

# **Stakeholders' Validation Workshop on Media Communication Strategy for General Election in South Sudan**

written by NEC Press | May 7, 2025



The Media Authority and the National Communication Authority (NCA) co-chaired a Stakeholders' workshop held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at Telecom House, Juba, under the theme "Unpacking Elections Media Communication Matrix". The event brought together key institutions including South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC), the Information Commission and the Universal Service Access Fund (USAf), with guidance from the Competent Minister of ICT and Postal Services.



The workshop focused on the upcoming General Elections process to ensure transparency, inclusivity and credibility to reflect the democratic aspirations of the South Sudanese people. The program was centered around enhancing voter education to ensure that every eligible citizen is well-informed about their rights and responsibilities. It also aimed to promote peaceful participation by fostering an environment of tolerance and respect. Another strategy was designed to combat misinformation, providing accurate and reliable information to counter false narratives; and furthermore, to ensuring equitable media access to all political parties and empowering citizens to make informed decisions.



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The workshop brought together representatives from a diverse range of stakeholder groups which included National Election Commission, Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations, Media Fraternity, UN Agencies, Donors, Academia, Government and Law Enforcement Agencies.

Opening remarks were delivered by senior government officials and stakeholders including Hon. George Lemi Yata (Spokesperson – National Election Commission), Hon. Oliver Mori Benjamin (Spokesperson – Transitional National Legislative Assembly), Hon. Elijah Alier Kuai (Managing Director, Media Authority) and Edmund Yakani (Executive Director – Community Empowerment for Progress Organization); among others.



This collaborative initiative demonstrated a unified commitment to strengthening media engagement and access to information during election.

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## **NEC and the Central Equatoria State High Committee boost awareness of the electoral process among CSOs in Juba**

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On 8 April 2025, the National Elections Commission (NEC) held a consultative meeting with civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Central Equatoria State (CES) to discuss the NEC's electoral mandate and potential areas for cooperation between the NEC and CSOs. This meeting, hosted by the NEC State High Election Committee (SHEC) in CES, was the first convened by the NEC with state-level CSOs in this state. It followed a national-level consultative meeting between the NEC and CSOs in January, as well as nine (9) similar meetings held in each state of South Sudan during March 2025.

This one-day event brought together 48 representatives from state-level CSOs such as community and faith-based groups, youth and women's organizations, networks for persons with disabilities, and media representatives. The primary objective was to enhance public awareness of the electoral process and to strengthen relationships and partnerships between the NEC, SHECs, and CSOs. Notably, the event exhibited excellent inclusiveness, with 50% of participants being women.



The NEC Chief Electoral Officer, Hon. Mac Maika Deng, officially opened the meeting and shared the progress and challenges of the election preparations. These challenges primarily relate to aligning the electoral timeline, the constitution-making process, and census timelines, as well as the necessity for political and legal clarity and financing.

The Chairperson of the CES SHEC, Alphayo Philip Lako, introduced participants to the meeting agenda, which covered topics such as civic and voter education, voter registration, and overall election preparations at both the national and state levels. Additional subjects included the inclusiveness of the electoral process, the neutrality of NEC and SHEC members, capacity building for electoral stakeholders, and collaboration in the electoral process.

After the NEC and SHEC presented the framework for the electoral process, the CSO representatives discussed their activities and potential areas for support and collaboration with the NEC and SHEC.

During group work sessions, participants identified challenges regarding the upcoming elections and proposed collaborative solutions. Subsequently, these points were presented and discussed with the entire plenary. The discussions yielded valuable insights that the SHEC members gratefully received.



At the end of the meeting, the NEC and SHECs committed to convening regularly to share information on the electoral process and to maximise the essential role of CSOs as extended arms for civic and voter information, as well as being observers and watchdogs of the process. The CSO participants pledged to strengthen their collaboration with the election management body to ensure transparency and a coordinated approach to the electoral process. They also committed to supporting comprehensive public awareness campaigns related to civic and voter education once they receive clarity on the way

forward.

