Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC)
2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections

ECC Voter Registration Update #3 (March 2, 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 platform of civil society 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 third update, which follows upon our two previous updates released on the voter registration process. This third update covers the middle, or second phase, of the voter registration exercise from Saturday, February 18 through Thursday February 23.

Overall, reports from ECC observers from all 15 counties show that registration is continuing across the entire country. While there continue to be some challenges such as problems with camera, there were fewer issues reported than at the beginning of the registration process. Also, political parties are now deploying more of their representatives to witness the voter registration process. ECC Observers continue to report that registration staff appear 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 – Saturday February 18, Tuesday February 21, and Thursday February 23 – 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 Information Center (ECC-IC).

The ECC received a total of 257 reports from its observers during this second phase of voter registration with reports being sent in from all 15 counties (see Table 1). Unlike the first phase, all ECC Observers this time were permitted to observe because they had all receive accreditation badges from the NEC.

Findings

The ECC's Voter Registration Update #3 provides comprehensive information on reports from the ECC's observers during the second phase of the voter registration exercise (February 18 to 23).

Setup (see Table 2)

During Phase 2, ECC observers reported that four registration centers did not open due to equipment failure.

▶ Overall 191 of 257 registration centers opened by 8:00 am;

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

- ▶ 202 of 253 registration centers had four registration staff at opening;

- ▶ 76 of 253 registration centers had a female registrar;

- ▶ 253 of 253 registration centers had optical mark recognition (OMR) registration forms; and

- ▶ 252 of 253 registration centers had indelible ink.

As during Phase 1, ECC observer reports show a continued low presence of uniformed security personnel at registration centers. However, political party representatives were deployed to a larger number of centers than observed in Phase 1 (see Chart 1):

- ▶ 41 of 253 registration centers had uniform security personnel; and

- ▶ 147 of 253 registration centers had representatives of any political party.

Finally, ECC observers reported that at 21 of 253 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 233 of 251 registration centers, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women were allowed to register before other applicants;

- ▶ At 242 of 251 registration centers, an optical mark recognition (OMR) registration form was completed for every successful applicant; and

- ▶ At 244 of 251 registration centers, every successful applicant had his/her finger marked with indelible ink;

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

- ▶ At 102 of 251 registration centers, every applicant was asked to show proof of his/her eligibility; and

- ▶ At 145 of 251 registration center, applicants were asked to provide any evidence that they ordinarily resided in the locality.

ECC observers reported challenges with cameras in some places during registration, but observed fewer instances of such problems than during Phase 1:

- ▶ At 9 of 251 registration centers, the camera did NOT work throughout the day; and

- ▶ At 3 of 251 registration centers, the camera did NOT take good quality photographs.

At 7 of 251 registration centers, ECC observers reported that the center was closed for more than an hour for lunch and at 7 of 251 registration centers the center closed before 4:00 pm. However, there remains 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 10,015 applicants successfully register, an average of 40 successful registrants per center based on 250 reports. While this is a significant reduction from Phase 1 when an average of 75 successful registrants was reported, such a decrease in registration rates is typical during the middle of the voter registration exercise (see Chart 2).

- ▶ Saturday February 18 – 3,686 successful registrants at 87 centers for an average of 46 successful registrants;

- ▶ Tuesday February 21 – 3,437 successful registrants at 83 centers for an average of 41 successful registrants; and

- ▶ Thursday February 23 – 2,892 successful registrants at 80 centers for an average of 33 successful registrants.

A total of 4,746 women successfully registered at 250 centers for an average of 19 women successful registrants. Women represent 47% of successful registrants observed by the ECC. This is an increase from the first phase when women represented 43% of successful registrants observed by the ECC.

Finally, there were 160 spoiled OMR registration forms at the 250 centers for an average of less than 1 spoiled forms per center. This is a significant decrease from Phase 1 when a total of 690 spoiled OMR registration forms were reported (or an average of 1 spoiled form per center).

Critical Incidents

ECC observers were instructed to immediately report any serious problems that could compromise the conduct of the voter registration process. Critical incidents that were reported by ECC observers were related to the late opening of registration centers, the failure of camera's to work throughout the day, suspension of registration due to riots or violence at centers, .

A total of 20 critical incidents were reported by ECC observers from February 18 to 23. Critical incidents of note that were directly observed by ECC observers include:

- ▶ Several instance of registration centers opening after 10:00 am or never opening.
- ▶ Several instances when registration officials refused to share the Daily Accounting Sheet (DAS) with observers; and
- ▶ Issues with mal-functioning cameras.

Interim Recommendations

Again, overall, reports from ECC observers from all 15 counties show that registration is continuing across the entire country. While there continue to be some challenges such as problems with camera, there were fewer issues reported than at the beginning of the registration process. Also, political parties are now deploying more of their representatives to witness the voter registration process. ECC Observers continue to report that registration staff appear 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

- ▶ Ensure registration centers open as scheduled at 8:00 am;
- ▶ Provide clarity on whether applicants are required to provide proof of eligibility and where they ordinarily reside;
- ▶ 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, or at least county or district level updates, on the number of individuals who have registered by gender and age.

