
National Democratic Institute



Liberia

Liberians have celebrated more than ten years of peace since their civil war ended in 2003, transitioning from a country seeking stability to one focused on transformation. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is implementing two programs to increase citizen participation around the election and to provide international observation of the electoral process for the October 10, 2017 presidential and legislative polls.

Engaging Civil Society throughout the 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 process throughout the election cycle including:

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

Following the election, the ECC will also 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 providing assistance to 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 in all parts of the Liberia to implement voter education and engagement strategies that specifically target 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 people to vote for candidates who also recognize those issues.

The partners and their projects include:

- *The Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR)*, a network of community radio stations, is broadcasting voter education information and discusses election issues throughout all of Liberia's counties in order to expand outreach countrywide, especially to rural communities;
- *The Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)* is facilitating 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 (LCC)* is mobilizing union networks through worker-to-worker voter education trainings and discussions throughout Liberia to increase political participation among first-time voters and rural Liberians;
- *The National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE)* is implementing phonebanking and canvassing 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)*, is organizing public forums and community outreach events for women to increase their participation in the electoral process in Liberia's remote southeastern counties.



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

Increasing Women Engagement in Political Processes

Liberian women continue to face considerable challenges in participating in Liberia's political system as citizens, political party and 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. The GRTL program aims

to enhance the knowledge and skills of potential women candidates in campaign management, mobilization, fundraising, communication, and policy development.

Additionally, NDI is supporting a group of women activists to develop 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. Liberian women leaders and activists are utilizing the LWM as a tool to engage more women in the electoral process by highlighting the importance of supporting candidates who endorse the LWM's policies and key issues.

Supporting Credible and Peaceful Elections through Observation

NDI launched a 14-month international election observation program in January 2017 **to enhance the integrity of the polls by conducting continuous and impartial monitoring of all phases of the electoral process.** International election observation enhances the integrity of election processes by promoting public confidence, deterring and exposing irregularities and fraud, and mitigating electoral violence. NDI is partnering with the West African Election Observers Network (WAEON), and its secretariat, 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.

Pre-Election Observation

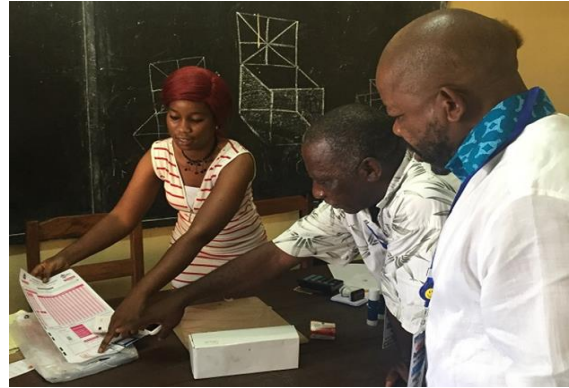
During the pre-election period, NDI is conducting two pre-election assessment missions to evaluate election preparations; identify concerns; and offer recommendations to promote improvements that can contribute to more peaceful and credible elections. NDI conducted its first pre-election assessment mission from February 20 to 24, 2017 and found that voter education and logistical preparation efforts must intensify to ensure smooth, peaceful, and legitimate polls come October. The second pre-election assessment mission will take place in September.

NDI is also deploying long-term analyst and 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 & Post-Election Monitoring

On election day, NDI will deploy 35 international delegates to observe the polls in all 15 counties. Delegates will meet with national and local stakeholders prior to the polls and visit polling stations on election day to observe poll opening and closing, the voting process, vote counting, and tabulation

procedures. After the elections, long-term observers and analysts will continue to monitor the announcement of results and the resolution of election disputes.



Liberian voter registrar explains registration processes to mission delegates.

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 on the conduct of the election and set priorities for electoral reform. NDI plans to organize a conference to discuss recommendations for electoral reform and develop a legislative action plan to implement priority reforms.

Funding

NDI's past and current programs in Liberia have been funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Embassy of Sweden (EOS), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and Humanity United.

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