The UN Integrated Electoral Assistance Team (UNIEAT), which includes the UNMISS Electoral Assistance Division and the UNDP South Sudan Electoral Support Project, provided both technical and financial support for the meetings.

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# **NEC attends BRIDGE training on Boundary Delimitation and Voter Registration**

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The National Election Commission (NEC) attended two customized modular workshops on Boundary Delimitation and Voter Registration in Juba supported by the United Nations Integrated Election Assistance Team (UN-IEAT). The trainings, held between 25-28 March and 1-4 April 2025, utilized the BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections), a comprehensive capacity development curriculum for election management bodies worldwide.



The two workshops brought together over 50 participants NEC Commissioners, members of the secretariat as well as members of the State High Election Committees (SHECs) from all 10 states.



The trainings were designed to equip NEC and electoral stakeholders with the knowledge to analyze implications of electoral boundary decisions and shed light on foundational principles of effective voter registration systems. The workshops are part of a capacity building series that provide platforms for electoral administrators to continue preparing South Sudan for its national elections scheduled in December 2026.

# NEC Consults with Civil Society in Bor and Yambio to Enhance Electoral Awareness

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On 26 March 2025, the National Elections Commission (NEC) and the State High Election Committees (SHECs) of Jonglei and Western Equatoria states organized consultative meetings with civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bor and Yambio.



The one-day event brought together 79 representatives of state-level CSOs (45 from Bor including 19 women, and 34 from Yambio including 13 women), including community and faith-based organizations, youth and women's groups, as well as media representatives, to raise public awareness of the electoral process and strengthen relationships and

partnerships between the NEC, SHECs, and CSOs. The NEC Board and Secretariat members from Juba also participated in these events. The NEC and SHECs informed of challenges associated to the electoral timeline – namely as related to the Constitution-making process timeline, political and legal clarity needed, in addition to financing. The discussion included topics and coordination on civic and voter education, voter registration, and overall election preparations at both national and state levels. Other topics covered included the inclusiveness of the electoral process, the neutrality of NEC and SHEC members, the roles of and capacity building for electoral stakeholders, and collaboration in the electoral process, among others.



After the two events, the NEC and SHECs agreed to meet regularly to share information on the electoral process and coordinate the essential role CSOs play in the electoral process – as extended arms for civic and voter information,

and as observers and watchdogs of the process. The CSO participants committed to strengthening collaboration with the election management body to ensure transparency and a coordinated approach to the electoral process. They also pledged to support comprehensive public awareness campaigns associated with civic and voter education upon clarity on the way forward. The UN Integrated Electoral Assistance Team (UNIEAT), which includes the UNMISS Electoral Assistance Division and the UNDP South Sudan Electoral Support Project, provided both technical and financial support for the meetings.

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## **NEC LAUNCHES TWO FIRST STATE-LEVEL ENGAGEMENTS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN BENTIU AND MALAKAL**

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UN-IEAT supported the NEC to conduct the first two state-level engagements with CSO, i.e., in Bentiu (Unity State) and Malakal (Upper Nile State) on 05 March 2025. The events were hosted on UNMISS premises in the two states with key logistical and administrative support provided by the UNMISS field offices and UNIEAT UNVs recently recruited and deployed to the two states.



The events were well attended by about 45 invited participants from each state. The meeting in Unity State was held at on the UNMISS premises in Rubkano and was attended by 33 CSO representatives including 7 women, while the one in Upper Nile was held in the Legislative Assembly Chamber in Malakal town and was attended by 47 CSO representatives including 11 women. Each meeting was convened and moderated by the respective chairperson of the State High Committee (SHEC) of the NEC, Honorable Peter Mayom Pur for Upper Nile, and Honorable George Kuong Gattang for Unity. The meetings started with opening remarks read out on behalf of the Chairperson of the NEC, Honorable Professor Abednego Akok Kacuol, who commended CSOs for their active engagement with the electoral process and support to the NEC in the preparations for the next elections including their participation in the first two NEC state-level engagements with CSOs. “The NEC remained committed to creating an enabling environment based on, among other things, stakeholder

trust and confidence in the electoral process and institutions. This will go a long way to guarantee credible elections which will serve as a firm foundation for sustainable peace, democracy, and development in South Sudan", he pointed out.



