



NAMIBIA
e-Parliament
Strategy **2022-2027**



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ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DP	Development Partner
EPDN	Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia Programme
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IT	Information Technology
LTE	Long-term Evolution
MP	Member of Parliament
NA	National Assembly
NC	National Council
OMAs	Offices, Ministries and Agencies
PBO	Parliamentary Budget Office
PSC	Parliamentary Service Commission
SME	Subject-matter Expert
SPC	Strategic Performance Committee
SRO	Standing Rules and Orders
VPN	Virtual Private Network

JOINT FOREWORD BY THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

More than thirty years after independence, the Namibian people have demonstrated remarkable resilience and are increasingly demanding transparency and accountability from their elected representatives. The Namibian Parliament therefore desires to strengthen its institutional capacity and democratic culture so that it can become a vibrant and pluralistic democratic institution. In 2021, the Namibian Parliament with the support of the World Bank (Southern Africa Regional Office) embarked on the development of a transformational e-Parliament initiative. The World Bank has dedicated its expertise and resources to the Namibian Parliament in conceptualizing an e-Parliament concept that encapsulates modern and reliable digital technologies to achieve a democratic and citizen-centered Parliament.

The e-Parliament initiative is an extension of the ***Agenda for Change*** on policy reform conceptualized under the leadership of the first Speaker of the National Assembly of an independent Namibia, Hon. Dr. Mosé Penaani Tjitendero and was further adopted and championed by the second Speaker, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab.

The Namibian Parliament plans to implement an e-Parliament infrastructure to improve the parliamentary process, and capacity to fulfill its core functions efficiently and effectively. The implementation of an e-Parliament Strategy will improve the efficiency and productivity of lawmaking, representation, review, and oversight. This would entail: (i) enabling MPs to have easy access to a wide range of information and knowledge resources in order to make informed decisions e.g. access to parliamentary committee reports online, tracking tools to monitor all legislation in the enactment process and web based equipped Parliament Library; (ii) equipping Parliamentary Committees with appropriate technology to undertake public hearings, (iii) develop interactive websites and other collaborative tools to enhance interaction between MPs and the citizenry and (iv) develop information systems and databases that will enable MPs to directly track and monitor national budgets, major development projects and Namibia's contractual obligations.

The Parliament also plans to enhance specific institutional pillars that align with the effective use of e-Parliament systems. Specifically, (a) establishing and operating a strong Parliamentary Budget Office with key personnel whose duty will be to serve as a key advisory unit for the joint Parliamentary Budget Committee, (b) strengthening the Children's Parliament and Junior National Council, (c) revamping the Parliament Library, and (d) capacity building for Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff.

These targets are aimed at ensuring that we create 21st Century Parliamentary polity that can effectively utilize the technological tools of the 4th Industrial Revolution to enhance and

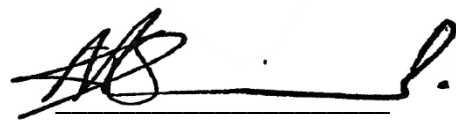
advance participatory democracy in Namibia. It goes without saying that the implementation of this strategic policy document will depend on the collective efforts of all stakeholders. It is important for Members of Parliament and all Parliamentary Staff to take ownership and embrace this e-Parliament Strategy as their own. Taking full ownership of this strategy will ensure that the set objectives of development are fully implemented. Similarly, the e-Parliament initiative cannot be a success without the support of our development partners. The interest expressed by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) to facilitate the process, the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) Namibia Office, the Office of the European Union (EU) Delegation to Namibia, the Finnish Parliament and various other Development Partners will go a long way towards the successful implementation of this strategy.

Finally, it is our sincere aspiration through this strategic reform, that the Parliament of Namibia, through Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff will become more widely accessible to the citizenry.

December 2022



HON. PROF. PETER H. KATJAVIVI, MP
Speaker of the National Assembly



HON. LUKAS S. MUHA, MP
Chairperson of the National Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Parliament of Namibia has over the years continuously adjusted its operations to respond better to the legislative demands and oversight responsibility. These were not met without challenges. However, the dedicated workforce and political leadership have continued to commit ourselves towards ensuring that the legislature remains a functional and responsive Branch of the State.

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic took the entire world by surprise. Across the globe governments have declared lockdowns which were aimed at saving as many lives as possible. This led to the pause in economic and administrative operations across the board. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to forth the adoption of technology in the operations of business of government including Parliaments. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings become the norm and various strategies like working from home were implemented. During this period, Parliament was from time to time required to suspend its work in our efforts to curb the spread of the virus. As a result, the Secretariat of Parliament commenced consultations to formulate Virtual Rules that would legally allow Members of Parliament to conduct their mandates through smart IT systems without having to be present in the Parliamentary Precincts.

The lessons and experiences learned through this outbreak necessitated the need for Parliament to develop a comprehensive e-Parliament Strategy. The concept of e-Parliament refers to how Parliaments effectively use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to support their external and internal functions and processes to be more effective, accessible, accountable, and inclusive. The Namibian Parliament aspires to accelerate the adoption of an e-Parliament system to improve efficiency within the institution and in its interaction with its stakeholders. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the increased demand for transparency by citizens have provided an impetus to deepen the adoption of digital technologies.

The application of digital tools is expected to improve Parliamentary processes and increase effectiveness in the discharge of Parliament's core functions of law-making, oversight and representation, and increase its engagement with citizens. The increased use of digital technologies is also consistent with achieving the goals of Namibia's Vision 2030 and the related 5th National Development Plan. Over the course of 2021 the team of experts from the World Bank and the core team of Parliament has been engaged in an assessment process to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are consulted.

The team was given 5 key e-Parliament pillars which were to guide this process;

1. Parliamentary Services using digital technologies
2. Infrastructure

3. Digital Skills
4. Oversight and management of ICT
5. Cross-cutting enabling foundations

We then divided this project into three thematic phases namely;

1. Assessment phase and production of the Draft Assessment Report
2. E-Parliament Strategy Development
3. Sourcing of Funding and Implementation of the Strategy

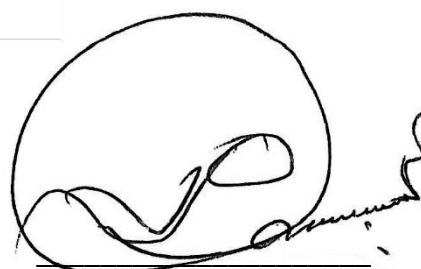
This document therefore marks the end of phase 2. Parliament and its partners now have the opportunity to commence with resource mobilization and implement this strategy in a phased manner. It is now incumbent upon us as Parliamentary Staff to ensure that the vision entailed in this strategy is achieved within time frames as indicated. We have the responsibility as support staff to work tirelessly to ensure that commitment. With that and with the necessary support we are confident that what we set for ourselves in this strategy is achievable. The Parliament will continue to count and rely on our long term development partners, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) as facilitator, the United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), Namibia Office and the European Union Delegation to Namibia to help us in realizing the objectives as set out in this strategy.

