what are key problems have electoral stakeholders identified? Have these been addressed in any of the options being forwarded for update of the register?
- Do electoral stakeholders consider the voter registration process to be fairly managed and administered? What specific objections do stakeholders have to the management of the registration process?
- In the existing voter registration process, is placement of voter registration centers designed to allow registration of all eligible voters without undue difficulty of access? Do the options being proposed for update of the register adequately address placement of registration centers?
- Are changes to the electoral rolls, as well as claims and objections, managed according to established laws, regulations, and policies? Are decisions made publicly and transparently? How would challenges and complaints be effectively dealt with under the various options under consideration?
- ***How do the options proposed compare in terms of impartiality?***

Effectiveness

- Are institutional responsibilities for development and maintenance of voters list clearly defined, and are there effective processes in place to keep data in the register current to the extent possible given the existing environment?

- Are there statistical discrepancies in terms of the number of registered voters and census data on the number of eligible voters based on age requirements? If so, what are possible explanations offered by electoral authorities for these discrepancies, especially for youth?
- Is the voters' database automatically / routinely scrubbed of errors by government authorities? If so, how often are updates made to the database?
- Is there currently sufficient time before an election for voters to register/ check their registration? For the options being advanced to update the register, is the time for voters to register or check their status sufficient to ensure that there will be adequate time for voters to register/check their registration?
- For the options being advanced to update the register, does the commission have the resources and processes in place to update the register in a timely manner?
- What security procedures are in place to ensure that data is protected from unauthorized access or alteration or from loss due to user error or weather-related or other disasters? Would these security procedures be compromised through implementation of any of the options being advanced for update of the register?
- Does the database allow for flagging of duplicate, incomplete, suspicious, or unacceptable (e.g. not a citizen, not of voting age, etc.) entries?
- Are requests to be registered or a correction made to one's registration handled in a timely manner? How would this process be impacted by the various options being advanced to update the register?
- Is the delineation of geographic locations in the register sensitive to the need for the registration system to serve all levels of elections?
- ***How do the options proposed compare in terms of effectiveness?***

Inclusiveness

- As the discussions on need for update to the register have progressed, what level of engagement have electoral authorities solicited from stakeholders? Do stakeholders believe they have been adequately consulted? Are there regular means or forums for communication between the commission and specific stakeholder groups such as political parties, CSOs, etc.? If yes, have these been leveraged effectively for the voter registration discussion?
- What is the level of engagement in the voter registration discussions by traditionally marginalized constituencies such as women's groups, groups representing persons with disabilities, groups representing specific ethnic groups, etc.?
- How has the commission solicited the views on register updates of other government entities that play a role in the registration process? Have they been adequately consulted?
- As discussions on the update process have progressed, what level of focus has there been on considerations of the differential impacts of voter register update options on the ability of traditionally marginalized groups to effectively register? How has this impacted the discussions? Do the various options for update of the register consider the equitable treatment of all citizens in the update process, especially in regard to youth and IDPs? If so, how do the various options being promoted to update the register address this issue?

- Has the commission solicited consultations with groups specifically representing young people and first-time voters, and if so, what has been the impact of these consultations?
- *How do the options proposed compare in terms of inclusiveness?*

Transparency

- Is the voter registration period and process adequately publicized for the public at large? What kind of voter education efforts have been used to sensitize the public to the voter registration process, and have they been adequate? Do they reach specific under-represented parts of the population (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities, etc.)?
- What strategies (if any) have been used to provide outreach and information for young people and first-time voters? Are these strategies considered adequate to effectively sensitize these populations to voter registration processes? What about reaching IDPs?
- Will the information for the general public on the voter registration process be impacted by the options being considered for the update? If so, how?
- What methods of outreach does the commission use to communicate adjustments/changes/decision on the voter registration process? Are stakeholders and public informed in a reasonable timeframe? Are there adequate sources of information used to communicate with stakeholders and the public?
- Does the commission have focal points who stakeholders/public can contact in order to address issues related to the voter registration process? If so, how effective has this been?
- *How do the options proposed compare in terms of transparency?*

Sustainability

- Is there a robust plan for developing local capacity to manage the registration process effectively over the longer-term? Does the commission have adequate personnel, training programs and resources to effectively manage the voter registration process? In terms of the options being forwarded for update of the register, would the commission have to consider additional personnel and resources in order to implement these options?
- Does the commission have the necessary relationships in place with the relevant government entities and legislative bodies to effectively exercise its authority on voter registration issues? If not, how can these be established?
- Does the commission have the budget flexibility to absorb the financial implications of any of the options being forwarded for the update of the list?
- *How do the options proposed compare in terms of sustainability?*

Final report template

1. **Brief introduction to political context, and program need**, including summary of political and contextual risks and considerations that will need to be taken into account for a revision of the voter roll.
2. **Brief summary of evaluation methodology**, approach, and implementation
3. **Summary of overall vulnerabilities identified**, in order of severity, including demographic and population-specific variations in data collected, and issues related to the inclusion of

marginalized groups in the revision of the voter roll and the electoral process, with a specific focus on registration of young people, first-time voters, and IDPs. The summary also includes a discussion of issues related to political dynamics that impact the feasibility of the options and recommendations. This discussion of political issues may be left out of the public document based on advice provided by USAID.

