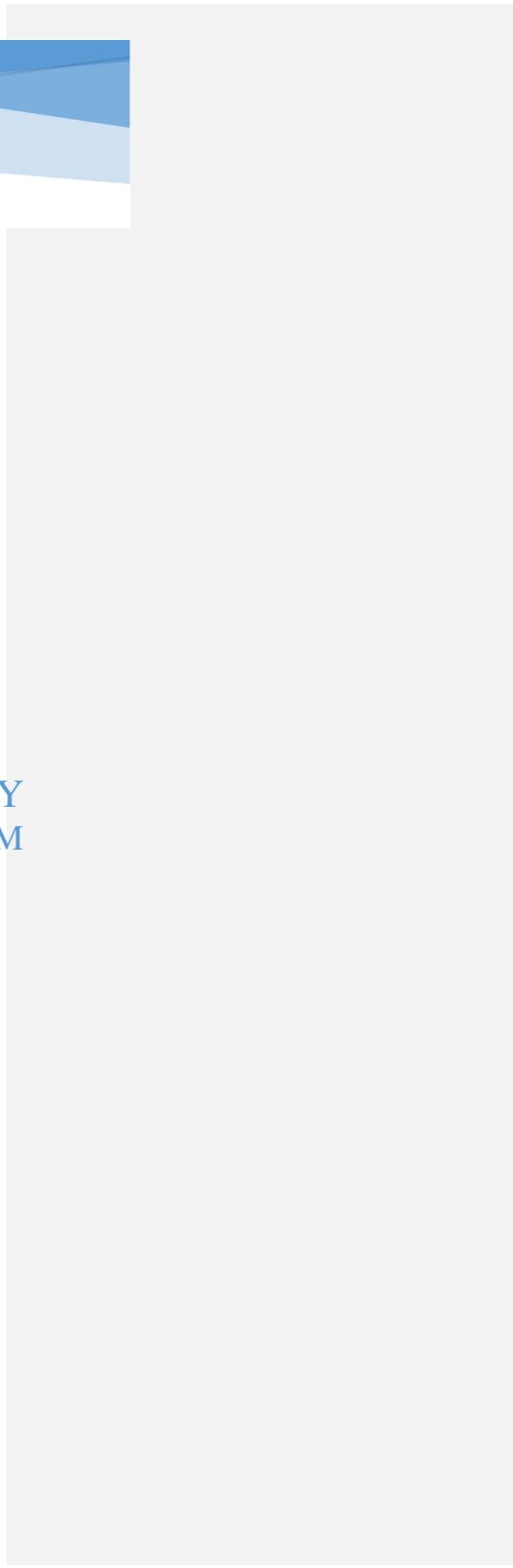




COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
ELECTION SITUATION ROOM



Communication Strategy 1

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PART I - GENERAL DESCRIPTORS	
1. Description of the Election Situation Room Project	
<p>The Election Situation Room (ESR) is a platform that brings together Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with common interest to collaborate on activities related to elections process, collect and analyse information on a real-time basis and providing evidence-based information on incidences for rapid response through the Situation Room network of stakeholders. This means members of the ESR should form relationships and partnership with all actors in the elections process, inform them about the ESR and what it is.</p> <p>In (insert country), the ESR will be called (insert name) and will operate at two major levels: the office level where structures will be put place for data processing and communication and at field level where Observers will gather data using cell phones into the Vote n System</p> <p>At office level, there will be three tiers of operation, the first being the management coordination team responsible for coordinating and following up on activities. Second, the expert team responsible to analyse data and recommend solutions/alternatives to stakeholders especially the Electoral Commission body, the Police Force, Political Parties and the International Community within their network to intervene in situations and inform the public on the status quo of the elections as the day progresses. The third level of operation is the technology level, one of the most important component of the ESR as it enables the collection and processing of data from end to end and makes available information to the expert team for analysis and quick decision making.</p>	
2. Communications Objectives, Principles and Key Messages	
(i) Objectives	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To establish ways of communication among Taskforce members and representatives prior, during and post-election to end of the project against the background that Taskforce members have other organizational obligations to fulfil on Election Day. 2. To create relationships and communication channels with elections stakeholders for the smooth flow of information. 3. To create awareness about the ESR and its objectives. 4. To engage electorates in social media and increase citizen participation in the elections process. 5. To demonstrate to citizens that the ESR is the “eye of the people” by strengthening Field Observers to monitor, observe and report activities at and around every polling station. 	
(ii) Principles	
<p>Transparency – stakeholders agree to be open in information sharing to enhance strategic planning, quick decision making process and action.</p> <p>Sharing – stakeholders agree to share all information relating to the election keeping in mind that the “smallest” piece of information may be disruptive and destructive if held from other members for an agreed and coordinated action to be taken in time.</p> <p>Collaboration & Coordination – synergy does not only save resources but brings together excellent ideas and stronger actions, response and advocacy on issues. Collaboration and coordination will improve the quality of monitoring, observation and evidence-based reporting on the elections process.</p>	