Finally, we extend our greatest appreciation to the staff members from both Houses of Parliament, who spend sizeable amount of time to work closely with the World Bank team to ensure the successful completion of this Strategy. To the World Bank (Southern African Regional Office), we remain indebted to you for spearheading this mammoth task.

We thank you all.

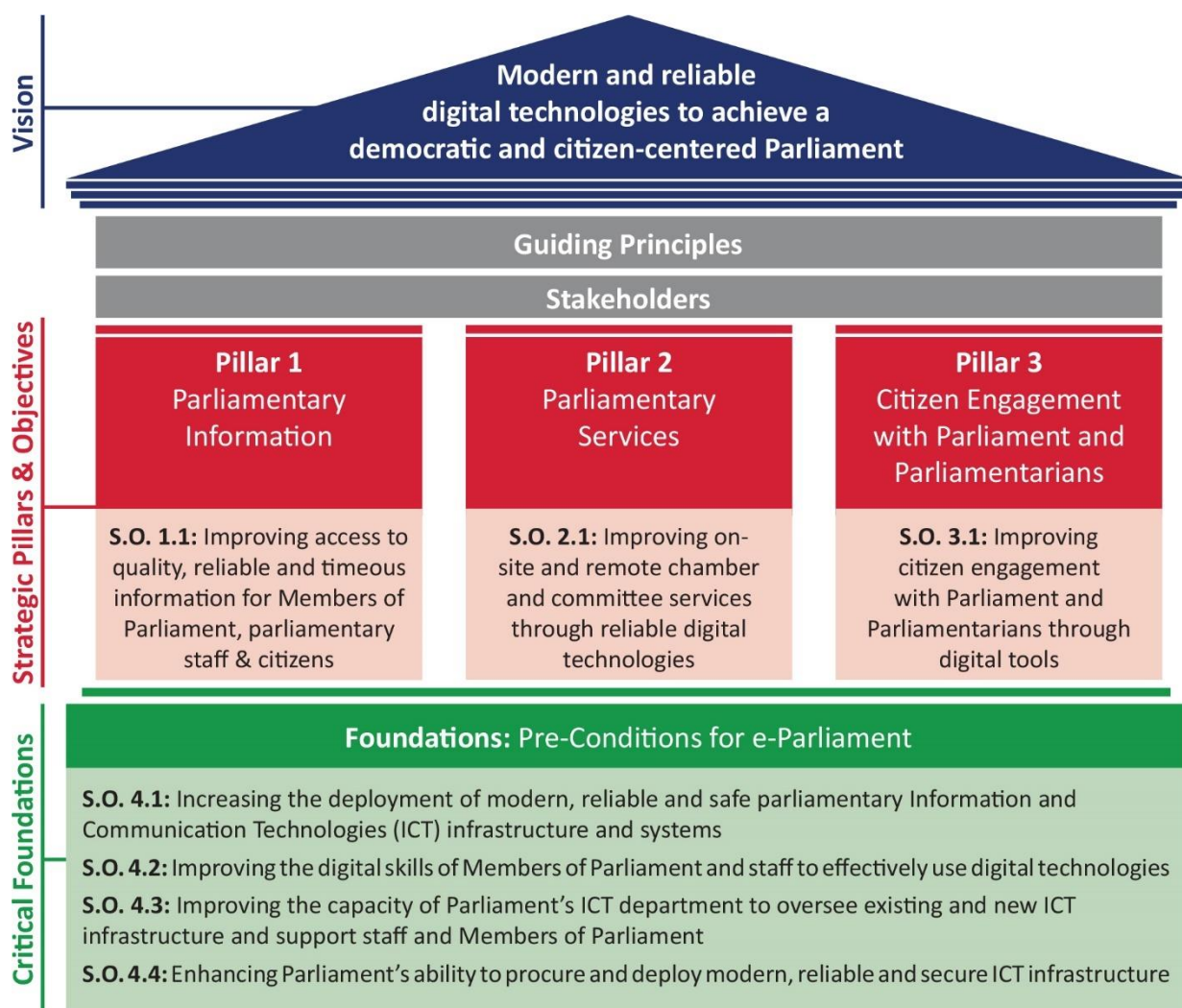


MS. LYDIA T. KANDETU
Secretary: National Assembly



ADV. TOUSY NAMISEB
Secretary: National Council

Figure 1. E-Parliament Strategic Plan 2022-2027



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The National Assembly and the National Council (“Parliament”) have in the last few years embarked on an e-Parliament reform to digitize its operations to improve service delivery efficiency in the core functions of Parliament. The National Assembly’s chamber has been equipped with a chamber system, namely the Taiden conference chamber system, that is equipped with functionalities that allow Members of Parliament (MPs) seated in the Chamber to use computer terminals to access electronic documents, register their attendance, and vote. All MPs have been provided with enabling equipment (tablets and computers) in their offices, as well as access to the Internet. The Parliament mainly uses its website (recently upgraded), Facebook and Twitter to share information with citizens.

The Parliament aspires to accelerate the adoption of an e-Parliament system to improve efficiency within the institution, as well as in its interactions with stakeholders. The application of digital tools is expected to improve parliamentary processes and increase its effectiveness in the discharge of the core functions of law-making, representation, and oversight. It is also expected to increase its engagement with citizens. The aspiration comes at an opportune time. Parliaments across the globe are increasingly using digital technologies to improve service delivery and parliamentary functioning. In the case of Namibia, this aspiration has emerged in response to the following developments:

- **The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated the adoption of digital technologies in Parliaments.** The pandemic brought about a new way of working in Parliament. Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff started working from home and using remote models. The change required the Parliament’s management to increase the adoption of digital tools, as well as to review and strengthen the systems and processes used in the Parliament.
- **Rising national access to devices and communication networks.** Digital technologies offer the unprecedented opportunity to connect parliaments with citizens, thus improving participation in democratic processes. Namibians are increasingly connected, with 89 percent having 3G coverage and 79 percent having Long-Term Evolution (LTE) internet access. The Government recently announced plans to achieve 95 percent broadband coverage by 2024, focusing on coverage for public schools and health facilities. It is also seeking to develop a Broadband Policy and Implementation Action Plan.
- **Global trends towards the cost-effective digitization of parliamentary services.** The last decade has seen several Parliaments adopt modern and innovative parliamentary tools. Coupled with the disruptive shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has brought the

digitization of Parliament to center stage. Parliaments globally are adopting innovative information and communication technologies (ICT) strategies. In this context, they are increasing the proportion of their parliamentary budgets allocated to ICT, with several parliaments allocating at least 9 percent toward ICT infrastructure development. Furthermore, over 65 percent of parliaments surveyed in the 2020 World e-Parliament Report hosted virtual or hybrid committee meetings, thereby demonstrating the effective use of digital technology in virtual plenary activities, such as e-voting, e-legislation and e-petitions.

We are committed to enhancing the work quality of our MPs by continuously empowering them with the necessary tools, knowledge and skills for them to execute their constitutional mandate of legislation, oversight and representation. To this end, amongst other things, we have embarked on a deliberate initiative of transforming our National Assembly into a 21st-century parliamentary polity by establishing an e-parliament system and improving parliamentary processes and procedures.

