

**THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN LIBERIA**  
**Liberian Elections Observers Network/ National**  
**Democratic Institute for International Affairs**  
**A Practical Guide For Voters Education Moderators**



The purpose of this guide and the attached materials is to provide you the *moderator* with a means of facilitating community discussions about the voting process and the importance of the elections.

It is important that you follow the attached agenda closely so that the information you provide is complete and accurate.

## SET UP:

In order to ensure that the discussions are as successful as possible make sure you:

- widely announce the location and time of the discussion
- arrange the location in such a way that as many people as possible can hear what you say. Ideally, the participants should seat in a circle and you should stand as part of the circle.

## MODERATION:

It is important that you treat all the participants as your peers and recognize that everyone has something valuable to say and to add to the discussion. Your role is to keep the discussion going and to encourage everyone to participate. By asking questions you can encourage thoughtful discussions. You are a servant of the participants and it is important that you present the information in a *clear nonpartisan* manner.

When moderating the discussions, you should:

- make sure you thoroughly understand the issues being discussed;
- follow the attached agenda. In doing this you ensure that you discuss all the areas vital to voters' education;
- understand and express the purpose of the session;
- help to create a non-threatening environment by not expressing partisan views and by encouraging the participants to do the same;
- ask the participants questions to ensure that they understand the material;
- listen carefully and help explain participants questions or comments;

- summarize main points and try to relate issues and ideas to examples in your own community;
- demonstrate respect and interest;
- discourage interruption and unproductive criticism; and
- be flexible and creative so as to keep the discussions on track.

## The Purpose of the Training

The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that every Liberian citizen understands the importance and potential impact of the upcoming elections. In order to ensure that the elections are as free, fair, and transparent as possible, the citizens of Liberia must be educated about their rights and responsibilities as voters and the voting process. You as moderator play a crucial role to this end.

## The Discussion Process

It is important that the group establish certain principles and rules for discussion. This will ensure that the discussions are productive and that none of the participants feels intimidated. In order to promote a full discussion, the rules should be based on ideas of freedom of speech and expression, and equality of opportunity.

As the moderator you should remember that it is important:

- that each participant has the opportunity to speak at least once;
- the opinion of each participant is significant and should be respected;
- the discussion groups ARE NOT intended to be debates about specific political party positions; and
- that you establish rules to help govern the discussion process and protect the rights of each of the participant.

### Suggested Discussion Questions\*

1. How should we interact as a group?
2. What happens if we all talk at once and no one listens?
3. Are different opinions important? Why or Why not?
4. What rules are important to establish equal participation in the discussions?\*
5. How can we ensure that partisan opinions do not disrupt the discussion?

\* It often helps if one person, in addition to yourself serves to enforce the rules. Therefore, after the rules are established you might ask for one person to monitor the groups' compliance to the rules.

# VOTER EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S GUIDE

## 1. REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

(Chapter 3: 3.1 - 3.11 of the Special Elections Law for the 1997 Elections)

### a) WHO MAY REGISTER

- Only Liberian citizen.
- Only citizens who are eighteen (18) years old or above

Ask the participants what different documents they might produce to prove their age and citizenship.

In order to prove your citizenship and age you may use a variety of documents such as a passport, driver's license, or birth certificate.

### b) PLACE OR CENTER OF REGISTRATION

- There will be a registration center in every community in the thirteen (13) counties.
- Keep listening to the radio and you will be told where to assemble for registration.
- Keep reading the newspapers for registration sites.
- Keep reading posters and placards for registration sites.

Make sure you are familiar with the location of the polling centers in your area.

### c) TIME OF REGISTRATION

- Registration starts on June 24, 1997 and ends on July 3, 1997.

### d) WHO WILL OBSERVE THE REGISTRATION

- Agents of registered political parties;
- Independent national and international observers; and
- Other non political organizations in Liberia.

### Suggested Questions?

Can someone from another country register to vote in the elections in Liberia?

Can you register to vote the day before elections?

What documents can you use to prove your age?

## 2. VOTER REGISTRATION LIST

### a) VOTER REGISTRATION CARD

- A registration card will be given to each voter upon completion of the registration process.
- The registration card shall be signed by the Registration Officer.
- The registration card shall contain the family name and given names of each voter.
- The registration card will bear the following:
  - The County Code
  - The Center Number; and
  - Voter's Roll Number

Stress the importance of registering as soon as possible and stress the importance of keeping the voter registration card in a safe place.