Confidentiality – stakeholders in this circle should regard all information shared as sensitive and only disclose through the channels of communication agreed by members internally. All external communication will go through the appointed Head of the Co-ordination Team/Media Rep member for release to the public before it can be shared by any other **ESR** member and with anyone outside of the **ESR** Team.

(iii) Key Messages

The **ESR** Centre is the “eyes of the people” and will empower Field Observers to monitor, observe and report every step of the voting process and ALL incidences at Polling Stations and within 100 meters radius around it to ensure the public is aware of holistic atmosphere on Election Day.

The **ESR** will collaborate with election stakeholders such as Electoral Commission, political parties, security personnel, the international community by sharing information and creating a structure that will by-pass bottlenecks in bureaucratic processes that slows down information dissemination in order to achieve rapid response during emergencies and give alternative aid to electoral officials when and where needed.

3. Target Audiences

1. Electorates
2. The **ESR** Taskforce – Member Organizations
3. Stakeholders (Electoral Commission, Political Parties, Independent Media Houses, & Donor Organization(s))
4. International Community – this includes other International Non-Governmental Organizations working in the country, Embassies & Consulates, citizens in the diaspora and other interested international bodies within and outside

4. Target Audiences Ranked By Importance	5. Preferred Channels of Communication
Electorates	Radio Broadcasts, Press Conferences, Social Media
Stakeholders	Phone Calls, Conferences, E-mails, & Meetings
The ESR Taskforce – Member Organizations	E-mails, SMS, Phone Calls, Meetings & Trainings
International Community	Website & Social Media
Media Organizations	Press Conferences, E-Mails & Live Streaming

PART II - PRE-ELECTION DAY (CAMPAIGN PERIOD)

1. Internal Communication

(i) Assumptions

1. We are assuming that the **ESR** Taskforce will location with three (3) halls/rooms available to accommodate the Expert Team, the Technology Team and a Conference Area of **ESR** Taskforce member teams.

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2. The **ESR** Taskforce member organizations appointed to various teams will be physically present at the location of the Situation Room.
3. All members have mobile phone regardless of its type.

ESR Taskforce Member Organizations will continuously hold meetings, make phone calls and send e-mails to each other to discuss and make decisions. However, at team level, the heads of each team will be the contact individual for that team and will be responsible or his/her designate to give updates on the activities of the team.

Below is a list of representative members and their contacts by teams:

(ii) Contact List

Contact List – MEIC Taskforce Representatives

Item #	Name	Organization/Post	Gender	Contact
Partners				
1				
Steering Committee				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
Support Team				
7		Project Manager,		
8		ICT Assistant,		
9		Media Assistant,		
10		Finance Officer,		
Technology Team				
11				
11				
12				
Expert Team				
28				
29				
30				
31				
32				
33				

All Field Observers will receive text messages with their supervisors’ names and contacts for the Polling Stations to which they are allocated. Supervisors will also have the contacts of the Head

of the Technology Team & Project Manager texted to them in case they need to refer for technical or logistics reasons.