—Honorable Professor Peter H. Katjavivi, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly

- **National desires for transparent and participatory parliamentary processes.** The increased demand for transparency by citizens has provided an impetus to deepen the adoption of digital technologies. The digitization of Parliament would enable it to be more transparent and provide more opportunities to engage with citizens, including civil society organizations (CSOs) — thus, taking Parliament to the citizens.

Parliament adopted a three-phased approach to accelerate the implementation of an e-Parliament system. Firstly, an e-Parliament Assessment was conducted on existing Parliamentary digital tools, systems, processes and capacity. The assessment proposed recommendations to increase digital tools. Secondly, this Namibia e-Parliament Strategy was prepared. It was informed by the results and recommendations of the e-Parliament Assessment. The third phase will focus on the implementation of the strategy.

The development of the e-Parliament Strategy is aligned with the strategic objectives in the National Assembly's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. Specifically, the following strategic objectives:

- Enhancing democracy through Parliamentary strengthening;
- Improving the organization through effective management of procedures and functioning of the National Assembly;
- Improving human resource management and business processes for effective service delivery;

- Enhancing stakeholder engagement and cooperation; and
- Improving information, communications, research, and library and ICT services.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Provide an overarching reference to guide all digital adoption and implementation decisions, particularly infrastructure, digital services, budgetary allocations, and the people that will drive the Strategy;
- Set ICT directions and priorities for Parliament that align with the institutions' core functions, as well as the need to connect with citizens; and
- Establish an agreed understanding of Parliament's digital direction and priorities for the next five years.

The implementation of the strategy is expected to improve the Parliament's capacity to effectively engage in its core functions of law-making, representation, and oversight. Specifically, the effective implementation of the interventions in the Strategy will: (i) enable the MPs to have easy access to a wide range of information and knowledge resources, thus aiding them in making informed decisions and fulfilling their responsibilities; (ii) equip parliamentary committees with appropriate technology to perform their responsibilities more effectively; (iii) create platforms to increase engagement with citizens; and (iv) provide Parliamentary Staff with robust platforms that will make it easier and quicker to process and access documents, as well as streamline Secretariat processes.

2. STRATEGY FORMULATION APPROACH

The development of the strategy evolved from the following four building blocks:

1. Review of the e-Parliament Assessment Report to determine the strategic pillars, objectives and interventions;
2. Deciding and designing a strategy framework architecture;
3. Identifying and applying key guiding principles; and
4. Consultations with Parliament's management and stakeholders. This included consultations with the Speaker and senior management from the National Assembly and the National Council during a workshop hosted at Parliament in April 2022, and consultations with Parliament's key stakeholders, including MPs, development partners, CSOs, and media representatives.

2.1. The e-Parliament Assessment Report

The e-Parliament Assessment Report provided the foundation for designing the Strategy. The assessment was prepared using a consultative approach, including questionnaires, interviews and a desk review. It was based on pillars in the e-Parliament 2020 Report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The Report took stock of the current state of the e-Parliament in Namibia and identified several challenges. Most importantly, it made five priority recommendations for consideration by Parliament to accelerate the adoption of additional technologies. They include the following:

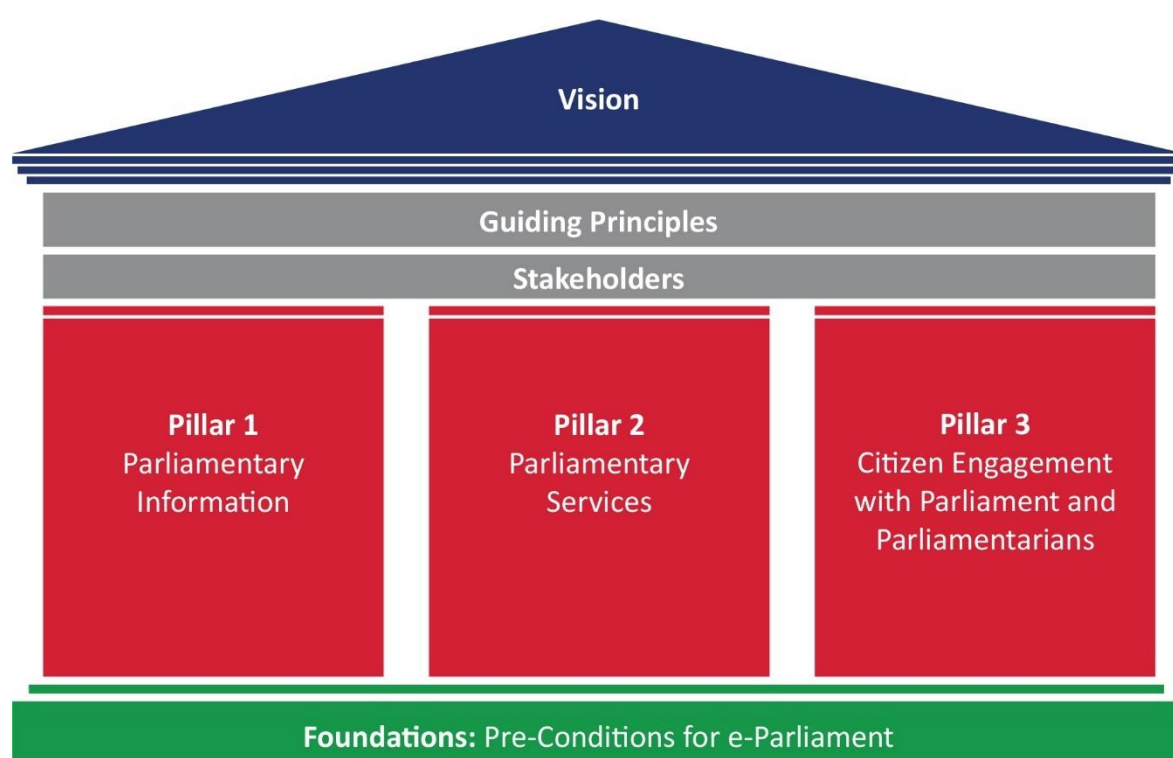
1. Implement the pre-conditions necessary for the effective roll-out of the e-Parliament system.
2. Digitize parliamentary information for easy access by users, and recruit research staff to support MPs and citizens.
3. Provide digital skills development for Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff.
4. Enhance digital services for the chambers and committees.
5. Develop and implement a formal citizen engagement strategy based on a more cost-effective use of digital technologies.

These key priority recommendations informed the determination of the pillars, as well as the foundation of the e-Parliament Strategy.

2.2. Strategy Framework

The Parliament used a strategic framework underpinned by the “metaphor” of a House. The framework comprises the Vision, which articulates the digital aspirations of the Parliament; three strategic pillars with strategic interventions that need to be implemented to achieve the Vision; and the foundation, which embodies the pre-conditions that are critical for the successful implementation of the e-Parliament system. As noted, the foundation and pillars are based on the recommendations contained in the e-Parliament Assessment. These are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2. e-Parliament Strategy Framework¹



2.3. Guiding Principles

The Strategy is underpinned by five key guiding principles. These are described below:



Alignment with the National Assembly and National Council’s Strategic plans and goals: The Strategy is informed and driven by strategic goals contained in both the National Assembly and National Council’s Strategic Plans. They constitute the source from which this Strategy is derived and aligned.

