

Inclusiveness with regards to people with disabilities and marginalised groups (for examples: pre-trial detainees) is still limited. Architectural, physical, information, communications, and technology barriers are present and in need of improvements.

Gaps in the electoral dispute resolution system (EOM recommendation n.9) are often exploited by actors aiming at undermining the electoral process, and low literacy and civic rights information among the voters remains a challenge. The current voter registration system has been under scrutiny and criticism during the last two main elections and it is still in need of improvements, technically and legally (EOM recommendation n. 13). The work and dialogue with political parties (EOM recommendation n.16) needs to be fostered and improved.

Even though elections have largely been peaceful, cases of vote tampering, election violence, intimidation, and harassment of female candidates have been documented in reports of election observation missions. Consequently, technical and capacity building support to strengthen existing national mechanisms to early identify and respond to electoral violence support to institutional strengthening, and capacity development of NEC and electoral stakeholders remain critical for the consolidation of the fragile Liberian peace.

2. Women and youth are marginalised in the political life, with major gaps in their representation in political processes in Liberia, even though they constitute the largest part of the country's population. Youth represents the majority of the population in Liberia with close of one third ready to be engaged in the next election. Women, make up 51% of the country's population, their participation in governance and politics remains low even if Liberia recorded the first elected African female President. The last few years have marked an increase of Sexual and Gender base Violence (SGBV) cases to the point that in 2020 the President of Liberia declared it a national emergency. Recent by-elections showed few cases of extreme violence against women in politics somehow linked to traditional and heritage culture. In the last Mid-Term election (2020) only 2 women won Senatorial seats, out of 15 winning candidates, while the actual leading party did not present any female candidates. Successful steps have been taken afterwards by the political parties with: the signature of the Violence against Women in Elections and Politics protocol (VAWiE/P) at the beginning of 2022 and declarations of some of the main parties about a reserved quota for female candidates for the 2023 contest. NEC submitted to the Legislature amendment to the current new elections law including gender quota and, up to now, it has been successfully approved by the House of Representatives. This partially responds to the EOM Recommendation n.9, still the effective engagement of women and youth and marginalised groups among them into the political process is limited.

Political parties which should be a key vehicle in enhancing women's and youth's engagement in political processes, are generally weak, largely undemocratic, not institutionalised and often strongly personalised. As such, societal interests are often not prioritised, as well as inclusivity of citizens' interests especially youth, women remains wanting. This weakens democracy and undermines good governance and service delivery in Liberia. Collaboration and cooperation of political parties in pursuit of national, citizens and shared interests is hamstrung by partisan politics that are devoid of a willingness to look beyond narrow party interests.

3. The Liberian National Legislature's oversight responsibility faces enormous challenges. The Constitution of Liberia provides the Legislature with representational, law making and oversight functions. Theoretically, the Legislature is a strong and independent institution. However, there is consensus that the Legislature has largely been dysfunctional and not carrying out its responsibilities effectively. In particular, the oversight responsibility faces vast challenges including limited capacity in specialised areas as well as the limited capacity of the Secretariat. A five-year Joint Legislative Modernization Plan which remains, to this day, the sole reference document for modernisation of the Legislature, was formulated with donor assistance in 2009 around 5 pillars, pillar 4 focusing specifically on modernising the Secretariat. A Joint Legislative Modernization Committee (JLMC), and subsequently a Joint Legislative Modernization Secretariat was created to implement the Plan. However, implementation to this day has been very limited. The Secretariat faces significant hurdles of capacity constraints as well inadequate modern tools and skills to perform effectively and efficiently. Often, the Legislature does not represent the citizen's interests and CSOs as well as media face challenges in obtaining information about the Legislature's processes, which undermines accountability. The access to legislative information is limited. Decisions in committee rooms and/committee reports are not readily available to the press. There is a chronic lack of transparency with the voting system and inadequate record keeping.

There is no formal mechanism to engage with CSOs and interactions between the legislature with different actors as youth, women and people living with disabilities is absent. Supporting civil society and media to