### b) REGISTRATION ROLL

- Registration Rolls shall be kept by the Registration Officer and shall contain the following:
  - 1) Family name and given name of the voter.
  - 2) Address of the voter.
  - 3) Date of birth of the voter.
  - 4) Age of the voter.
  - 5) Sex of the voter.
  - 6) Names of father and mother of the voter.
  - 7) Roll number of the voter.

### c) LIST OF PUBLIC INSPECTION

A printed copy of the Registration List will be made available for display at all of the voting centers.

### d) CLAIMS FOR REGISTRATION

In the event that there are doubts regarding a person's right to register to vote a claim for registration may be required. The Commission may charge an official with the duty of gathering information about the person wishing to register. The person(s) providing information must do so truthfully and honestly.

- The claim must contain the following:
  - 1) Surname and the given name of the claimant;
  - 2) Age and residence of the claimant;
  - 3) The name of the Registration Center,
  - 4) Signature or right thumb print of the claimant.

The Claims for Registration process allows people who do not have the traditional documents to prove their age and citizenship to register. You should encourage participants in this situation to locate a respected member of their community to provide the necessary claims information.

Suggested Questions?

Can you use your party card to vote?

Can a Liberian citizen 18 years old or older be denied the right to vote?

What can a Liberian citizen 18 years old or older do in the event that she/he has no documents to prove their age?

3. **QUALIFICATIONS FOR OFFICE**  
 (Chapter 4: 4.1 - 4.2 of the Special Elections Law for the 1997 Elections)

a) QUALIFICATIONS

**PRESIDENT**

- a) Must be a natural born Liberian Citizen.
- b) Must be 35 years of age or above.

**VICE PRESIDENT**

- a) Must be a natural born Liberian Citizen.
- b) Must be 35 years of age or above.

**SENATOR**

- a) Must be a natural born Liberian Citizen.
- b) Must be 30 years of age or above

**REPRESENTATIVE**

- a) Must be a natural born Liberian Citizen.
- b) Must be 25 years of age or above.

b) REQUIREMENTS

Former government officials who want to contest any of the positions, must have resigned

from Government on or before February 28, 1997. Those who did not resign cannot be eligible to contest an elected position.

### Suggested Questions?

- Can women hold offices?
- Can someone from another country be a Senator?
- Can someone who is 16 years of age be President?

## CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS

(Chapter 5: 5.1 - 5-11 of the Special Elections Law for the 1997 Elections)

### a) Polling Places:

Polling sites have been established all over the county. The registration sites are the same as the polling sites. It is important for the voter to return to the place where they registered to vote to place their ballot.

Please make sure that you have the most up to date information about the location of the polling sites in your area.

At the polling site each voter will have a separate compartment for voting. This compartment will ensure that each voter can vote in privacy and that his or her vote will not be known to anyone else. The officials at the polling site will ensure that the voters are guaranteed privacy and that their ballot is secret.

### b) Duty of Election Officials

The Magistrate of Elections is responsible for taking all necessary steps to make arrangements for holding the elections.

The Magistrate is responsible for informing the political

parties/coalitions/alliances, the candidates and the voters of the schedule of election activities, the time-table for the electoral process and the general arrangements for taking the poll, the conduct of the election and the duties of parties and candidates.

Please make sure you emphasize that the voter's choice of candidate is private and that no one will know who they voted for. Reassure them that they are not required to put their name or any other identifying marks or information on the ballot.

The Magistrate is responsible for;

- the polling places and the ballot box or boxes, ballots, and all other needed election materials;
- administering the oath to all polling officials;

- arranging for the counting of votes at each polling station and the transportation of the sealed boxes containing the counted ballots along with the writs and tally sheets at the close of the count; and
- ensuring that the security of movement of election materials from one point to another is provided by ECOMOG.

At each polling site there will be a Presiding Officer. This person will be assisted by additional staff and will be the responsible official at the polling site.

There will also be a ballot box at each site. This ballot box will be locked with either security seals or a lock and key. There will be an opening which will allow the ballots to be placed in the box by the voters. This ensures the secrecy of the ballot and the integrity of the process. The sealed boxes ensure that no one can place additional ballots into the box or remove ballots from the box.

There will be several categories of officials at the polling centers. The categories of people are:

- election officers;
- voters for the purpose of casting their vote;
- persons assisting physically incapacitated voters;
- properly appointed representatives of party/coalition/alliance\*;
- national and international monitors, ECOMOG soldiers; and
- the press and other persons that the Commission may approve.