¹ Source: Prepared by Parliament team with support of the World Bank



Informed by the e-Parliament Assessment: As noted, the Strategy was developed, drawing mainly on the findings and recommendations of the e-Parliament Assessment.



Stakeholder centric: The strategic pillars, objectives and interventions were developed from a stakeholder perspective, drawing on the needs of the Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Staff, development partners, and citizens, with a focus on their expectations and interests.



Partnership: The need for the Parliament and its stakeholders to collaborate to facilitate successful implementation of the strategy.

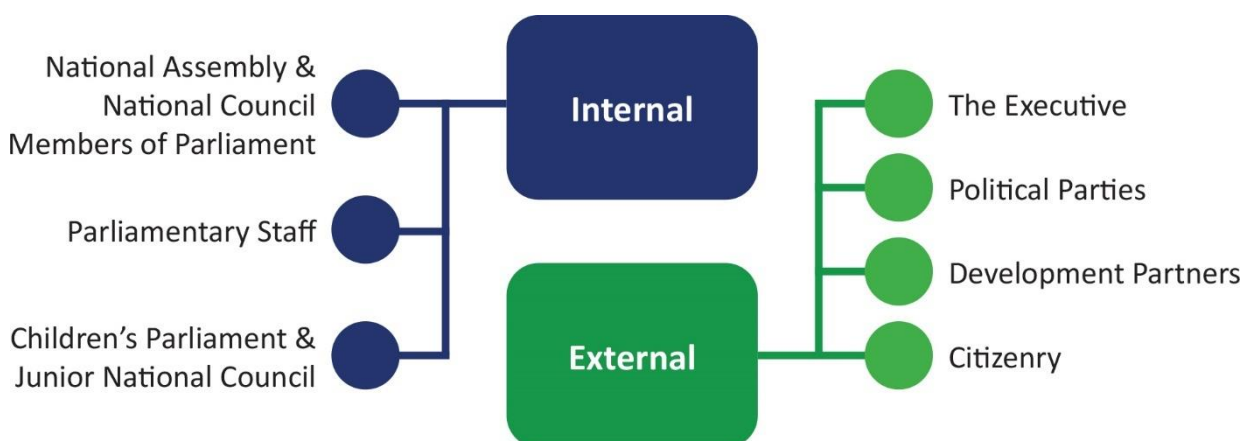


Sustainable interventions and outcomes: Identify and agree on innovative, scalable, and sustainable interventions that will enable the Parliament to effectively achieve its goals.

2.4. Stakeholders

The design of the strategy involved extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders to consider their needs, expectations and interests. The stakeholders were categorized into two categories, namely internal and external. Figure 3 presents a brief overview of the two groups.

Figure 3. e-Parliament Stakeholders²



² Source: Prepared by Parliament team with support of the World Bank

The internal stakeholders are the users of digital services within the Parliament of Namibia. They include:

- The National Assembly and the National Council: Parliamentarians require tools and services that enable them to execute their duties effectively. This includes obtaining quality and timely information from the executive, staff, and citizens. It also includes the ability to effectively perform their parliamentary functions and engage with citizens.
- Parliamentary Staff: Staff require reliable and secure digital tools, services and infrastructure that support the daily operations of Parliament.
- The Children's Parliament and the Junior National Council: The Children's Parliament and the Junior National Council require cost-effective ways to meet, gather perspectives from their constituents, and share this information with Parliament. They also monitor the latter's use of this information.


The external stakeholders are the actors who access Parliament's information and/or interact with Parliament on a regular basis. Parliament is the custodian of records on behalf of these stakeholders. They include:

- **The Executive:** The Executive requires a safe and efficient way to submit information to Parliament to advance the government's agenda, as well as to ensure that the business of government and the country is properly carried out.
- **Political Parties:** Parliament requires the input of the political parties to advance the legislative agenda. As such, it needs an efficient/effective mechanism for using digital tools.
- **The Citizenry:** Parliament exists to represent citizens. For their part, citizens need to be able to engage with their representatives to communicate their desires and concerns, as well as provide feedback concerning the quality of services provided by both Parliament and the Executive. They also require information provided digitally to monitor the Parliament.

The Parliament's management hosted a workshop with the Speaker and senior management, the purpose of which was to obtain information required to develop the strategy. The workshop was facilitated by the World Bank. In addition, several consultations were held with the Members of Parliament, CSOs, Development Partners and the media to obtain their views.

3. THE VISION, STRATEGIC PILLARS, OBJECTIVES, AND INTERVENTIONS

3.1. Vision



Modern and reliable digital technologies to achieve a democratic and citizen-centered Parliament

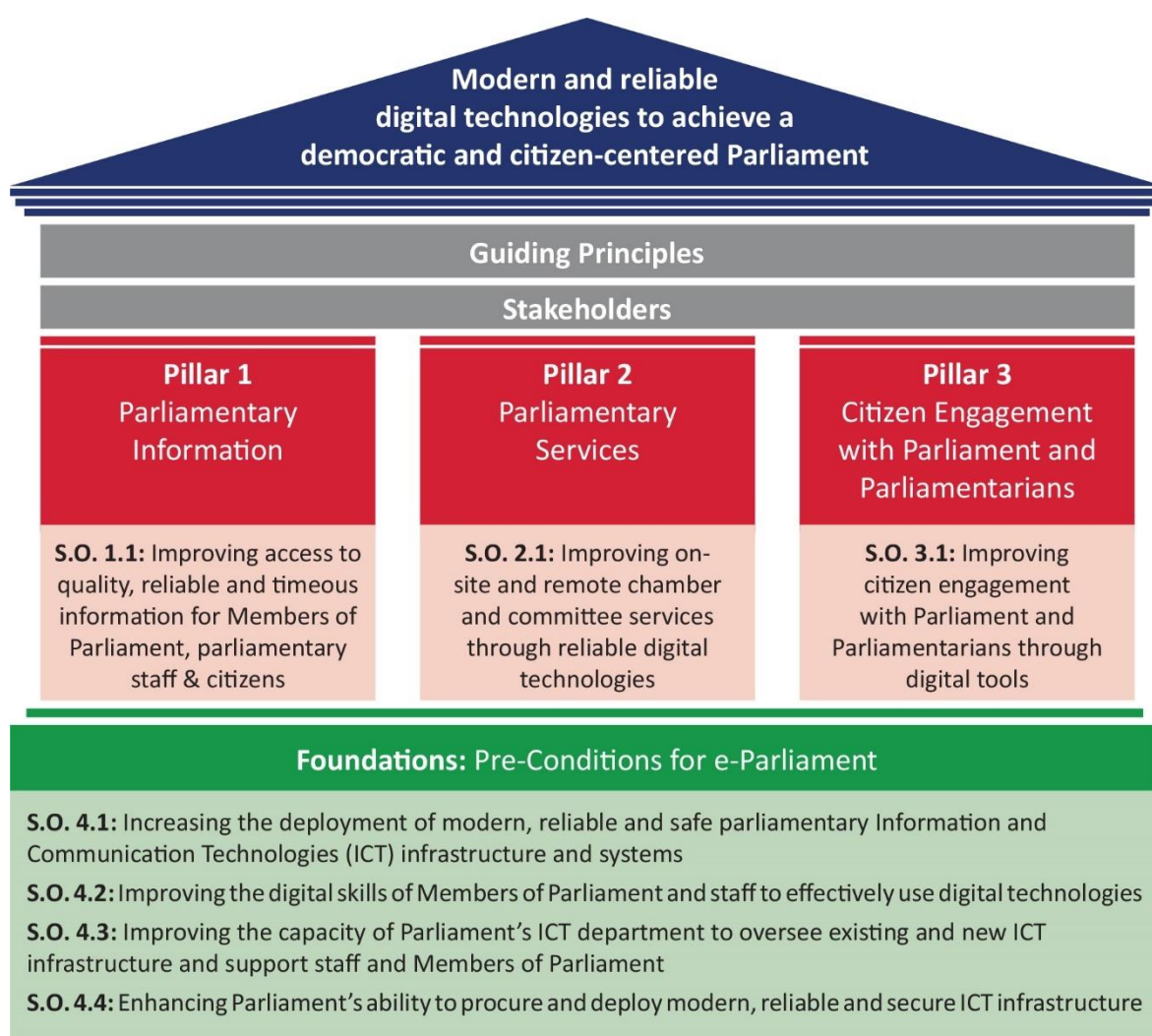
The vision serves as an aspiration of the adoption of digital technologies by the Parliament. The vision is aligned to that of the National Assembly and the National Council. It was also informed and validated by stakeholders consulted during the strategy development process.

