

ECC Voter Registration Update #2 (February 9, 2017)

The **Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC)** is a civil society platform, comprising 30 organizations that observes all aspects of the electoral process in Liberia, including the 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections. The ECC has a seven member steering committee with representatives from Actions for Genuine Democratic Alternatives (AGENDA); Center for Democratic Governance (CDG); Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP); Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD); National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections – Partners for Democratic Development (NAYMOTE-PADD); West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), and the Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL). CDG currently serves as the chair of ECC.

Summary

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), a civil society platform comprising 30 organizations that observes all aspect of elections in Liberia, has deployed observers across the 15 counties to witness the voter registration process. Today we are issuing our second update, which follows upon our first update released on Wednesday February 1, 2017, the first day of voter registration. This second update covers the start, or first phase, of the voter registration exercise from Wednesday February 1 through Monday February 6.

Overall, reports from ECC observers from all 15 counties show that registration is progressing across the entire country. There have been challenges, such as some centers not opening or issues with the cameras, but these have not been widespread. However, most registration centers lacked uniformed security and political parties are generally not deploying their representatives to witness the voter registration process. Further, registration staff appears to be unevenly requiring applicants to provide proof of eligibility.

Methodology

The ECC has deployed 89 total observers – one county coordinator per county for each of the 15 counties (with an additional coordinator for Montserrado County) – and electoral district observer for each of the 73 electoral districts. All ECC observers were carefully selected and thoroughly trained by the ECC as well as accredited by the National Elections Commission (NEC).

All 89 observers were instructed to observe at a single registration center throughout the day on three specific days – Wednesday February 1, Friday February 3, and Monday February 6 – in their assigned county or electoral district. On each observation day, every observer sent in four observation reports based on a comprehensive checklist via coded text message using their mobile phones to the ECC’s Elections Data Hub.

The ECC received a total of 249 reports from its observers during this first phase of voter registration with reports being sent in from all 15 counties (see Table 1). However, six ECC observers on Wednesday February 1 and one ECC Observers on Friday February 3 were not permitted to observe as the NEC did not provide accreditation badges in time.

Findings

The ECC’s Voter Registration Update #2 provides comprehensive information on reports from the ECC’s observers during the first phase of the voter registration exercise (February 1 to 6).

Setup (see Table 2)

During Phase 1, ECC observers reported that nine registration centers did not open. The most common reason for centers not opening was the lack of a functioning camera. Further, only 171 of 247 centers

opened by 8:00 am as scheduled. However, as Chart 1 shows, more registration centers opened on time on Friday February 3 and Monday February 6:

- ▶ Wednesday February 1 – 42 of 82 registration centers opened by 8:00 am;
- ▶ Friday February 3 – 68 of 82 registration centers opened by 8:00 am; and
- ▶ Monday February 6 – 61 of 83 registration centers opened by 8:00 am.

ECC observers reported that opened registration centers generally had the staff and materials required. For example,

- ▶ 211 of 237 registration centers had four registration staff;
- ▶ 64 of 237 registration centers had a female registrar;
- ▶ 236 of 237 registration centers had optical mark recognition (OMR) registration forms; and
- ▶ 236 of 237 registration centers had indelible ink.

However, ECC observers reported few registration centers with either uniformed security personnel or political party representatives:

- ▶ 37 of 237 registration centers had uniformed security personnel; and
- ▶ 68 of 231 registration centers had representatives of any political party.

Finally, ECC observers reported that at 37 of 237 registration centers applicants were required to go upstairs to register – which potentially poses a problem for some persons with disabilities.

Registration Procedures (see Table 3)

Once centers were open, registration procedures were generally followed:

- ▶ At 214 of 231 registration centers, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women were allowed to register before other applicants;
- ▶ At 223 of 231 registration centers, an optical mark recognition (OMR) registration form was completed for every successful applicant; and
- ▶ At 221 of 231 registration centers, every successful applicant had his/her finger marked with indelible ink;

However, applicants are not systematically being asked to show proof of eligibility.

- ▶ At 111 of 231 registration centers, every applicant was asked to show proof of his/her eligibility; and
- ▶ At 123 of 231 registration centers, applicants were asked to provide any evidence that they ordinarily resided in the locality.

Further, though not widespread, ECC observers reported challenges with cameras in some places during registration:

- ▶ At 19 of 231 registration centers, the camera did NOT work throughout the day; and
- ▶ At 5 of 231 registration centers, the camera did NOT take good quality photographs.