The meetings sought to bring state-level CSOs including community and faith-based organizations, and media with the SHEC to raise public awareness and foster working relations between the NEC and SHECS on the one hand, and CSOs as key electoral stakeholders. The meeting also sought to discuss NEC preparations for December 2026 based on the revised transition timeline of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) of 2018. Among related issues discussed were the election timelines, funding, legal and political issues impacting election preparations. The SHECs used this platform to inform CSOs about ongoing NEC activities such as NEC institutional strengthening including training and capacity building most of which is provided by the UNIEAT; ongoing legal reform, establishing the NEC presence at the state level through office construction and refurbishment, support to NEC business processes and policy development covering areas such as civic

and voter education, stakeholder engagement, gender and inclusion, corporate branding and communication also engagement with key national stakeholders including the presidency to discuss the NEC funding, organogram, legal reform; CSOs t discuss civic and voter education, election observation; and NPS on election security issues; also regional and international partners on technical and financial support.

Among the comments and questions from CSOs in the two meetings were: concern about the lack of NEC and election funding and the impact this has on NEC credibility and capacity to deliver elections in two years; continued insecurity including the recent upsurge in violence in Upper Nile and how these could adversely impact the country preparedness for elections.

Participants in the two meetings resolved to work closely with the NEC and the SHECs in areas such as civic and voter education and to actively participate in relevant coordination structures once the NEC has set them up at state and local levels. An issue raised in the meetings was the concern about the increasing number of internally displaced persons due to conflict and flooding – the latter has rendered many communities inaccessible by road and without access to many government services. Reaching out to water-locked communities may be a challenge when it comes to civic and voter education, voter registration, election campaigning, and the voting process itself.

The NEC used these two occasions to validate the database of CSOs working on democracy, human rights, inclusive participation and elections and the meetings agreed to regularly update the database with the support of the SHECs and UNIEAT in each state.

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# NEC engages Civil Society Organizations

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The National Elections Commission (NEC) held a stakeholder engagement consultative meeting on 17 January 2025 with a diverse group of civil society organizations (CSOs) including faith-based organizations, academia and media from South Sudan. The objective of the half-day engagement focused on raising awareness on the electoral process and key updates related to the electoral timeline and preparations.

Over 60 CSOs participated in the event who welcomed NEC's initiative to strengthen dialogue with electoral stakeholders and exchange crucial information about the progress of electoral preparations and challenges, such as proposed timelines for constitutional review, population census and elections, electoral legal framework and budget constraints.