3.2. Strategic Pillars, Objectives, and Interventions

The achievement of the vision is anchored in three pillars and a foundation. As summarized in Figure 4, the pillars are the focal points of the Strategy. As such, they are the areas where digital technology can transform Parliament. The pillars include (1) Parliamentary Information, (2) Parliamentary Services, and (3) Citizen Engagement with Parliament and Parliamentarians. The foundation includes the cross-cutting pre-conditions for effective implementation of digital technologies. Specifically, these include conditions, such as developing digital skills; the deployment of modern, reliable, and safe parliamentary ICT infrastructure and systems; and improving the capacity of the ICT Directorate.

Each pillar and the foundation include strategic objectives and interventions to achieve the stipulated objective. Each strategic objective discusses the barriers to digitization of the Parliament. This is followed by the interventions that will resolve these barriers. The interventions in the pillars are targeted, whereas the interventions in the foundations are cross-cutting.

Figure 4. Strategy Framework: Vision, Pillars, and Objectives



PILLAR 1: PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

Objective 1.1. Improving access to quality, reliable and timely information for MPs, parliamentary staff, and citizens

The Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Staff and citizens require easy access to quality and reliable information to improve the law-making process and public understanding of the activities of parliamentarians. The MPs require information from a variety of sources to empower them to make effective decisions and fulfil their law-making mandates. This includes access to the budgets and financial statements of the government's Offices, Ministries and Agencies (OMAs), which enable parliamentarians to evaluate and monitor budget proposals and implementation. It also includes access to committee reports, documents from CSOs, relevant books, as well as historical parliamentary resources, such as

plenary minutes and speeches. With efficient access to this information — and dedicated staff that can support independent analysis and interpretation — the MPs can make more informed decisions. Citizens require access to parliamentary information to understand the work of parliamentarians and enhance the quality of their engagement with MPs. Parliamentary Staff require quality information to provide valuable and informed support to the MPs.

The Namibia Parliament faces barriers that hinder easy access to information. Specifically, these include the following:

1. The Parliament’s library and other resources are minimally digitized and maintained primarily in hard-copy formats. This prevents easy and remote access to these resources. It is compounded by the absence of a formal policy or framework for appropriately managing documents in digital format.
2. The Parliament has limited direct access to timely information concerning public budgets and financial information from the OMAs. This impedes the work of the MPs, who require this information to evaluate and monitor budgets during the oversight and law-making processes.
3. There is a shortage of research staff and research support facilities needed by citizens and MPs. The existence of such a resource would help the MPs with analyzing information and guide them to where relevant information is accessible.

The following four key interventions will be implemented to achieve the strategic objective and address the challenges described above (Table 1).

Table 1. Interventions to Improve Access to Quality, Reliable and Timely Information

#	Intervention
1	Design and approve a policy and framework for managing documents in digital format, as well as data governance.
2	Digitize library books and other relevant documentation and upload them onto a portal that provides users (MPs and citizens) with the ability to search and obtain the required information. Include links to the e-library on the Parliament’s intranet.
3	Interconnect the Parliament’s system to Information Technology (IT) systems of government OMAs to facilitate access to and transfer of information required for the Parliament to fulfil its mandate.
4	Recruit more researchers, with some dedicated to the library to support MPs and citizens.

PILLAR 2: PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

Objective 2.1: Improving on-site and remote chamber and committee services through reliable digital technologies

The execution of Parliament's functions relies on infrastructure, systems and processes that enable transparent, efficient, and frequent interactions between MPs. These are critical to achieve informed and collective decision-making by the Parliament and its Standing Committees. This includes infrastructure and tools for registering attendance, online access to information and voting in the chambers and committee meeting rooms, as well as processes governing how these activities are conducted. Likewise, parliamentary infrastructure, systems and processes are needed to ensure representation in decision-making. This would be achieved by enabling the MPs to participate in plenary and committees, regardless of location. Enabling remote participation also prevents the exclusion of MPs who are unable to attend in person.

The Parliament has made commendable progress in the digitization of parliamentary services; however, there are opportunities for further improvement. There are three specific barriers to realizing the opportunities in this pillar:

1. The Taiden conference system in the National Assembly Chamber enables MPs to register their attendance, access electronic documents, and vote using computer terminals in each MP's seat. However, the system lacks remote access functionality. The National Council Chamber and committee rooms do not have similar infrastructure. The Taiden system and existing ICT infrastructure offer a strong foundation for the digitization of Parliament — if it is used more widely and upgraded to improve on- and off-site functionality.
2. In many cases, the law-making and oversight processes are still conducted manually. In some cases, this is due to the preferences for manual and paper-based processes by some MPs.
3. The Standing Rules and Orders (SROs) only allow for physical meetings. The SROs of the National Assembly have recently been amended to allow for the virtual meetings of both the Assembly and the Committees. The National Council is currently revising their SROs to allow for virtual meetings.

The following three key interventions will be implemented to achieve the strategic objective and address the challenges described above (Table 2).

