

STOCKTAKING OF ELECTORAL REFORMS IN NIGERIA, BENIN, SIERRA LEONE, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, AND GUINEA-BISSAU

Terms of reference

1.0 Background/Context

Elections are a cornerstone of democratic legitimacy, enabling peaceful transfers of power and promoting citizen participation. In West Africa, however, electoral processes are frequently undermined by political interference, institutional weaknesses, and legal ambiguities. As such, electoral reform has emerged as a critical instrument for deepening democratic consolidation in the region. These reforms typically involve legal, institutional, and procedural changes aimed at enhancing the integrity, inclusivity, transparency, and credibility of elections, while safeguarding the electoral rights of citizens. Despite ongoing efforts, electoral reform processes often face significant challenges. Key among these are the lack of sustained political will, particularly when reforms threaten the interests of incumbent elites, and procedural constraints that limit the effectiveness and influence of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), especially in contexts where they lack clear legislative mandates or autonomy. These persistent obstacles underscore the importance of ongoing advocacy, strengthening institutional capacity, and inclusive stakeholder dialogue, particularly during the post-election period.

The experiences of countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau reflect both the progress and challenges of electoral reform efforts in West Africa. Across these countries, electoral reform processes have focused on issues such as electoral integrity, EMB independence, political inclusion, dispute resolution, electoral violence mitigation, transparency in results management, and the strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks. While some reforms have contributed to improvements in electoral administration and participation, concerns persist regarding political interference, implementation gaps, public trust, and the overall credibility of electoral processes.

In light of these developments, the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON), seeks to conduct a stocktaking of electoral reforms in Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau. The assessment will examine the extent to which key electoral reforms, particularly those identified by domestic and international election observer missions, EMBs, and other electoral stakeholders, have been implemented.

It will also identify outstanding issues, implementation gaps, and ongoing challenges, and provide recommendations to inform future advocacy and reform initiatives in the region.

2.0 Objective of the Assignment

The primary objective of this consultancy is to conduct a comparative assessment of electoral reforms in Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau. Specifically, the study will:

- a. Evaluate the nature, scope, and effectiveness of key electoral reforms across the selected countries.
- b. Identify factors that facilitate or hinder reform implementation.
- c. Highlight best practices and regional patterns.
- d. Generate evidence-based recommendations to guide regional advocacy with ECOWAS, national governments, and civil society coalitions.

3.0 Scope of Engagement

3.1 Research and Analysis

The Consultant shall undertake a comprehensive desk review and comparative analysis of electoral reform processes in Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau. Specifically, the Consultant shall:

- a. Review relevant literature and documentation, including constitutions, electoral laws, amendment bills, policy documents, reform commission reports, election observation mission reports, academic literature, media reports, and policy briefs related to electoral reforms in the selected countries.
- b. Map major electoral reform trajectories, milestones, and timelines within each country, particularly reforms introduced following democratic transitions and recent electoral cycles.
- c. Examine key reform areas, including electoral administration, voter registration, results management, dispute resolution, political party regulation, campaign finance, electoral dispute adjudication, inclusion of women and youth, and the independence and effectiveness of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs).
- d. Assess the extent to which recommendations by domestic and international election observer missions, civil society organizations, EMBs, and other electoral stakeholders have been implemented.
- e. Analyze the legal, political, and institutional factors that facilitate or hinder the adoption and implementation of electoral reforms in the selected countries.
- f. Examine the role and effectiveness of institutional actors, including EMBs, parliaments, the judiciary, civil society organizations, and political actors in shaping and implementing reform processes.
- g. Assess the extent to which electoral reforms in the selected countries align with ECOWAS and African Union principles, protocols, and normative frameworks on democratic governance and elections.
- h. Conduct a comparative analysis to identify regional trends, common challenges, gaps, lessons learned, and best practices across the selected countries.

3.2 Limited Stakeholder Engagement

Where necessary, the Consultant may conduct a limited number of virtual key informant interviews or written consultations with selected electoral stakeholders to validate findings

emerging from the desk review and to clarify specific reform developments or implementation challenges.

3.3 Recommendations for Advocacy and Policy Engagement

Based on the findings of the study, the Consultant shall develop actionable country-specific and regional recommendations aimed at:

- a. Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks for credible elections;
- b. Enhancing the independence, transparency, and professionalism of EMBs;
- c. Addressing implementation gaps in existing reform processes;
- d. Strengthening citizen participation and inclusion in electoral processes; and
- e. Informing regional advocacy and policy dialogue with ECOWAS, national governments, and civil society coalitions.

4.0 Consultant Profile

The consultant should demonstrate the following:

- a. Advanced degree in Political Science, Law, Public Policy, or a related field.
- b. Extensive research and analytical experience in electoral processes and democratic governance.
- c. Knowledge of West African electoral systems and familiarity with ECOWAS protocols.
- d. Proven experience conducting multi-country policy research and stakeholder engagement.
- e. Excellent writing and communication skills.

5.0 Deliverables

- a. A final report incorporating all feedback and comments on the draft version; and
- b. A concise, 5-10page summary report synthesizing the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study

6.0 Duration of Assignment

The assignment shall have a duration of eight (8) weeks, commencing on the date of signing the contract.

7.0 Application Process

Interested consultants should submit CV(s) detailing relevant expertise and a sample of relevant work (e.g., electoral reform studies, policy reports) to jobs@cddgh.org by 20th June 2026.