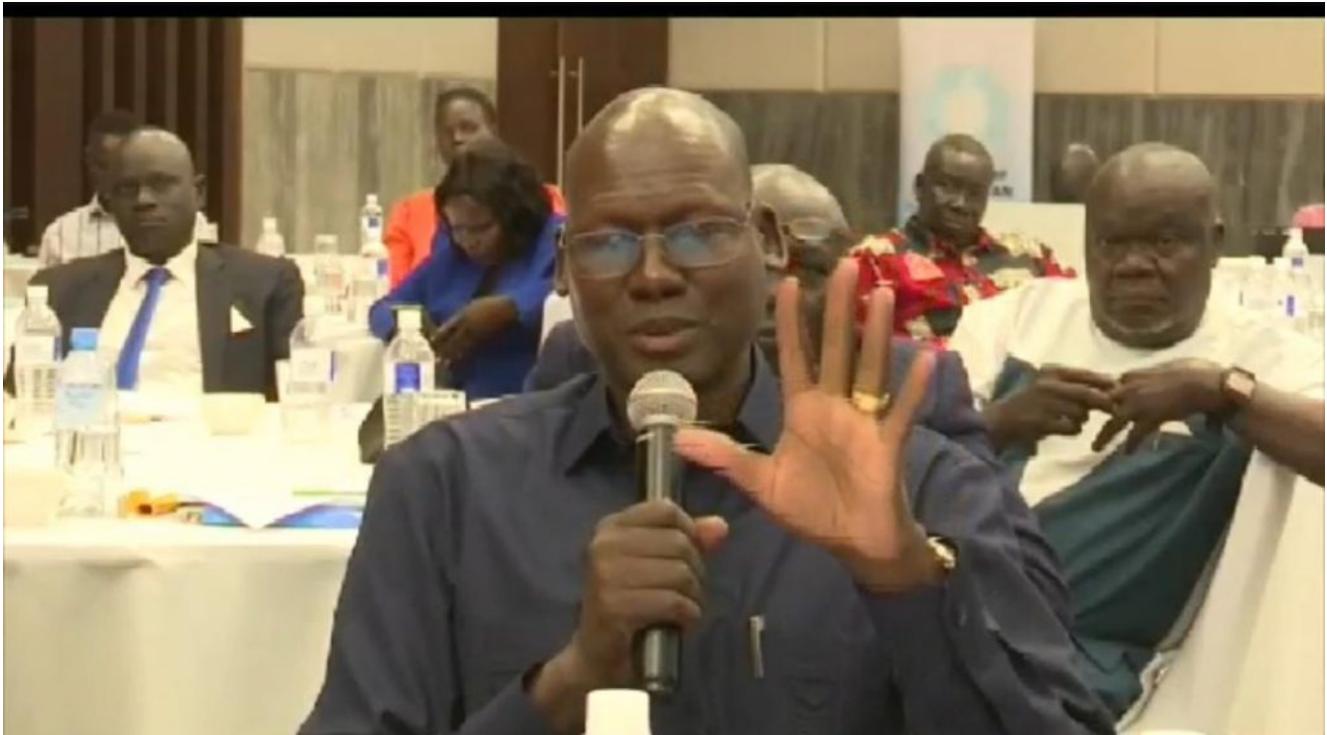
This series of stakeholder engagements form part of the Commission's action plan adopted during a retreat in Entebbe, Uganda, in December 2024. The consultative meeting was NEC's

second stakeholder meeting, following a similar one held with political parties on 17 December 2024.

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# NEC Engages Political Parties in Crucial Electoral Preparations

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The National Elections Commission (NEC) held a stakeholder engagement consultative meeting on **17 December** with diverse political parties from South Sudan to discuss electoral

timelines, electoral preparations and enabling decision-making for credible elections. Twenty-six (26) registered political parties attended the event.

The NEC provided a detailed briefing to the participants on electoral achievements and challenges related to the National Election Act and the electoral timeline. Several issues were highlighted to the plenary, including but not limited to: (i) the outcomes of the recent operational planning workshop from 3-5 December 2024 in Entebbe; (ii) adoption of the two regulations on observers, media and party agents and election campaign; (iii) adoption and signing of the NEC Code of Conduct; (iv) development of a NEC civic and voter education strategy; and (v) updates on the refurbishment of the new State High Election Committee offices.

In an interactive spirit, political parties engaged in discussions with the NEC, and the latter appealed to the parties' support in taking critical decisions required to advance the electoral process. There was consensus among the group that while the Commission relies on legal frameworks to guide its mandate and work, collaboration with the political parties remained essential for progress. It was also encouraged by NEC Commissioners for all political parties to be well informed with the National Election Act. Several questions were raised at the conclusion of the event on a number of issues relating to the gaps in the legal framework, decisions on the population census and constitution-making process, the question of IDPs and refugees, NEC budget and fundraising efforts. It was agreed that more forums with political parties will be convened to foster relations and build civic and political space for effective citizens' engagement with democracy and elections.