<u>To Political Parties</u>

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

<u>To All Stakeholders</u>

> ▶ Expand efforts to inform the public particularly women that if they 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.

<u>To All Liberians</u>

> ▶ All eligible Liberians should register by March 7, 2017 to enable them participate in the October polls.

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

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 one more update – scheduled for Wednesday March 15. Given the time sensitively 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.

<u>For More Information Contact:</u>

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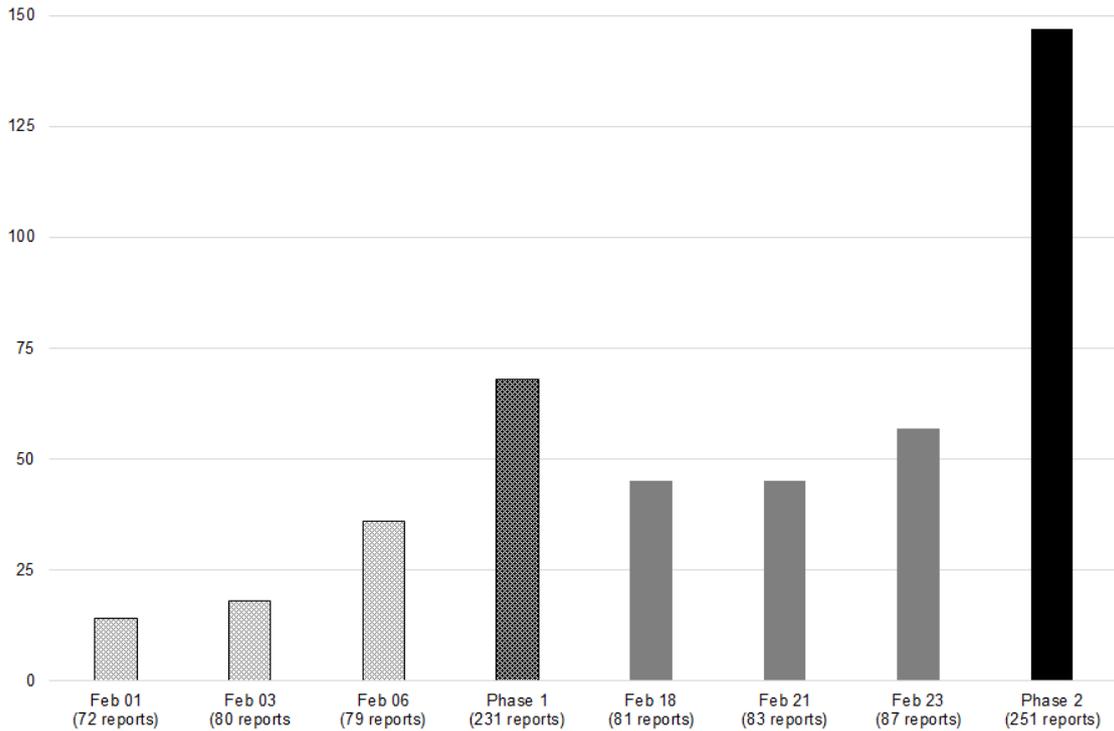**ECC Secretariat** at eccsecretariat2011@gmail.com

Table 1. Distribution of ECC Observer Reports by County (Phase 2 – February 18 to 23)		
County	**ECC Observers**	**Received Reports**
Bomi	4	12
Bong	8	24
Gbarpolu	4	12
Grand Bassa	6	18
Grand Cape Mount	4	12
Grand Gedeh	4	9
Grand Kru	3	9
Lofa	6	17
Margibi	6	18
Maryland	4	12
Montserrado	19	56
Nimba	10	28
River Gee	4	9
Rivercess	3	9
Sinoe	4	12
Total	**89**	**257**

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Table 2: Setup of Registration Centers (Phase 2 – February 18 to 23)	
1) Registration centers that did **not** open	4 of 257 reports
2) Registration centers open by 8:00 am	193 of 257 reports
3) Registration centers with four registration officials	202 of 253 reports
4) Registration centers with a female registrar	76 of 253 reports
5) Registration centers with a voter registration kit (VRK)	253 of 253 reports
6) Registration centers with optical mark recognition (OMR) registration forms	253 of 253 reports
7) Registration centers with a working camera	252 of 253 reports
8) Registration centers with indelible ink	252 of 253 reports
9) Registration centers with laminates	252 of 253 reports
10) Registration centers with uniformed security personnel	41 of 253 reports
11) Registration centers with a representative of any political party present	147 of 251 reports
12) Registration centers with political materials posted inside or near them	8 of 253 reports
13) Registration centers that are not on the ground floor	21 of 253 reports

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Chart 1: Registration centers with a representative of any political party present