At 23 of 230 registration centers, ECC observers reported that the center was closed for more than an hour for lunch and at 13 of 231 registration centers the center closed before 4:00 pm. However, there appears to be confusion over the closing time for registration centers with some staff believing it is 4:00 pm, others 5:00 pm and still others 6:00 pm.

Registration Figures (see Table 4)

ECC observers witnessed 17,032 applicants successfully register, an average of 75 successful registrants per center based on 226 reports. The average number of successful registrants increased each subsequent day during Phase 1:

- ▶ Wednesday February 1 – 4,672 successful registrants at 70 centers for an average of 67 successful registrants;
- ▶ Friday February 3 – 5,904 successful registrants at 77 centers for an average of 77 successful registrants; and
- ▶ Monday February 6 – 6,456 successful registrants at 79 centers for an average of 82 successful registrants.

A total of 7,332 women successfully registered at 226 centers for an average of 32 women successful registrants. Women represent 43% of successful registrants observed by the ECC.

Finally, there were 690 spoiled OMR registration forms at the 226 centers for an average of 3 spoiled forms per center.

Critical Incidents

ECC observers were instructed to immediately report any serious problems that could compromise the conduct of the voter registration process. Very few critical incidents were reported by ECC observers of which the vast majority related to the late opening of registration centers, the failure of camera's to work throughout the day, and challenges observing at registration centers for ECC observers who had not yet received their accreditation badge from the NEC.

Other critical incidents of note reported by ECC observers include:

- ▶ Several instances when registration officials refused to share the Daily Accounting Sheet (DAS) with observers;
- ▶ One potential incident of trucking;
- ▶ Two incidents of apparent illegal registration of applicants;
- ▶ Two registration centers making errors completing the OMR registration forms leading to a large number being spoiled;
- ▶ One incident of an unauthorized person at the registration center; and
- ▶ Seven minor incidents of conflict at registration centers all of which were resolved peacefully.

Interim Recommendations

Again, overall reports from ECC observers in all 15 counties show that registration is progressing across the entire country. There have been challenges, such as some centers not opening or issues with the cameras, but these have not been widespread. However, most registration centers lacked uniformed security and political parties are generally not deploying their representatives to witness the voter registration process. Further, registration staff appears to be unevenly requiring applicants to provide proof of eligibility.

The ECC offers the following recommendations to help enhance the quality of the registration process:

To the NEC

- ▶ Continue to address issues related to the distribution and functioning of cameras;
- ▶ Ensure registration centers open as scheduled at 8:00 am;
- ▶ Provide clarity on whether applicants are required to provide proof of eligibility;
- ▶ Provide clarity on the closing time of registration centers (4:00 pm, 5:00 pm, or 6:00 pm);
- ▶ Ensure observers are provided a copy of the Daily Accounting Sheet (DAS); and
- ▶ Provide registration center level updates on the number of individuals who have registered by gender and age to enhance the transparency and accountability of the process.

To Security Services

- ▶ Ensure that all registration centers have adequate security – in particular those in areas prone to potential conflict.

To Political Parties

- ▶ Deploy representatives to registration centers to ensure that voter registration is conducted to your party's satisfaction.

To All Stakeholders

- ▶ Expand efforts to inform the public that if they want to vote in 2017 they must register in 2017; and
- ▶ Be vigilant to possible registration of non-Liberians, especially near the border, and the possibility of the trucking of Liberians from one community to another as any incidents should immediately be brought to the attention of the NEC.

About the ECC and Observation of the 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) is a civil society platform, comprising 30 organizations that observes all aspects of the electoral process in Liberia, including the 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections. The ECC has a seven member steering committee with representatives from Actions for Genuine Democratic Alternatives (AGENDA); Center for Democratic Governance (CDG); Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP); Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD); National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections – Partners for Democratic Development (NAYMOTE-PADD); West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), and the Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL). CDG currently serves as the chair of ECC.

The ECC will issue at least four updates on voter registration. The first update was issued on Wednesday February 1. This second update was scheduled to be released on Wednesday February 15, but due to the speed of data collection, data cleaning, and data verification it has been released almost a week early on Thursday February 9. The ECC will release at least two additional updates – scheduled for Thursday March 2 and Wednesday March 15. Given the time sensitivity of this information if the reports can again be released earlier than planned the ECC will endeavor to do so. The ECC intends on releasing a final report on voter registration before the end of March 2017.

