



National Democratic Institute

Liberia

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. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is implementing programs to increase voter participation, conduct international observation of the electoral process, and support political party engagement in the October 10, 2017, presidential and legislative polls.

Promoting Civil Society Engagement in the 2017 Electoral Process

A credible general election in 2017 will be an important step towards bolstering citizen participation and restoring voter confidence in democratic governance in Liberia. NDI is partnering with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) under a five-year United States Agency for International Development- (USAID-) funded program called Liberia Elections and Political Transitions (LEPT) to **promote meaningful civil society engagement in electoral processes.**

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 and voter education;
- Political party activities during the campaign period;
- Voting and counting processes on election day; and
- Electoral dispute resolution.

Following the election, NDI will support the ECC to compile lessons learned and advocate for electoral reforms. By providing reliable and credible updates on electoral processes, the ECC is working to continue its development as the country's premier civic election monitoring coalition.

Issue-Based Voter Education

NDI is also aiding a network of community radio stations and four civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver country-wide voter education targeting marginalized groups that 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.

The partners include:

- *The Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR)*;
- *The Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)*;

- *The Liberia Labour Congress (LLC)*;
- *The National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE)*; and
- *The Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA)*.

NDI and its partners 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 also supporting CJPS, SEWODA, and their partner community-based organizations to conduct a series of community dialogues to encourage issue-based conversations between citizens and candidates.



Liberian woman activist presents the 2017 Liberia Women's Manifesto during a community meeting.

Increasing Women's Engagement in Political Processes

Women continue to face considerable challenges participating in Liberia's political system as citizens, political party leaders, and elected officials. In January 2017, NDI launched "Getting Ready to Lead" (GRTL), a leadership program to train prospective women political leaders. Since the program began, NDI has trained over 200 party activists, campaign managers, civil society leaders, and aspirant candidates – 68 of whom received nominations to run for office in October. The GRTL program has prepared these women to take the lead through a series of trainings on 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 Policy Platform (LWPP). The LWPP 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 leadership opportunities for women. Leaders and activists are utilizing the LWPP as a tool

to engage more women in the electoral process and encourage political parties and candidates to include these issues and the LWPP's proposed policy solutions in their campaign platforms.

Supporting Credible and Peaceful Elections through Observation

In January 2017, NDI launched a 14-month international election observation program. The program aims to enhance the integrity of the election process by promoting public confidence, exposing irregularities and fraud, and mitigating electoral violence. NDI is partnering with the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) and the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) to observe the 2017 electoral process before, during, and after the October polls. NDI's observation will focus on three critical issue areas: electoral administration and the legal framework, gender, and the role of the media.



Liberian voter registrar explains registration processes to mission delegates.

Pre-Election Observation

In February 2017, NDI conducted the first of two pre-election assessment missions to evaluate election preparations; identify concerns; and offer recommendations to contribute to more peaceful and credible elections. The February mission found that voter education and logistical preparation efforts must intensify to ensure legitimate polls in October. A similar mission will take place in September. NDI is also deploying long-term thematic analysts and long-term observation teams around the country during the campaign period to meet with voters, county-based election officials, and political actors to assess election preparations and the political environment.

Election Day Observation and Post-Election Monitoring

On election day, NDI will deploy approximately 34 international delegates to observe the polls throughout the country. Delegates will meet with national and local stakeholders in the days prior to the election and visit polling stations on election day to observe polls open and close, the voting process, vote counting, and tabulation. Long-term observers and analysts will continue to monitor election results and the resolution of election disputes in the post-election period.

Post-Election Electoral Reform

During the post-election period, NDI will work with citizen monitors to facilitate dialogue among Liberian election stakeholders to identify lessons learned from the election and set priorities for electoral reform.

Strengthening Political Parties Program

NDI is implementing a USAID-funded program to strengthen the capacity of political parties to participate in credible and peaceful elections in 2017. NDI provides technical assistance to all interested and registered political parties through multiparty trainings and discussions.

Political Party Pollwatching

Political party pollwatching is important to ensure credible and peaceful elections. Pollwatching can:

- Encourage participation by party members;
- Deter electoral fraud; and
- Collect evidence from polling stations to use in the electoral dispute resolution process.

NDI is training observers for party pollwatching and provides templates for training handbooks and election day checklists. Over the last thirty years, NDI has trained more than 500,000 party poll-watchers in over 50 countries.

Debates

In order to help parties have a structured approach in assisting their candidates for debates, NDI will provide multiparty seminars for party communications teams. The seminars will cover core debate elements such as:

- Debate preparation and research;
- Speaking tips; and
- Effective messaging.

Funding

NDI's current programs in Liberia are funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

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