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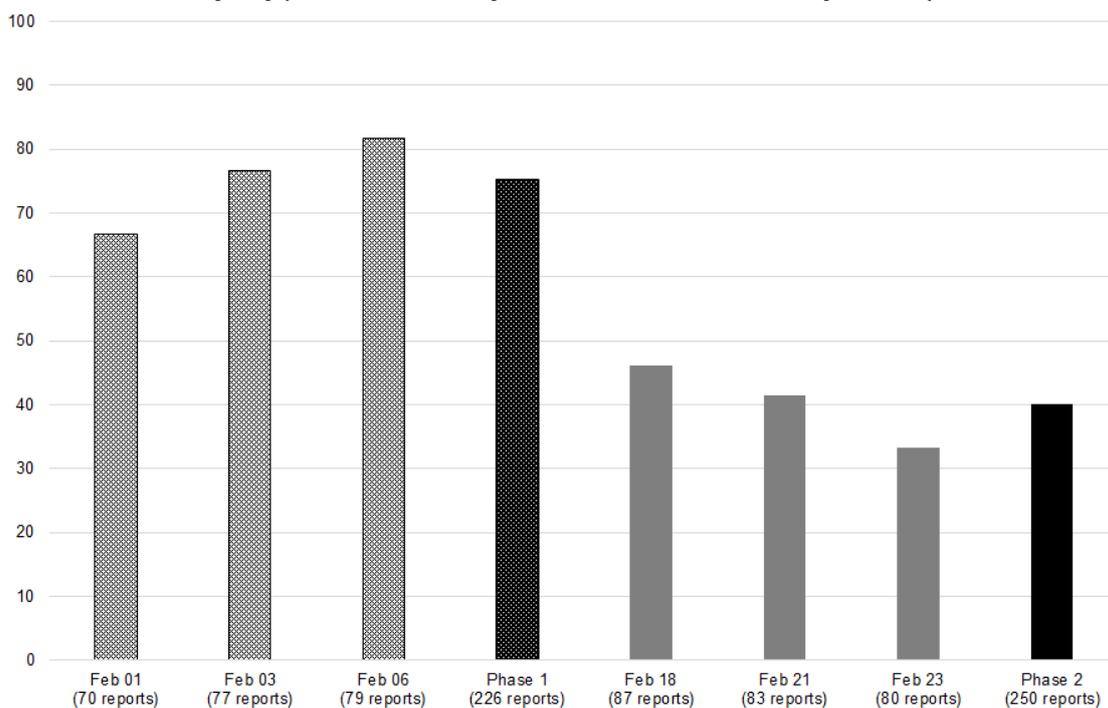| Table 3: Registration Process (Phase 2 – February 18 to 23)	
1) Registration centers where persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women were allowed to register before other applicants	233 of 251 reports
2) Registration centers where every applicant was asked to show proof of his/her eligibility	102 of 251 reports
3) Registration centers where applicants were asked to provide any evidence that they ordinarily resided in the locality	145 of 251 reports
4) Registration centers where an optical mark recognition (OMR) registration form was completed for every successful applicant	242 of 251 reports
5) Registration centers where the camera **did not function** throughout the day	9 of 251 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	244 of 251 reports
8) Registration centers where people **were allowed** to register on behalf of someone else not present	4 of 251 reports
9) Registration centers where uniformed security personnel **interfered** in the registration process without a request from the registration officials	2 of 251 reports
10) Registration centers with **incidents** of intimidation, harassment or violence against, registration officials, applicants, political party representatives or observers	2 of 251 reports
11) Registration centers that closed for more than just one hour for lunch	7 of 251 reports
12) Registration centers that closed before 4:00 pm	7 of 251 reports

Table 3: Registration Process (Phase 2 – February 18 to 23)	
13) Registration centers where all of the materials were stored in the voter registration kit (VRK) at the end of the day	250 of 251 reports
14) Registration centers where ECC observers were obstructed or prevented from observing the entire registration process	0 of 251 reports

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Table 4: Registration Figures (Phase 2 – February 18 to 23) (based on 250 reports from ECC observers)	
Successful registrants	Total..............10,015 Average 40
Women successful registrants	Total...............4,746 Average ....19 Percent 47%
Spoiled registration forms	Total...................160 Average 0.6
Individuals **not allowed** to register because they were rejected by the registration officials	Total...................209 Average 0.8
Individuals **not allowed** to register even though they had proof of their eligibility	Total.......................2 Average 0.0
Individuals **allowed** to register even though they appeared to be ineligible	Total.....................57 Average 0.2
Number of complaints filed	Total.......................2 Average 0.0

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Chart 2: Average Number of Successful Registrants per Registration Center by Day (Phase 1 - February 1 to 6 and Phase 2 - February 18 to 23)

Feb 01 (70 reports)	Feb 03 (77 reports)	Feb 06 (79 reports)	Phase 1 (226 reports)	Feb 18 (87 reports)	Feb 21 (83 reports)	Feb 23 (80 reports)	Phase 2 (250 reports)
67	77	82	75	46	42	33	40

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