For More Information Contact:

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Table 1. Distribution of ECC Observer Reports by County (Phase 1 – February 1 to 6)		
County	ECC Observers	Received Reports
Bomi	4	12
Bong	8	24
Gbarpolu	4	8
Grand Bassa	6	18
Grand Cape Mount	4	12
Grand Gedeh	4	12
Grand Kru	3	9
Lofa	6	15
Margibi	6	18
Maryland	4	12
Montserrado	19	52
Nimba	10	29
River Gee	4	10
Rivercess	3	9
Sinoe	4	9
Total	89	249

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Table 2: Setup of Registration Centers (Phase 1 – February 1 to 6)	
1) Registration centers that did not open	9 of 249 reports
2) Registration centers open by 8:00 am	171 of 247 reports
3) Registration centers with four registration officials	211 of 237 reports
4) Registration centers with a female registrar	64 of 237 reports
5) Registration centers with a voter registration kit (VRK)	236 of 237 reports
6) Registration centers with optical mark recognition (OMR) registration forms	236 of 237 reports
7) Registration centers with a working camera	230 of 237 reports
8) Registration centers with indelible ink	236 of 237 reports
9) Registration centers with laminates	232 of 237 reports
10) Registration centers with uniformed security personnel	37 of 237 reports
11) Registration centers with a representative of any political party present	68 of 231 reports
12) Registration centers with political materials posted inside or near them	18 of 237 reports
13) Registration centers that are not on the ground floor	37 of 237 reports

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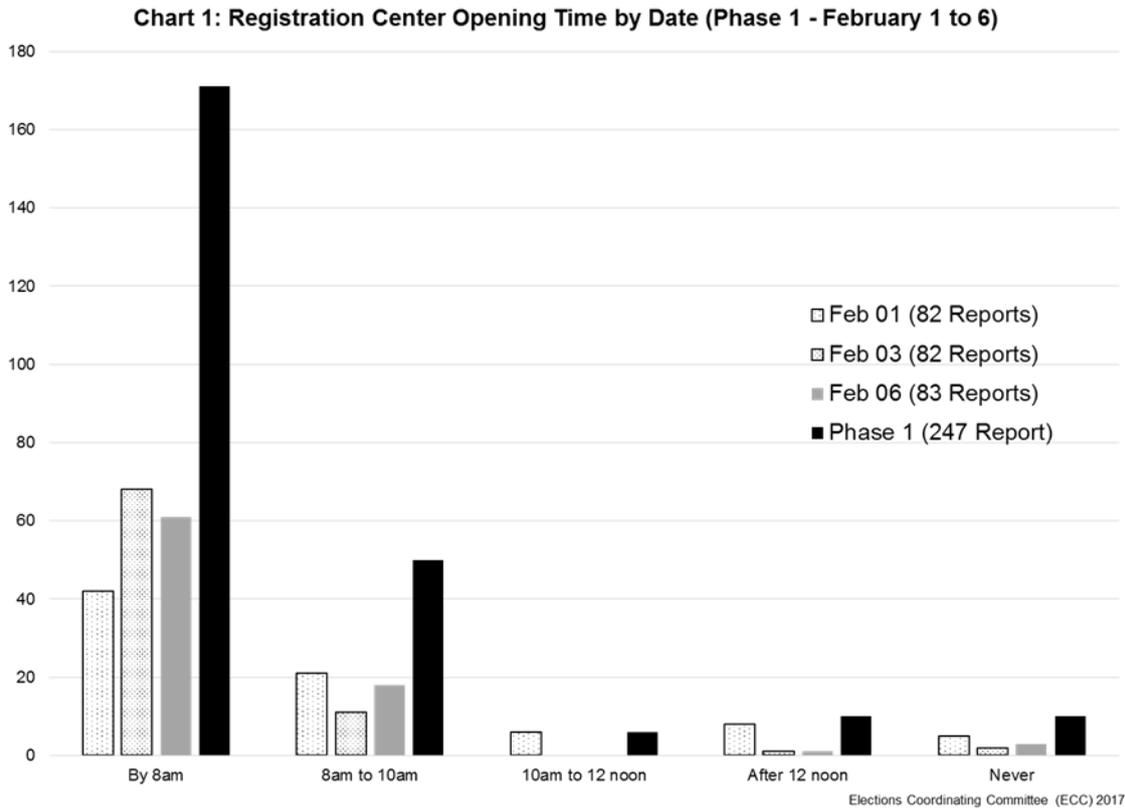


Table 3: Registration Process (Phase 1 – February 1 to 6)