Table 2. Interventions to Improve On-site and Remote Chamber and Committee Services

#	Intervention
1	Develop and approve a framework/guideline, including principles, policies, and practices to regulate virtual sessions and remote working.
2	Install and upgrade the Chamber system in the National Assembly and the National Council to facilitate virtual plenary sessions (virtual parliament), live streaming, and synchronization with external devices, such as the mobile phones of the MPs.
3	Operationalize the revised SROs for the National Assembly to allow for virtual meetings.
4	Revise, approve and implement SROs for the National Council to allow it to conduct its business virtually, as well as allow for hybrid operations.

PILLAR 3: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT WITH PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

Objective 3.1: Improving citizen engagement with Parliament and Parliamentarians through digital tools.

Digital technologies offer low-cost channels that enable citizen participation in parliamentary decisions, improve citizens' visibility of parliamentary activities, and enhance engagements between citizens and Parliamentarians. The proliferation of social media and access to the Internet offer new channels for engagement between Parliament and the citizens. Digital channels enable citizens to voice their opinions to Parliament and MPs. They also allow Parliament and Parliamentarians to engage with citizens, including through support systems where petitions can be raised and managed for the Parliament. The channels include social media, interactive websites that provide citizens with the opportunity to pose questions and access parliamentary resources, news and live-streaming, and television broadcasts. Tools for citizen engagement can improve parliamentary transparency and MP accountability, thus creating closer alignment between parliamentary outcomes and citizen desires.

The Parliament has not fully leveraged the digital platforms to engage its citizens. There are three barriers to realizing the opportunities of this pillar, including the following:

1. Parliamentarians are increasingly using social media to communicate with citizens. However, the communication is uncoordinated and there are minimal two-way interactions between Parliament and citizens. Also, limited citizen access to affordable Internet, as well as a lack of digital skills, negatively impacts the use of digital platforms as communication tools between MPs and citizens. This is partly attributable to the absence of a Parliamentary communications strategy and social media policy. Furthermore, it has

hindered the application of a systematic and effective approach to communicating with citizens.

2. The Parliament's website lacks interactive functionality, which would improve citizen access to information and enable citizens to communicate their perspectives in ongoing parliamentary decisions.
3. The community centers of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in various regions that provide communication platforms between the MPs and citizens have been equipped with computers and access to the Internet. However, they are not fully functional.

The following seven key interventions will be implemented to achieve the strategic objective and address the challenges described above (Table 3).

Table 3. Intervention to Improve Citizen Engagement with Parliament

#	Intervention
1	Develop and implement a parliamentary communications strategy to increase interactions with citizens, CSOs, and the media.
2	Develop a social media policy for use by the Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff.
3	Revise the budget regulations and parliamentary processes to require the engagement of citizens in the budget process.
4	Upgrade the website to include interactive functions and capabilities to allow the Parliament to engage with citizens, including requesting input in law-making and oversight responsibilities.
5	Equip the regional information centers with digital tools, support capacities, and allow the Parliament, MPs, CSOs, and citizens to use the facilities. Ensure the utilization of existing infrastructure.
6	Establish a Parliamentary Radio with links to rural radios so that citizens in remote parts of the country can listen to parliamentary activities and programs.
7	Pilot the implementation of an appropriate and desirable platform or citizen engagement tool. For example, this might include a platform for managing petitions, or a social media bot.

FOUNDATIONS: PRE-CONDITIONS FOR E-PARLIAMENT

The successful deployment of digital technology in Parliament relies on three sets of preconditions. These preconditions are referred to as the foundation. A well-structured

foundation is required to realize the benefits of each pillar and serve as the basis for future digitization in the Parliament. The foundation has three components:

1. **Infrastructure and Systems:** Hard and soft ICT infrastructure required to support the design and operation of modern, reliable, and secure digital technology.
2. **Digital Skills:** The competencies required of Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff to use digital technologies effectively, safely, and confidently.
3. **Management and Oversight:** The ability of the Namibian Parliament to make independent ICT investment decisions, deploy modern and secure technology, and establish a well-capacitated ICT Directorate.

Foundation 1: Infrastructure and Systems

Objective 4.1: Increasing the deployment of modern, reliable, and safe parliamentary ICT infrastructure and systems

The successful use of digital technology in the Parliament requires investments in hard and soft infrastructure and systems. Specifically, there is a need to improve the bandwidth at the Parliament to facilitate the effective use of digital technologies. Modern and scalable storage infrastructure in the cloud, as well as laptops for staff to access the Internet and support MPs — regardless of location, are also necessary for the effective digitization of the Parliament. Investments in systems are as important as investments in infrastructure. Manual secretarial support systems such as Human Resources (HR), payment approvals, and notices and invitations for comments incur avoidable costs and reduce the efficiency of the Secretariat operations. Strengthening IT security policies and procedures would also ensure confidentiality of parliamentary data and increase confidence among the MPs, who currently do not trust parliamentary digital systems. Therefore, they are reluctant to use them. Finally, fit-for-purpose infrastructure and systems will enable secure and efficient digitization, while also reducing costs and securing user trust.

The following five key interventions will be implemented to achieve the strategic objective (Table 4).

Table 4. Interventions to Increase the Deployment of Modern, Reliable and Safe Parliamentary ICT Infrastructure and Systems

#	Intervention
1	Improve bandwidth to facilitate the smooth running of parliamentary digital services.
2	Make a shift to cloud-based data storage for parliamentary information.
3	Provide laptops for staff to allow them to connect remotely and provide support to MPs.

#	Intervention
4	Automate all Secretarial support systems and conduct business process re-engineering.
5	Develop and implement policies and procedures regarding Parliament's IT security (firewalls, passwords, and so on), data protection (Virtual Private Network [VPN] access), and cybersecurity.

Foundation 2: Digital Skills

Objective 4.2: Improving the digital skills of MPs and Parliamentary Staff to effectively use digital technologies

Securing the opportunities offered by e-Parliament requires users to have the skills to adopt and use parliamentary technologies safely and confidently. Parliamentarians are increasingly accustomed to and comfortable with using the Taiden system, emails, and social media for communications. They are also supported by Secretariat IT staff when needed. Despite this, Parliamentarians still vote manually in plenary. Some still also prefer paper-based documents, with 50 percent of surveyed MPs citing a lack of skills and training as the primary challenge in using digital tools to communicate with citizens. This highlights the desire for capacity building. Thus, digital skills development and capacity building will support the safe and scaled use of parliamentary technologies.

The following two key interventions will be implemented to achieve the strategic objective (Table 5).

Table 5. Interventions to Improve the Digital Skills of MPs and Staff

#	Intervention
1	Conduct a detailed digital skills assessment of MPs and Parliamentary Staff.
2	Develop and implement a user-centric and systematic capacity-building program.
3	Conduct refresher training for all MPs on the Taiden Conference system and other digital tools in the Parliament.
4	Parliament to collaborate and participate in digital transformation training at regional and global training hubs, such as the Southern Africa Regional Centre for Innovation.