At this point it might be useful to draw a diagram of the people who will be at the polling station. This will assure the voters of the integrity of the voting process. It will also alert them to the fact that a number of people will be in the polling station and that those people are serving in an official capacity and not to determine how they voted or to influence their vote.

The party officials are representatives from each registered political party/coalition/alliance. However, no more than one representative can be present within the polling station at a time.

The party representative cannot speak with the voter. The representative cannot attempt in anyway to influence the voter. The representative cannot in any way attempt to determine for which candidate the voter has voted.

Accredited national and international Observers are present not to influence the vote but to observe the process.



#### d) Closing Day and Counting Procedure:

At the end of the election day, the Presiding Officer and other polling officials, in the presence of the parties/coalitions/alliances representatives, international and domestic observer and ECOMOG security, the Presiding Officer will open the ballot boxes and begin the counting process.

The Presiding Officer will announce each vote cast and then given it to the clerk so that it may be deposited in the ballot box of the parties/coalitions/alliances for whom the vote was cast. This process will continue until all votes are counted.

The total of the votes is then written on a tally sheet in duplicate and signed by the presiding officer and representatives of the parties/coalitions/alliances.

The Presiding Officer will put the tally sheets and the ballots back in the ballot box after they have been counted and re-seal the box in the presence of the parties/coalitions/alliances representatives and international and domestic monitors. The Presiding

It is important to stress that in the event that the results are not announced on July 20th, people should be flexible and understanding.

Officer will transport the re-sealed ballot box to the Magistrate. The Magistrate, accompanied by ECOMOG, and representatives of the parties/coalitions/alliances, international and national observers will deliver the box to the Commissioner. According to the Special Elections Law For the 1997 Elections, the results should be announced within 24 hours of receipt of the final tally of the votes. On July 20, 1997 the results should be announced.

#### Suggested Questions?

- Who will announce the results?
- Will the voters count the ballots?
- Who will be present at the polling sites?

#### **The Voting Process**

**(Chapter 6: 6.1- 6.7 of the Special Elections Law for the 1997 Elections)**

##### a) Who may vote?

- Only Liberian Citizens
- Only Citizens who are 18 years or above
- Only Liberians who have registered to vote

The voter may choose to identify him or herself through a variety of means, such as a passport, birth certificate, or through an elder in the community.

b) Where to Vote?

- You must cast your ballot in the same place where you registered to vote.

c) Identification of the Voter

- Every voter must present an identification card before being permitted to vote. If a representative of a political party/coalition/alliance or an Election Officer challenges a voter. The voter will only be allowed to vote after a positive investigation and upon administration of an oath that the voter has not voted on that day and that they have the right to vote. The vote of the challenged voter will be placed in an envelope marked "CHALLENGED VOTE" before it is placed in the ballot box. The envelope will be marked with the individual's personal details, address, signature, thumb print and the signature of the polling official.

d) Casting a Ballot

- The voter will enter the voting compartment to cast his or her ballot. The voter should mark his or her ballot according to the instructions of the Presiding Officials. In any case the voter must clearly indicate which candidate he or she is casting the ballot for. The voter will then fold the ballot inwards and place it in the ballot box.

The element of secrecy should be emphasized here. The participants should understand that their vote is secret at all times during the voting process.

#### 4. WHAT ARE WE VOTING FOR?

a) We are voting for the leaders who will govern Liberia.

- Those leaders are:
  - a) President
  - b) Vice President
  - c) Senators
  - d) Representatives

b) Elections results

Presidential Elections

How can a presidential candidate be declared a winner?

The presidential elections shall be based on the majoritarian system. A political party should obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast to be declared the winner for the presidential post. If no candidate obtains an absolute majority, a run-off election shall be organized within a period of 14 days. The two candidates with the largest number of valid votes in the first election will contest the run-off election and the candidate obtaining the highest number of valid votes in the second round shall be declared the

winner.

### c) Legislative Elections

The legislative elections shall be based on the basis of Proportional Representation. Seats for the House of the Senate and members of the House of Representatives shall be allocated to political parties/coalitions/alliances, on the basis of Proportional Representation using the country of Liberia as a single constituency.

There are twenty-six (26) members of the Senate and sixty-four (64) members of the House of Representatives. Each Party/Coalition/Alliance shall be awarded the number of seats in the Senate and the House in proportion to the percentage of valid votes won in the first round.

The political parties/coalitions/alliances that have received the highest percentage during these elections shall be invited by the Commission to select their Senators and Representatives.