(iii) Recruitment Communications

Applications - all applications shall be e-mailed to (insert email of ESR). No hard-copy of applications will be considered therefore candidates should be advised to e-mail their applications. A Recruitment Plan should be developed in collaboration with the Steering Committee and communicated to other members.

Shortlisting – Secretariat will prepare a list of shortlisted candidates based on adverted criteria and share with the Steering Committee and contact candidates for test and interviews based on agreed dates in the Recruitment Plan.

Interview Panel - the ESR Taskforce should appoint members to sit on the Interview Panel to ensure accountability and transparency is maintained but the recruitment shall be led by the Technology Team who have the human resource expertise and are au-fait with the requirements: knowledge, abilities, skills and competencies needed for the operation of the ESR team.

Selection - upon conclusion of the interview, Interview Panellists shall compare their scores on each candidate for a position and recommend the strongest one for the position. The interview report will be put together by one of the Panellists appointed among themselves, signed and e-mail to all signatories and the Steering Committee for approval.

On-Boarding Process - the secretariat will prepare related documentation: contracts and non-disclosure agreements for the new Contractors.

Gender & Disability Mainstreaming - the recruitment and selection process should also be gender mainstreamed as the ESR does not only seek female and disabled representations but requires to give them the opportunity in decision-making positions as long as they are qualified. Therefore, the shortlisting and selection shall take cognisance of this– meaning giving equal chances to both females and males to interview for the various positions and having a representation of both genders in the final selection.

2. External Communications

The success of this implementation is highly dependent on the interrelationships created by ESR Taskforce members and the rapport developed with all actors in the election arena. Therefore, all efforts should be made to relate with different stakeholders beginning right now.

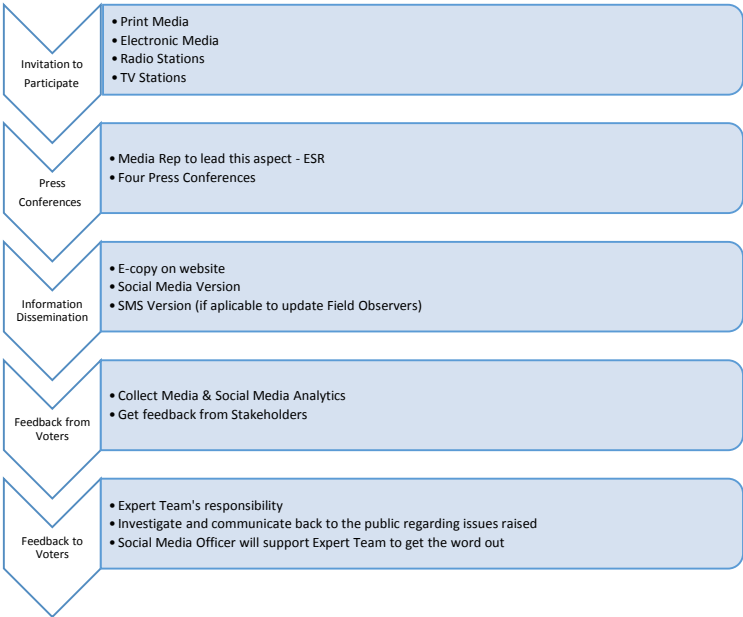
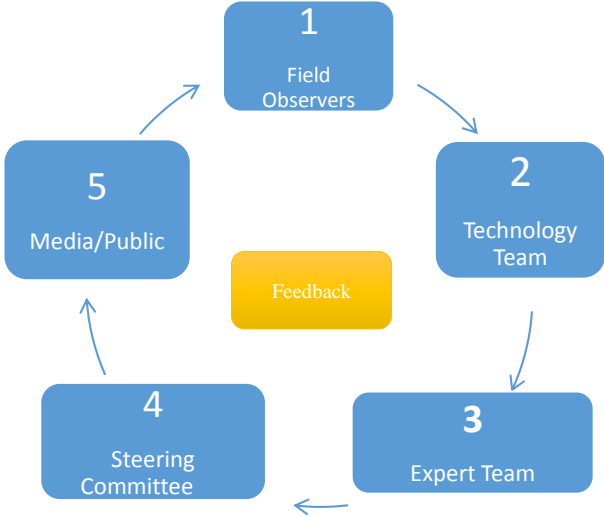
A central online document storage should be created by the secretariat to enable all Team members to have a common place to view all communications sent to the ESR Taskforce via e-mails which also enables members with access to save documents securely including those that are work-in-progress. This way everyone is able to see the same information at the same time.