Foundation 3: Management and Oversight

Objective 4.3: Improving the capacity of the Parliament's ICT Directorate to oversee existing and new ICT infrastructure and support MPs and Parliamentary Staff

A well-capacitated ICT Directorate and the ability to independently make ICT investments will facilitate agility and ensure that ICT investments are effectively maintained and overseen. The ICT Directorate is understaffed, with an average of one staff person serving 65 MPs of National Assembly and 42 MPs of the National Council. There is one IT Director position, one Chief System Administrator, one Senior Analyst Programmer, two System Administrator and one Computer Technician on the staff establishment. IT staff are also stretched because they serve Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff for both National Assembly and National Council as a common (shared) parliamentary service. This creates challenges in the day-to-day maintenance of existing infrastructure and tools. At the same time, it also slows the deployment of new ICT infrastructure and tools.

The following three key interventions will be implemented to achieve the strategic objectives (Table 6).

Table 6. Interventions to Improve the Capacity of the Parliament's ICT Department

#	Intervention
1	Conduct a detailed evaluation of the ICT Directorate function, specifically its role (expectations), human capacity, processes, and systems, and develop a plan to address the gaps.
2	Establish and operate a help desk at the IT Directorate to provide timely technical support to MPs and Parliamentary Staff.

Objective 4.4: Enhancing Parliament's ability to procure and deploy modern, reliable, and secure ICT infrastructure

The absence of a Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) requires Parliament to adopt government-based procurement policies and methodologies for ICT procurement and deployment. This also slows the process of procuring and deploying ICT. Securing independence and an optimized ICT Directorate are critical preconditions for the success of the Strategy (Table 7).

Table 7. Interventions to Enhance Parliament's Ability to Procure and Deploy Modern, Reliable and Secure ICT Infrastructure

#	Intervention
1	Accelerate the establishment of the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) to increase the independence of the Parliament. The PSC would also facilitate the adoption of Parliament-specific, agile practices in designing, procuring, and deploying ICT.

4. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The successful execution of the Strategy relies on five additional mechanisms and considerations, as highlighted below.

4.1. Prioritized Implementation Plan

The strategic interventions are prioritized and will be implemented over five years. The interventions have been allocated to specific time frames for execution, thus enabling a prioritized approach to implementation. Appendix 1 sets out the strategic objectives, timelines for implementing each intervention, and the party/parties responsible for implementing each intervention. These timelines comprise: short-term (less than two years); medium-term (between two to four years); and long-term (four to five years).

4.2. Institutional Arrangements

An effective governance structure will be key to ensuring timely implementation, allocation of responsibilities, and enabling of monitoring. This Strategy's governance structure has two committees, as depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5. e-Parliament Strategy Governance Structure



E-PARLIAMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

The e-Parliament Steering Committee is responsible for overarching leadership and strategic oversight. The Committee is key to ensuring coordination and providing guidance in resolving unforeseen implementation issues and challenges. The Committee will also need to

meet with internal and external stakeholders, as needed. For example, this includes the Children's Parliament, the Junior National Council, as well as the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology, the Ministry of Finance, CSOs, the media, and development partners.

The Steering Committee will be co-chaired by the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council. Steering Committee members will include the Chief Whip of the majority party, and the Chief Whip of the minority party. It will also include the Secretaries of the National Assembly and the National Council, as well as both of the e-Parliament Implementation Coordinators. The Implementation Coordinators also chair the E-Parliament Implementation Committee. They serve as the IT Director and a Director of an appropriate directorate. If the IT Director position remains vacant, a suitable alternative should be elected by the Chairs of the Steering Committee.

E-PARLIAMENT IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

The e-Parliament Implementation Committee is responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the strategy. The Implementation Committee will be responsible for the day-to-day execution of the strategy, as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. As such, it will report on implementation issues, including the status, barriers, and successes. It will be chaired by the implementation coordinators, who are responsible for supporting the stakeholders in charge of implementation, as highlighted in the Appendix. They are also responsible for monitoring and reporting on implementation to the Steering Committee. Members of the Implementation Committee include senior representatives from each of the National Assembly and National Council Secretariat directorates involved in implementation. Therefore, the Implementation Committee will have expertise in technical and other domains.

4.3. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Designing and implementing an effective performance monitoring and evaluation framework and process will be key to achieving the objectives of the Strategy. The framework will facilitate determination of quality performance indicators, collecting, as well as the recording and reporting of the performance information. It will also facilitate the timely reviewing of the actual performance of the indicators, and taking appropriate actions as needed.

The e-Parliament Strategy Implementation Committee will determine the indicators which shall be approved by the e-Parliament Strategy Steering Committee. The indicators should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART). As such, they should facilitate the capturing of the impact of the strategic interventions. With the support of the

Parliament Secretariat, the Committee will design a system to collect, record and report on the performance information. The performance data should be recorded and reported on a regular basis. Transparent reporting mechanisms will be key to resource mobilization, as highlighted in sub-section 4.4 below. The Implementation Committee will also regularly review the achievements of the indicators and put in place appropriate measures to address challenges that may be hindering the achievement of the indicators.

4.4. Risks and Mitigation Measures

Several risks are likely to impede the smooth roll-out of the Strategy. These factors and associated mitigating measures are outlined below in Table 8.

Table 8. Risk and Mitigation Measures

Risk	Mitigation Measures
Institutional Barriers: The major institutional barrier is the absence of a Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC). This makes Parliament dependent on the Executive for its digital needs, as well as for its human resources and, to some extent, its budgetary needs.	The e-Parliament strategy recommends fast tracking the establishment of the PSC — one of the key pre-conditions of the e-Parliament system.
Inter-Chamber and Inter-departmental challenges: Lack of effective coordination, collaboration and communication between the two Houses of Parliament and various Directorates of the two Houses may negatively impact strategy implementation. Specifically, it may result in a lack of ownership of the strategy, as well as a lack of clarity concerning responsibilities related to the implementation of various interventions.	The e-Strategy implementation governance structure is expected to address the coordination, collaboration, and communication challenges. An e-Parliament strategy Implementation Coordinator will be appointed by the Speaker and Chairperson to oversee the implementation of the strategy.
Resistance to Change: Despite the significant digital progress made by the Parliament, there still exist pockets of resistance to technology — both among Members and staff. This “techno-phobia” needs to be resolved for the effective implementation of the Strategy.	The Strategy identifies the need for skills development, which can resolve capacity-related barriers to resistance to change. These interventions are a priority and should be complemented by participatory strategy implementation and change management processes that create awareness. They

Risk	Mitigation Measures
	should also include continuous stakeholder consultation and feedback.
Resource Constraints: Lack of adequate financial resources to fund the implementation of the Strategy.	Parliament will develop and implement a financial resource mobilization strategy, targeted to secure financial resources from the government and development partners.
Citizen limitations: The inability of citizens to engage with Parliament and MPs due to the high cost of data and limited digital skills.	The Parliament's leadership will engage with and ask the Executive Branch to accelerate Namibia's digital transformation through: (i) implementing reforms to reduce the cost of internet connectivity; and (ii) improving digital skills capacity across the public service.

