

National Democratic Institute

Liberia Elections and Political Transitions

The 2017 presidential and legislative elections marked a milestone for Liberia as the first peaceful democratic transfer of executive power in the nation since 1944. The National Democratic Institute (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.

During the 2017 elections, NDI partnered with a coalition of civic groups in Liberia to train and deploy observers to monitor the electoral cycle, supported civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver civic and voter education throughout Liberia and facilitated increased participation of women in political processes through training prospective women leaders. Following the elections, NDI is supporting citizen observers to monitor the post-election and political transition periods and create momentum for electoral reform in Liberia, as well as working with established and emerging women leaders to ensure women's participation in political processes.

Civil Society Engagement in Electoral Processes

NDI is partnering with the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), a coalition of civic groups dedicated to enhancing the credibility of Liberian elections by systematically observing electoral processes throughout the election cycle. The ECC deployed nearly 2,200 observers to polling places throughout Liberia for the first-round elections and 1,100 observers for the runoff election.



The ECC's data hub on October 10, 2017

As the 2017 election represents the first democratic executive transfer of power since 1944, there is no precedent for handing over power to a new administration. NDI is providing technical support to the ECC to establish benchmarks for monitoring the political transition process. Moreover, the ECC is uniquely positioned to build momentum with stakeholders for comprehensive electoral reform that incorporates citizen perspectives. NDI is supporting the ECC to collect citizen and stakeholder feedback on the 2017 electoral process and develop a strategic plan to advocate for electoral reform.

Issue-Based Voter Education

Ahead of the 2017 polls, NDI supported a network of community radio stations and four CSOs to deliver country-wide civic and voter education campaigns. NDI's CSO partners include the Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR), the Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS), the Liberia Labor Congress (LLC), the National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE), and the Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA). NDI and its partners reached 1,256,307 Liberians, including at least 488,396 women, through civic and voter education campaigns during the 2017 electoral process.

In the post-election period, NDI is conducting a post-election CVE assessment to identify successful strategies in order to develop recommendations to improve CVE in future elections and inform the broader electoral reform process.

During the campaign period, NDI worked with its partners and community based organizations (CBOs) to facilitate community dialogues in 16 of the most rural districts in six counties, areas less likely to be reached by other CVE efforts. Participants in the sessions prioritized the issues important to their community



Community members discuss the most pressing issues in their community during a community dialogue

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Getting Ready to Lead (GRTL) participants emphasize the importance of voting to their peers

and developed their own issue platforms. Candidates from the 16 districts signed pledges to work towards addressing the issues outlined in these platforms. In the post-election period, NDI is supporting partners to facilitate another series of dialogues bringing together communities with their newly elected representatives to foster accountability and to increase representatives' understanding of community priorities.

Increasing Women's Engagement in Political Processes

Women continue to face considerable challenges 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. Ahead of the 2017 elections, NDI trained over 200 party activists, campaign managers, civil society leaders, and aspiring candidates – 68 of whom received nominations to run for office in October. Following the election, NDI is continuing to provide women in elected office with the tools to be leaders

in the legislature through a series of skills training workshops.

In December 2016, a diverse group of Liberian women created the Liberia Women's Policy Platform (LWPP), a document that outlines policies to improve the lives of Liberian women and their families. Women candidates and activists used the platform during the 2017 election to engage citizens, political parties and lawmakers and to conduct campaigns encouraging women to register to vote and cast their ballots on election day. Following the election, women organizers are championing gender-related election reforms, working to increase women's participation in decision making roles and advocating for policy solutions to urgent issues affecting women.

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