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# NEC Press Conference and Website Launch

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**Juba, South Sudan**—NEC held a press conference to announce the outcome of the NEC Operational Planning retreat and launch the official website for the NEC. 56 participants from NEC, Media houses, international partners, and others attended this event.



During this press conference Honorable Professor Abednego Akok

Kacuol, the chairperson of the National Elections Commission (NEC), and Deputy Chairperson Honorable Gabriel Gabriel Deng briefed the participants on the outcome of the Operational Planning, adoption of regulations, and signing of the code of conduct. The Spokesperson of the NEC spokesperson, Honorable George Lemi Yata launched the website and took the participants through its contents.

The commission then answered questions raised by the media about the legal framework, budget and finance, and the website.

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## **NEC Concludes Operational Planning Retreat in Entebbe**

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The National Elections Commission held a successful operational planning retreat in Entebbe Uganda, attended by nine commissioners, two Secretariat Staff, and eight UN Integrated Electoral Assistance Team advisors.

The objective of this operational planning retreat was for the Commission to calibrate its priorities and establish an overall strategy for advancing its institutional readiness towards managing the electoral process that would enable the holding of the anticipated elections to be held in December 2026. Some of the objectives of the planning retreat

included:

- Review of R-ACSS extension timelines and identify key political decisions required for NEC to be able to deliver the December 2026 elections
- Define NEC's strategies and priorities.
- Define the method for drafting of the operational plan.
- Discuss Voter Registration and boundary delimitation processes and their implementation.
- Discuss the way forward towards Civic Voter Education and Education and Engagement
- Define the way forward for the review of the budget.

The outcome of this retreat was a ***communiqué*** and a set of action points that presented a coherent position that would guide the next set of engagements with the Government and other stakeholders. This engagement is aimed at strengthening the understanding of the challenges around the organization and conduct of the electoral process under the current conditions and it is expected that this understanding will foster informed and timely decision-making.

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## **NEC Commissioners Sign Code of Conduct**

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Following the adoption of *Regulation No. 1/2024 on the Use and Purpose of a Code of Conduct, and the National Elections Commission Code of Conduct 2024*, the National Elections Commission (NEC) has taken a significant step towards electoral preparations by having the commissioners individually sign the said Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct formulates values and principles for the professional and ethical conduct of members and employees of the NEC.

The event took place during the NEC Operational Planning retreat in Entebbe, marking a crucial step towards conducting democratic, inclusive, transparent, peaceful, and credible elections in the country.

#### **Key Provisions of the Code of Conduct include:**

- 1. Respect for the Rule of Law:** requiring its signatories to ensure that the legal framework relating to elections is implemented in an impartial and equitable manner.
- 2. Impartiality and Neutrality:** requiring its signatories to maintain neutrality, avoid partisan support, disclose potential conflicts of interest, and avoid accepting gifts or favors from election-related entities.
- 3. Transparency:** requiring its signatories to provide effective access to electoral documents and information in a timely manner. This includes consulting with electoral stakeholders regularly and providing the legal rationale behind decisions made by the election administration.
- 4. Accuracy:** requiring its signatories to ensure that all information collected, compiled, and published by the

NEC has a sound factual basis and is presented in a systematic, clear, and unambiguous manner.

5. **Service to Voters:** requiring its signatories to aim to provide the highest quality service to voters, ensuring they adequately understand the election process and can exercise their political rights effectively.

#### **Duties and Responsibilities:**

The Code of Conduct also outlines the duties and responsibilities of NEC members and staff. These include serving with impartiality and professionalism, exercising their powers without undue influence, and acting in the best interests of the people of South Sudan. They are also required to protect confidential information, attend all NEC meetings, and report any improper influence or misconduct. The signing of the Code of Conduct in Entebbe is an important milestone towards upholding the highest standards of conduct and ethics. This move is expected to enhance the credibility and integrity of the electoral process in South Sudan.