4.5. Financial Resource Mobilization

Sufficient financial resources are critical to the successful implementation of the Strategy. The Parliament will design a financial resource mobilization plan, setting out how to secure the resources. At a minimum, the plan will aim to secure sufficient financial resources from the government and development partners.

Parliament shall incorporate the e-Parliament interventions in the Parliament's budget planning phase to secure the necessary resources from government funding.

Parliament shall explore funding from the development partners, especially those supporting other parliamentary reforms. In this regard, once approved, the Parliament shall present the e-Parliament strategy and its implementation plan to the development partners and request implementation support.

ANNEX 1. PRIORITIZED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Table 9 presents an overview of the Strategy’s prioritized implementation plan. This implementation plan is discussed in more detail in Section 3. An explanation of the prioritization framework is discussed in Section 4.

The timelines in Table 9 comprise: short-term (less than two years); medium-term (between two to four years); and long-term (four to five years).

Table 9. Costed prioritized implementation plan

Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Estimated cost (US\$)
Pillar 1: Parliamentary Information			
Objective 1.1: Improving access to quality, reliable and timely information for MPs, parliamentary staff, and citizens			
Design and approve a policy and framework for managing documents in digital format, as well as data governance.	Short-term	Design: National Assembly (NA) Research, Information and Technology Services. Approval: NA and National Council (NC) Secretaries, Management: NA and NC Secretaries	10,000
Digitize library books and other relevant documentation and upload them to a portal that provides users (MPs and citizens) with access and the ability to search and obtain the required information. Include links to the e-library on the Parliament’s intranet.	Short-term	NA Research, Information and Technology Services; NC Research and Information Services	200,000

Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Estimated cost (US\$)
Interconnect the Parliament's system to information technology (IT) systems of government Offices, Ministries and Agencies (OMAs) to facilitate access to and transfer of information that Parliament will require to fulfill its mandate.	Medium-term	IT	50,000
Recruit more researchers, with some dedicated to the library to support MPs and citizens.	Medium-term	Human Resources (HR)	320,000 ³

Pillar 2: Parliamentary Services

Objective 2.1: Improving on-site and remote chamber and committee services through reliable digital technologies

Develop and approve a framework/guideline with principles, policies, and practices to regulate virtual sessions and remote working.	Short-term	NA and NC Committee Services	10,000
Install and upgrade the Chamber system in the National Council and National Assembly to facilitate virtual plenary sessions (virtual parliament), live streaming, and synchronization with external devices, such as the mobile phones of the MPs.	Medium-term	IT; NA and NC Committee Services	700,000
Operationalized the revised Standing Rules and Orders (SROs) to allow Parliament (National Assembly and National Council) to conduct its business virtually.	Short-term	(National Assembly) Approved (still requires NC approval)	Internal staff

³ 3 staff * US\$ 21,500 pa * 5 years

Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Estimated cost (US\$)
Pillar 3: Citizen Engagement with Parliament and Parliamentarians			
Objective 3.1: Improving citizen engagement with Parliament and Parliamentarians through digital tools			
Develop and implement a parliamentary communications strategy to increase interactions with citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the media.	Medium-term	NA Research, Information and Technology Services; NC Research and Information Services	20,000
Develop a social media policy for use by the Parliament, MPs, and staff.	Medium-term	NA Research, Information and Technology Services; NC Research and Information Services; Parliament Library; Committee Services	10,000
Revise the budget regulations and other parliamentary processes to require and facilitate the engagement of citizens in the budget process. Design processes, guidelines, and capacity to facilitate citizen engagement in the budget process	Medium-term	Office of the Secretaries: General Service (Finance); Select Budget Committee	40,000
Upgrade the website to include interactive functions and capabilities to allow the Parliament to engage with citizens, including requesting citizen input in law-making and oversight responsibilities.	Medium-term	IT	50,000

Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Estimated cost (US\$)
Equip the regional community centers with digital tools, support capacities, and allow the Parliament, Members of Parliament (MPs), CSOs, and citizens to use the facilities. Ensure the utilization of existing infrastructure	Medium-term	Ministry of Information and Communication Technology ⁴	140,000 ⁵
Establish a Parliament Radio with links to rural radios so that citizens in remote parts of the country can listen to parliamentary activities and programs.	Medium-term	NA Research, Information and Technology Services; NC Research and Information Services	150,000
Pilot the implementation of an appropriate and desirable platform or tool for citizen engagement. For example, this might include a platform for managing petitions, or a social media bot.	Medium-term	IT; NA and NC Secretariats	50,000
Foundations: Pre-Conditions for e-Parliament			

Objective 4.1: Increasing the deployment of modern, reliable, and safe parliamentary information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure and systems

Improve bandwidth to facilitate the smooth running of parliamentary digital services.	Medium-term	IT	50,000
Shift to cloud-based data storage for parliamentary information.	Short-term	IT	40,000

⁴ MPs to champion; Secretariats to lobby with stakeholders to use more effectively.

⁵ 14 centers at US\$ 10,000@

Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Estimated cost (US\$)
Provide laptops for staff to allow them to connect remotely and provide support to MPs.	Medium-term	IT (procurement specification)	50,000
Automate all Secretariat support systems and conduct business process re-engineering.	Short-term	NA and NC Secretariats ⁶	50,000
Develop and implement policies and procedures regarding Parliament's IT security (firewalls, passwords, and so on), data protection (VPN access), and cybersecurity.	Short-term	IT	50,000

Objective 4.2: Improving the digital skills of MPs and staff to more effectively use digital technologies

Conduct a detailed digital skills assessment for MPs and Parliamentary Staff.	Short-term	NA and NC General Services (Training and Development)	520,000 ⁷
Develop and implement a user-centric and systematic capacity-building program. Conduct refresher training for all MPs on the Taiden Conference system and other digital tools in the Parliament.			
Collaborate and participate in digital transformation training at regional and global training hubs, such as the Southern Africa Regional Centre for Innovation.	Medium-term	IT	30,000

⁶ Dependent on the Parliamentary Service Commission.

⁷ Consultant to conduct digital skills assessment US\$ 20,000 plus budget for capacity building US\$ 100,000 per year.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Estimated cost (US\$)
Objective 4.3: Improving the capacity of the Parliament's ICT Department to oversee existing and new ICT infrastructure and support staff and MPs			
Conduct a detailed evaluation of the ICT Directorate function, specifically its role (expectations), human capacity, processes, and systems, and develop a plan to address the gaps.	Short-term	Human Resources Division and IT	20,000
Establish and operate a help desk at the Directorate to provide timely technical support to MPs and parliamentary staff.	Short-term	IT	20,000 ⁸
Objective 4.4: Enhancing Parliament's ability to procure and deploy modern, reliable, and secure ICT infrastructure			
Accelerate the establishment of the Parliamentary Service Commission to increase the independence of the Parliament. This would facilitate the adoption of Parliament-specific, agile practices in designing, procuring, and deploying ICT.	Medium-term	Office of the Speaker; Office of the Chairperson, NA and NC Secretaries	30,000
Total budget estimate			2,610,000

⁸ Required equipment. Parliament IT staff to manage and operate the help desk.