Requests for all information shall go through the Steering Committee and all information supplied shall be approved by this team in collaboration with the Expert Team before dissemination. Communications in the Steering Committee shall be specialized. Members shall be appointed to communicate information to specific groups. For instance, one member organisation with a media speciality should be charged with the responsibility of communicating with the media on any given request or interaction needed. By doing so, it is easier to address issues and quickly get feedback from colleagues and information will flow more freely.

Names of individuals handling each aspect should be submitted to the Technology Team as this will form part of the database design and input.

PART III - ELECTION DAY (INFORMATION PROCESSING)

1. Information Flow & Feedback



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The Field Observers are the primary source of data because they are located at every Polling Station across the country.

Field Observers at Polling Centres will report to their Supervisors and refer to them in case of any problem or logistical need. Where a technical issue arise, Supervisors are encouraged to quickly refer the matter to the Technology Team and logistics issues directed to the Project Manager by the Supervisor.

The Technology Team that will be onsite will consists of the Software Engineer, Program Manager, Field Coordinator, Data Officers and the Social Media Officer. The Data Officers will be paying close attention to monitor the accuracy of message sent by Field Observers and calling those whose messages come into the system wrongly coded. If there happen to be any anomalies they cannot handle, they should quickly inform the Head of the Technology Team. The Head of Technology will be responsible for presenting and explaining information to the Experts Team in a clear and concise manner that will enable them to conduct their analysis and make quick decisions especially in emergency situations.

The Expert Team shall be appointed by the ESR Taskforce member organizations and the Head of the Expert Team to be appointed by Expert Team members, shall authorize all information going out of the ESR in collaboration with his/her team. Statistical reports will be accessible to the team and the team should agree on who shall put together the narrative of their analysis using those reports for press conferences and publications. Upon retrieving the reports from the system, if there are any incidences, this should be treated as priority. If it is a security related incidence, the team shall quickly agree on what to communicate and request for and the member of the team assigned to liaise with security personnel should directly call the head of the security institution be it the Police or special forces assigned to the keep the people secure during election period particularly. This methodology of communication will apply to all information processed and ready to be disseminated.

Hourly reports shall be made available to the Expert Team for analysis before the general quarterly reports are created for press conferences. The Technology Team will train this team how to access those reports.

The most important thing for every team is to ensure that we collect feedback for every piece of information sent out. This will help the entire team to improve on areas needed and integrating feedback from the public will build more trust in the ESR process and our ability to be a watchdog or the “eyes of the people”.

Any logistical issue faced by this team will be addressed to the Head of the Steering Committee while technology issues shall be communicated to the Head of the Technology Team for action.

Since the ESR is an OSIWA brain child, it is suggested that one of OSIWA’s representatives be present in the Expert Team as Guest who will also bring the value of past ESR experiences from across Africa.

