

National Democratic Institute

Liberia

The 2017 presidential and legislative elections represented a milestone for Liberia, marking the first peaceful democratic transfer of executive power since 1944. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is implementing programs to promote meaningful civil society engagement in the political process and strengthen political parties' capacities to participate in electoral processes and respond to the needs of Liberian citizens.

Promoting Civil Society Engagement in Political and Electoral Processes

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 by systematically observing electoral and political processes. 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.

As Liberia undergoes its 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 civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver country-wide civic and voter education campaigns, reaching 1,256,307 Liberians, including at least 488,396 women. In the post-election period, NDI is conducting a post-election civic and voter education (CVE) assessment to identify successful strategies in order to develop recommendations to improve CVE in future elections and



The ECC's data hub on October 10, 2017.

inform the broader electoral reform process.

During the campaign period, NDI worked with its partners and a group of community based organizations (CBOs) to facilitate community dialogues in 16 of the most rural districts in six counties. Candidates from the 16 districts signed pledges to work toward addressing issues of community importance outlined in these platforms. In the post-election period, NDI is working with partners to facilitate dialogues between communities and 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 leaders, and elected officials. In January 2017, NDI launched "Getting Ready to Lead" (GRTL), a leadership program to train prospective women political leaders. 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. 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

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solutions to urgent issues affecting women.

Strengthening Political Parties Program

NDI is implementing a USAID-funded program to strengthen the capacity of political parties to participate in Liberia's electoral and political processes. NDI is providing technical assistance to all registered political parties in Liberia in a variety of capacities.

ENHANCING INTERNAL DEMOCRACY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Following the 2017 elections, NDI and its international party experts are working with the leadership of selected political parties to conduct comprehensive party assessments and design five-year party modernization plans. NDI will design targeted assistance including a political party academy to train party leaders and staff in strategic planning, platform development, constituency outreach, membership recruitment and party operations.

To increase the participation of women and youth in politics, NDI will conduct a campaign workshop to help youth and women leaders to develop the organizational skills valuable to political parties. NDI also plans to build parties' capacities to incorporate citizen perspectives by introducing the benefits of public opinion research and other citizen outreach strategies.

INCREASING PEACEFUL EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Prior to the 2017 elections, NDI introduced party pollwatching training workshops as an opportunity for political parties to engage their constituents and improve party structures at the national and grassroots levels. NDI conducted 10 party pollwatching workshops and trained 169 pollwatching Master Trainers representing 23 political parties. NDI will continue to work with parties in advance of the 2020 Senatorial Elections to expand their membership recruitment, identify and develop additional party leaders and foster improved intra-party communication, information sharing and data management.

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY TO CONSTITUENTS

NDI is working with legislators and political parties to build their capacity to respond to the needs of constituents. In February 2018, NDI facilitated a legislative orientation for all elected



Lawmakers at the House of Representative's member orientation

members of the House of Representatives and their staff, aimed at enhancing their understanding of legislative processes and structures, the roles and responsibilities of legislators and lawmakers' relationships with constituents and civil society organizations. Following the orientation, NDI will continue to work with lawmakers and party leadership to build stronger party caucuses and to assist parties to create legislative agendas.

NDI is supporting civil society partner Liberian Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD) to monitor the activities of political parties and their elected officials. IREDD is developing profiles of each elected representative and will publicly post their campaign promises and platforms in order to track whether their actions in office reflect their promises and to increase their accountability to their constituents. IREDD also developed a website to track attendance, participation and initiatives created by each lawmaker.

Supporting a Peaceful Democratic Transfer of Executive Power

NDI is supporting the peaceful transfer of executive power in Liberia following the country's first democratic election in over 70 years. NDI is providing guidance and resources to key actors in the outgoing and incoming administrations during Liberia's presidential transition.

Funding

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