The selection shall be made on an open list system and will be limited to the lists presented only by the competing parties to the Commission.

## 5. WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE VOTING PROCESS

- to help choose the people you want to be your leaders.
- to re-establish the government in Liberia.
- to create peace and stability in Liberia.
- to ensure that the people for whom you voted are the right people to govern.

## 6. TEN PRINCIPLES FOR VOTING:<sup>\*1</sup>

1. You have a God given right to vote as a citizen of Liberia. It is not a crime to vote. Remember that your vote is secret. It is only between you and your God.
2. You need to know who your leaders will be. The best way to know your leaders is to personally vote them into office.
3. There are so many parties in the race. Watch out for wolves in sheep's clothing. Do not vote for a party without knowing its objectives or what it stands for.
4. Your vote is your power. Exercise it today for a better tomorrow.
5. Do not be misled and vote for a party which offers money, food or t-shirts in exchange for your vote. One who tries this is corrupt, unprincipled and unpatriotic.
6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for their future will be rewarding.

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines were first drafted by Project Vote, Capetown South Africa

- Stand in the rain and sun to vote a leader who will bring development to your country.
7. After seven years of bitter fighting, this election is the only chance we have as a people to decide how peaceful we are to live with one another. Therefore do not sit back and say "it is the people's thing". This thing is for all Liberians irrespective of tribe or religious background.
  8. We are one nation made up of many parties, as our bodies are made up of different parts. Respect and defend the rights for others to vote for the party of their choice. Do not intimidate and assault people for exercising their rights.
  9. To vote is not a right for a few people. It is a right for all. Therefore make the right choice now by voting for a party with integrity and credibility.
  10. Your responsibility does not end on the day of election. Do not expect personal favors from those elected, but watch out for their actions and demand that they fulfill their promises.

### Suggested Questions?

- What should you do if some one one attempts to offer you a bride for your vote?
- Why should you vote?
- Which officials are we electing?
- What is the importance of this election for Liberia?

### CONTESTED ELECTION

(Chapter 7: 7.1 - 7.7 of the Special Elections Law for the 1997 Elections)

#### a) Filing of complaint

Any political party/coalition/alliance unhappy with the Elections Commission conducted the elections is free to do the following:

- File a complaint with the Commission;
- State clearly the nature of the complaint;
- The complaint must be filed no later than three (3) days after the final results of the elections have been announced.

This section is quite complicated. Please be sure to go through it slowly. You might want to go through it twice just to be really sure that the participants understand.

#### b) Investigation and Decision

The Commission will conduct an investigation if it receives a complaint from a political party/coalition/alliance unhappy with the results of the elections. The Commission will conduct an investigation within seven (7) days of receiving the complaint. The Commission will then render a decision. The decision of the Commission will have the following effect:

- If the presidential candidate who was declared the winner is declared not to be duly

- elected, but has already taken office, he/she will immediately cease to hold such office;
- If a person is thought not to be the winner and is declared duly elected to an office, he/she will assume such office immediately; and
- If any election is declared void, a new election will be held.

#### c) Right of Appeal

- Any contestant/party affected by the decision of the Commission, and any contestant/party who is unhappy with the Commission's decision will have the right to have the matter addressed before the Supreme Court of Liberia.
- The contestant/party shall have the right to have the matter addressed by the Supreme Court no later than three (3) days after the decision is rendered.

In the event that a contestant wants to appeal to the Supreme Court they must submit a Bill of Exceptions. The Bill of Exceptions must contain:

- a clear and distinct ground for the complaint and the facts relied upon;
- a statement of the relief sought; and
- be signed by the appealing contestant.

#### d) Hearing and Determination by the Supreme Court

When the Supreme Court receives a complaint it will do the following:

- inform the contestants and the Commission of the time to file their briefs
- set the time on the court calendar when the matter will heard;
- inform the parties of the time of the hearing of arguments; and
- inform the parties of the time the Supreme Court will render its final judgment

#### e) Decision of the Supreme Court

- if the Supreme Court agrees with the decision of the Commission, the Commission shall act to put into effect the mandate of the court; and
- if the Supreme Court rejects the decision of the Commission, for whatever reason, the Commission shall within fifteen (15) days after judgment of the Court execute the mandate of the Supreme Court accordingly.

#### Suggested Questions?

- Can a voter conduct an investigation of a complaint by a political party?
- Who can appeal the decisions of the Commission?
- Who has the final say over the decisions of the Commission?
- If there is a complaint how long does the Commission have to respond?