1) Registration centers where persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women were allowed to register before other applicants	214/231 reports
2) Registration centers where every applicant was asked to show proof of his/her eligibility	111 of 231 reports
3) Registration centers where applicants were asked to provide any evidence that they ordinarily resided in the locality	123 of 231 reports
4) Registration centers where an optical mark recognition (OMR) registration form was completed for every successful applicant	223 of 231 reports
5) Registration centers where the camera did not function throughout the day	19 of 231 reports
6) Registration centers where the quality of photographs were poor (person cannot be easily recognized by his/her photo)	5 of 151 reports
7) Registration centers where every successful applicant had his/her finger marked with indelible ink	221 of 231 reports
8) Registration centers where people were allowed to register on behalf of someone else not present	3 of 231 reports
9) Registration centers where uniformed security personnel interfered in the registration process without a request from the registration officials	6 of 231 reports
10) Registration centers with incidents of intimidation, harassment or violence against, registration officials, applicants, political party representatives or observers	7 of 231 reports
11) Registration centers that closed for more than just one hour for lunch	23 of 230 reports
12) Registration centers that closed before 4:00 pm	13 of 231 reports

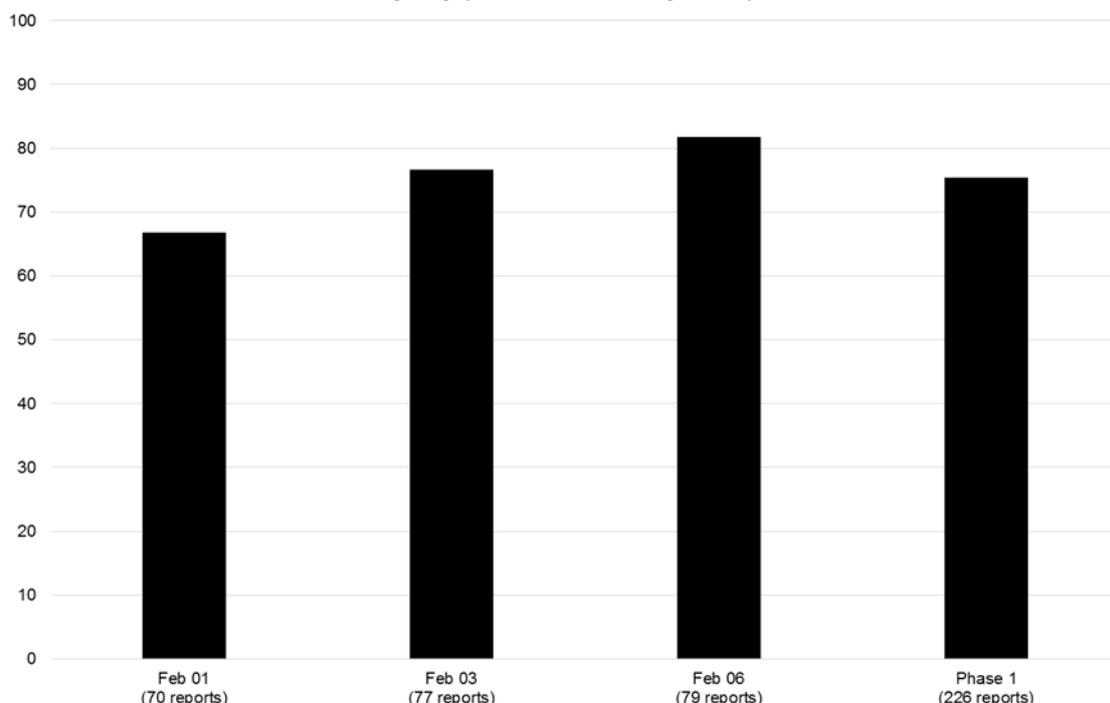
Table 3: Registration Process (Phase 1 – February 1 to 6)	
13) Registration centers where all of the materials were stored in the voter registration kit (VRK) at the end of the day	226 of 229 reports
14) Registration centers where ECC observers were obstructed or prevented from observing the entire registration process	3 of 230 reports

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Table 4: Registration Figures (Phase 1 – February 1 to 6) (based on 226 reports from ECC observers)	
Successful registrants	Total..... 17,032 Average 75
Women successful registrants	Total..... 7,332 Average 32 Percent 43%
Spoiled registration forms	Total..... 690 Average 3
Individuals not allowed to register because they were rejected by the registration officials	Total..... 183 Average 1
Individuals not allowed to register even though they had proof of their eligibility	Total..... 26 Average 0.1
Individuals allowed to register even though they appeared to be ineligible	Total..... 57 Average 0.3
Number of complaints filed	Total..... 13 Average 0.1

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Chart 2: Average Number of Successful Registrants per Registration Center by Day (Phase 1 - February 1 to 6)



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