The Support Team comprises of the four hired employees, three of whom will be line managed by the Project Manager. The Project Manager shall report to the Chair of the

<p>Taskforce. Questions related to the logistics of the smooth running of the ESR shall be addressed to the Project Manager.</p>
<p>2. Social Media</p> <p>Twitter and Facebook will be integrated to stream live on the ESR website in order to enable the most familiar social media platforms to be available as a discussion forum while enabling citizen journalism and the participation of electorates on this media.</p> <p>Forums within these platforms that are commonly used by citizens will be identified and insertions of the handlers and/or links included. By doing this, the ESR will be promoted through social media thus enabling as well as increasing the participation of citizen as they seek information.</p> <p>Create a hashtag for twitter and the website address which should then be shared with all stakeholders and where appropriate, shared on the social media platforms for increased visibility and accessibility via several media outlets.</p>
<p>3. Media Relations</p> <p>The media will be one of the ESR Taskforce’s dissemination outlets for non-Internet users and for the entire radio-listening population. Once information is authorized the Steering Committee/Expert Team, it will be released to the media through press conferences.</p> <p>Press conferences will take place four times on Election Day: 8:00 a.m., 12: 00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., & 8:00 p.m. (Liable to change...). Both Steering Committee & Expert Teams should arrange for airtime with an INDEPENDENT radio station for scheduled discussions about the ESR. This is a sensitization strategy for the entire public to be informed about the ESR and be invited to join in discussions over social media.</p> <p>The first press conference will reiterate what the ESR is, what it does and the organizations behind its operation. This will be followed by a brief note on what Journalists should expect at the ESR press conferences. Journalists will be given the alternative to receive the same information via e-mail and they will be pointed to links on the website where news materials can be found.</p>
<p>4. Publicity</p> <p>Radio sensitization airtimes, TV airtimes, Banners, Flyers and Stickers will be produced with KEY MESSAGES and slogan “eyes of the people” (or come up with something better) in English and the main local languages. These materials will have the social media handlers on them including the website address and e-mail contacts.</p> <p>After the training of the ESR Personnel, a one-pager document will be developed by Steering Committee with the following details: brief background of the ESR, What it is How It Works, Who Is Involved and How To Connect. This one-pager will be attached to every communication going out of the ESR to stakeholders and also shared on social media.</p>
<p>PART IV - POST- ELECTION DAY (EVALUATION & SUSTAINABILITY PLAN)</p>
<p>1. Project Evaluation Meeting</p> <p>In order to communicate the impact and success of the ESR implementation, we must be able to establish whether we met our objectives for the project, indicate what our highlights were and</p>

challenges. A meeting shall be held, as per Activity Plan items to discuss post-election activities and how to proceed with them. Every ESR Personnel that worked on the project must be present on **May 22, 2014** since evaluation is required on every aspect of the project.

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Report Consultant, if hired shall put together discussions from this meeting to general the final report on activities otherwise the final report shall be a collective effort of all members

2. Final Press Conference

This press conference should summarize the process adopted by ESR to observe, monitor and report on election day activities and incidences across the country, acknowledging EVERY organization involved appropriately and their contribution towards the collective process. This will strengthen the bond within the taskforce and pave the way for members to engage in collective advocacy on electoral issues speaking with ‘one voice’.

The Taskforce as an internal electoral watchdog should be prepared to be the first internal body to **make statement on the credibility of the election with especial reference on the voting process** with statistical and evidence-based data. **Based on our coverage of Polling Stations, the Statistician should be able to make a prediction of results and/or statistics provided by the Vote n Text System can be used to inform electorates and leave them to conclude the results making sure we emphasize that this is an independent but credible unofficial results data.**

3. Evaluating Success: Collective Indicators

(TBC Inputs needed from ESR member Orgs)

1. Number of election stakeholders who are aware of and participate in the ESR
2. Number of timely decisions reached and communicated to partners.
3. Number of requests received by the ESR for information and the number of information released.
4. Number of communication channels used and their effectiveness.
5. The effectiveness of key messages delivered to the public. This will be evaluated different feedbacks received from channels of contact with electorate to know if the key messages met the interest of the electorates.
6. The smooth flow of communication. This will be measured by the lack of negative conflicts in sharing information among stakeholders.
7. The number of website and social media analytics on access to information published and the engagement of electorate on social media.

4. Sustainability Planning Meeting

Schedule **a meeting** to develop a sustainability strategy and plan and how these tools can be used in smaller elections within the country including any other dialog SMS (two-way communication) implementation.