4. **Outline of VR options available**, with pros/cons (including risks and constraints), and with a focus on the operationalization of the various options and the extent to which they conform to the five electoral principles guiding the assessment. For example:
 - a. Outline option
 - b. Identify and rank the principles to which the voter register and voter registration process is least likely to conform because of significant vulnerabilities.
 - c. Within each principle, highlight the key vulnerabilities which challenge conformity of the voter registration process with the principle. Analysis should have specific focus on vulnerabilities which impact under-representation of young people, first-time voters, and IDPs.
 - d. Evaluate the viability of the option given the vulnerabilities identified for it and the actions which would have to be taken to address the vulnerabilities. Specific focus on viability of options to increase registration rates for young people, first-time voters, and IDPs.
5. **Recommendations** for way forward (may not be for public consumption)
6. **Annexes:**
 - List of all meetings and focus groups with interlocutors should be provided, along with the list of interlocutors themselves.

ANNEX 3 – LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Embassies

- American Embassy
- Belgian Embassy
- British Embassy
- Canadian Embassy
- French Embassy
- South African Embassy

International Organizations and Missions

- African Union (AU)
- The Carter Center
- Counterpart International
- European Union (EU) Delegation
- Freedom House
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Internews
- International Republican Institute (IRI)
- The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo – MONUSCO*)
- National Democratic Institute (NDI)
- Open Society Institute
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Government Ministries and Agencies

- General Assembly
- Independent National Electoral Commission (*Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante – CENI*) Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Ministry of the Economy
- Ministry of Communications
- National Human Rights Commission

Political Parties

- Engagement for Citizenship and Development (*Engagement pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement – ECIDE*)
- G7
- Movement for the Liberation of Congo (*Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo – MLC*)
- People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (*Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie – PPRD*)
- Unified Lumumbist Party (*Parti Lumumbiste Unifié – PALU*)
- Union for Democracy and Social Progress (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social – UDPS*)

Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations

- Congolese Church of Christ (*Église de Christ au Congo* – ECC)
- Electoral Integrity and Mediation Commission (*Commission d'intégrité et médiation électorales* – CIME)
- National Conference of Bishops of the Congo (*Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo* – CENCO)

Businesses

- Gemalto

ANNEX 4 – TEAM BIOS

Mrs. Carole Ageng'o- Inclusion Specialist

Ms. Ageng'o is a lawyer and consultant with a graduate degree in international conflict management. She is currently an Associate Regional Director, PP Global. Previously, she was the Senior Program Officer for Africa at the International Women's Program, Open Society Foundations where she managed the Africa Program on promoting women's rights in countries in or emerging from conflict. In 2008, she served as the Gender Advisor to the Kenyan Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence (CIPEV) where she led the Commission in the writing of Chapter Six on Sexual Violence. In 2008, she was the consultant for UNIFEM, Regional Office East and Horn of Africa. Over the last 13 years she has worked on issues of gender and conflict, human rights, violence against women, women's rights and the law, at the national, regional and international levels. She has undertaken research on several issues on these matters, which informed advocacy that she engaged in, for policy and legislative change in Mali, Ethiopia, Zambia, Uganda and at the UN level.

Mr. Charles Djrekpo- Democratic Development Expert

Former law professor at the Abomey Calavi University in Benin, Dr. Charles Djrekpo presided over the Beninese Autonomous National Electoral Commission in 2001. From 1991 to 1999, Dr. Djrekpo was elected for two consecutive terms as Deputy of the Beninese National Assembly, where he served as Vice-President for the Judicial, Administrative, and Human Rights Commission and leader of the *Alternance Démocratique*. He is currently a regional consultant for the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in several Central and West African countries, where he already has supported programs seeking to strengthen democracy in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, among others. In 2006, Dr. Djrekpo joined NDI to direct a program seeking to build the capacities of the National Assembly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From 2008 to 2012, he directed the NDI office in Côte d'Ivoire. Dr. Djrekpo has vast experience in electoral processes. In addition to being president of the Beninese electoral commission, he worked on the reform of the Beninese electoral code and legislation on political parties. In 2004, he was Principal Technical Advisor to the National Independent Electoral Commission in Niger. He was also member of several international electoral observation missions.

Mrs. Carmina Sanchis-Ruescas- Electoral Expert and Team Leader

Carmina Sanchis-Ruescas is an elections professional with more than 15 years of experience. She has held long-term electoral technical assistance assignments in Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia, managing programs for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Through these assignments, Ms. Sanchis-Ruescas has provided direct technical assistance to election management bodies in the areas of institutional capacity building, legal frameworks, electoral operations, voter registration, civic education, gender mainstreaming, communications, electoral conflict prevention and post electoral reform agendas. In addition, Ms. Sanchis-Ruescas has participated in numerous electoral assessment missions, project formulation

missions and electoral program evaluations. She also managed the UNDP's global programme on electoral cycle support (GPECS), including global, regional and country level components coordinating the UNDP's team of electoral advisors working across continents.

Mr. Michel Chajes- Voter Registration Specialist

Mr. Michel Chajes is a voter registration expert who has worked with electoral technical assistance programs for over 5 years in several African countries, including Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Tanzania among others. As voter registration specialist, Mr. Chajes has provided technical assistance in biometric voter registration. He first began working with electoral technical assistance programs in 2010 as a biometric voter registration consultant for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Benin. Following this experience, Mr. Chajes worked again with UNDP in Sierra Leone as a consultant and in Guinea as a senior voter registration expert. Since finishing his work in Guinea, Mr. Chajes has continued to work as a senior voter registration expert with GJCAF in 2012, France Expertise Internationale in 2013, and UNDP in Tanzania from 2014-2015. As voter registration expert in these various organizations, Mr. Chajes has been responsible for providing technical support to election management bodies in implementing and using biometric voter registration kits and other technology, as well as ensuring its proper use.



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