



Liberia Elections and Political Transitions

National Democratic Institute

Liberia has celebrated more than ten years of peace since its civil war ended in 2003, transitioning from a country seeking stability to one focused on growth and development. A credible general election in 2017 will be an important step towards bolstering citizen participation and restoring voter confidence in democratic governance in Liberia.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is working to increase citizen participation in the electoral process for Liberia's October 10, 2017, presidential and legislative polls. NDI is partnering with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to **promote meaningful civil society engagement in electoral processes** under the five-year United States Agency for International Development- (USAID-) funded Liberia Elections and Political Transitions (LEPT) program.

Civil Society Oversight of Electoral Processes

NDI is partnering with the **Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC)**, a coalition of civic groups dedicated to enhancing the credibility of Liberian elections, to systematically observe electoral processes throughout the election cycle, including:

- Voter registration and exhibition of the voters list;
- Political parties' candidate nomination processes;
- Election preparations and civic education;
- Political party activities during the campaign period;
- Voting and counting processes on election day; and
- Electoral dispute resolution.

The ECC observed the voter registration process and the exhibition of the provisional voters list, deploying 89 trained observers across Liberia's 73 electoral districts. ECC observers visited registration and exhibition offices and completed checklists to ensure that proper procedures were followed, and that citizens were able to register and check their names on the provisional list of voters. Observers transmitted their reports via coded SMS text messages to the ECC headquarters for analysis. The ECC shared the results of its observations publicly to enable the National Elections Commission (NEC) to make needed adjustments to its procedures and provide political parties, candidates, and voters with information to evaluate the credibility of the process.

The ECC has trained and deployed 32 observers to monitor the campaign period including civic and voter education

campaigns, political party activities, and election preparations. On election day, the ECC will systematically deploy observers to voting centers across the country to monitor the conduct of the polls.

Following the election, the ECC will also compile lessons learned and advocate for electoral reforms.

Issue-Based Voter Education

NDI is assisting a network of community radio stations and four civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver country-wide civic and voter education. NDI's CSO partners are working across Liberia to implement voter education and engagement strategies that target marginalized groups who are less likely to participate in the electoral process, including women, urban youth and rural communities. NDI's partners aim to identify issues that matter to voters and encourage voters to weigh candidates' positions on the issues.



A community member reads the community's platform during a candidate forum. The platform contains the priority issues identified and voted on by the community.

- *The Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR)* broadcasts a weekly election radio program highlighting important voter information and discussions on election issues. Through its community radio network, the broadcast reaches all of Liberia's fifteen counties, including many rural areas.
- *The Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)* facilitates community-based informational dialogues and dramatic performances in Margibi and Bong Counties to promote the importance of peaceful elections and encourage political participation among rural communities;
- *The Liberia Labour Congress (LLC)* mobilizes union networks through worker-to-worker voter education and discussions throughout Liberia to increase political participation among first-time voters and rural Liberians;
- *The National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE)* implements phonebanking and canvassing

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operations, as well as peer-to-peer voter education strategies and “call-to-action” radio programming, in central Liberia to reach youth and first-time voters; and

- *The Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA)* organizes issue-based public forums and community outreach events to increase women’s participation in the electoral process in Liberia’s remote southeastern counties.

NDI and its partners have reached nearly 400,000 Liberians during the voter registration and exhibition periods and will continue to encourage the participation of politically-marginalized communities in the election. During the campaign period, NDI is supporting CJPS and SEWODA to conduct a series of dialogues and candidate forums to help communities ensure that candidates are listening and responding to their priority issues.



Women discuss the voter registration process in a Liberian market

Increasing Women’s Engagement in Political Processes

Liberian women continue to face considerable challenges in participating in Liberia’s political system as citizens, political party activists, civil society leaders, and elected officials. In January 2017, NDI launched “Getting Ready to Lead” (GRTL), an intensive leadership program to train and support a network of prospective women political leaders. Since the program began, NDI has trained more than 200 party activists, campaign managers, civil society leaders, and aspiring candidates, 68 of whom received nominations to run for office in October. NDI has provided the women with general campaign and leadership skills, including campaign management, mobilization, fundraising, communication and policy development.

Additionally, NDI is supporting a group of women activists to develop and promote the 2017 Liberia Women’s Manifesto (LWM). The LWM highlights issues most

relevant in women’s lives, including topics such as empowering women in the economy, promoting healthy families, building safer communities, and developing political rights and leadership opportunities for women. Leaders and activists are using the LWM as a tool to engage more women in the electoral process, encouraging political parties and candidates to include these issues in their campaign platforms.

Funding

NDI’s support for civil society engagement in the 2017 electoral process is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).



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