

ECC Voter Registration Update #4 (March 21, 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 fourth update, which follows upon our three previous updates released on the voter registration process. This fourth update covers the end, or final phase, of the voter registration exercise from Friday, March 3rd through Tuesday March 7th. Also, a one day observation was carried out during the one-week extension of the Voter Registration. This observation was carried out on the last day of the extension, Tuesday, March 14.

Overall, reports from ECC observers in all 15 counties during Phase 3 as well as the extension show that while there were some recurring challenges such as problems with camera, there were fewer issues reported than at the beginning and middle of the registration process. Also, political parties deployed more of their representatives to witness the voter registration process a little more than the second phase. 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 – Friday, March 3, Monday March 6, and Thursday March 7 – in their assigned county or electoral district. During the extension period, ECC observers also deployed to observe the last day of registration on Tuesday March 14. 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 third phase of voter registration with reports being sent in from all 15 counties. Like the second phase, all ECC Observers were permitted to observe. During the last day of registration (March 14), the ECC received 86 reports with reports being sent in from all 15 counties. (See Table 1).

Phase 3 Findings

The ECC’s Voter Registration Update #4 provides comprehensive information on reports from the ECC’s observers during the third and final phase of the voter registration exercise (March 3 to 7).

Phase 3 Setup (see Table 2)

During Phase 3, ECC observers reported that only one registration centers did not open due to equipment failure.

- ▶ Overall 205 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.

- ▶ 217 of 256 registration centers had four registration staff at opening;
- ▶ 72 of 256 registration centers had a female registrar;
- ▶ 255 of 256 registration centers had optical mark recognition (OMR) registration forms; and
- ▶ 256 of 256 registration centers had indelible ink.

As during Phase 2, ECC observer reports show a continued low presence of uniformed security personnel at registration centers. However, political party representatives were deployed to a few more centers than observed in Phase 2 (see Chart 1):

- ▶ 45 of 256 registration centers had uniform security personnel; and
- ▶ 159 of 256 registration centers had representatives of any political party.

Finally, ECC observers reported that at 19 of 256 registration centers applicants were required to go upstairs to register – which potentially poses a problem for some persons with disabilities.

Phase 3 Registration Procedures (see Table 3)

Once centers were open, registration procedures were generally followed:

- ▶ At 238 of 256 registration centers, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women were allowed to register before other applicants;
- ▶ At 244 of 256 registration centers, an optical mark recognition (OMR) registration form was completed for every successful applicant; and
- ▶ At 248 of 256 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 119 of 256 registration centers, every applicant was asked to show proof of his/her eligibility; and
- ▶ At 156 of 256 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 2:

- ▶ At 14 of 256 registration centers, the camera did NOT work throughout the day; and
- ▶ At 2 of 256 registration centers, the camera did NOT take good quality photographs.

At 9 of 256 registration centers, ECC observers reported that the center was closed for more than an hour for lunch and at 8 of 256 registration centers the center closed before 4:00 pm.

Phase 3 Registration Figures (see Table 4)

ECC observers witnessed 7,935 applicants successfully register, an average of 31 successful registrants per center based on 256 reports. This is a reduction from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 (see Chart 3)

- ▶ Friday March 3 – 2,832 successful registrants at 85 centers for an average of 33 successful registrants;
- ▶ Monday March 6 – 2,940 successful registrants at 86 centers for an average of 34 successful registrants; and
- ▶ Tuesday March 7 -- 2,163 successful registrants at 85 centers for an average of 25 successful registrants.

A total of 3,549 women successfully registered at 256 centers for an average of 14 women successful registrants. Women represent 45% of successful registrants observed by the ECC. This is a slight decrease from the second phase when women represented 47% of successful registrants, but still more than the first phase when women represented 43% of successful registrants observed by the ECC.

Finally, there were 109 spoiled OMR registration forms at the 256 centers for an average of less than 1 spoiled forms per center. This is consistent with Phase 2 and 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).

Phase 3 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 and the failure of camera's to work throughout the day resulting in the suspension of registration.

A total of 12 critical incidents were reported by ECC observers from March 3 to 7. Critical incidents of note that were directly observed by ECC observers include:

- ▶ Fewer instances of registration centers opening after 10:00 am or never opening.
- ▶ Fewer instances when registration was suspended due to equipment failure such as cameras mal-function and solar panel dysfunction.

Observation of the Extension Period (March 14)

Following the NEC's declaration that the voter registration should be extended by one week, ECC observers also observed voter registration centers on Tuesday March 14, the final day of registration. By and large, the observation findings for this day were similar to those seen in Phase 3. All 86 of the voter registration centers visited by ECC observers were open, and only three centers reported problems with malfunctioning cameras. One observer was not permitted to observe. ECC observers witnessed 2,253 applicants successfully register, an average of 27 successful registrants per center based on 84 reports. This is slight decrease from Phase 3, when the average was 31 successful registrants per center based on the 256 reports received by the ECC (see Chart 2).

Conclusion Overall, reports from ECC observers in all 15 counties during Phase 3 as well as the extension show that while there were some recurring challenges such as problems with camera, there were fewer issues reported than at the beginning and middle of the registration process. Also, political parties still deployed more of their representatives to witness the voter registration process a little more than the second phase. ECC Observers continued to report that registration staff appeared to be unevenly requiring applicants to provide proof of eligibility. The ECC will release comprehensive findings

and recommendations in its final report on its observation of the 2017 voter registration process that will be released by the end of March.

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 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.

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County	ECC Observers	Phase 3 Reports received	Extension Reports received
Bomi	4	12	4
Bong	8	23	8
Gbarpolu	4	12	4
Grand Bassa	6	18	6
Grand Cape Mount	4	12	4
Grand Gedeh	4	9	3
Grand Kru	3	9	3
Lofa	6	18	5
Margibi	6	17	6
Maryland	4	12	4
Montserrado	19	57	19
Nimba	10	29	10
River Gee	4	9	3
Rivercess	3	9	3
Sinoe	4	11	4
Total	89	257	86

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	Phase 3	Extension
1) Registration centers that did not open	1 of 257 reports	1 of 86 reports
2) Registration centers open by 8:00 am	205 of 257 reports	70 of 86 reports
3) Registration centers with four registration officials	217 of 256 reports	65 of 85 reports
4) Registration centers with a female registrar	72 of 256 reports	19 of 85 reports
5) Registration centers with a voter registration kit (VRK)	256 of 256 reports	85 of 85 reports
6) Registration centers with optical mark recognition (OMR) registration forms	255 of 256 reports	85 of 85 reports
7) Registration centers with a working camera	253 of 256 reports	82 of 85 reports
8) Registration centers with indelible ink	256 of 256 reports	85 of 85 reports
9) Registration centers with laminates	254 of 256 reports	84 of 85 reports
10) Registration centers with uniformed security personnel	45 of 256 reports	14 of 85 reports
11) Registration centers with a representative of any political party present	159 of 256 reports	54 of 84 reports
12) Registration centers with political materials posted inside or near them	7 of 256 reports	2 of 85 reports
13) Registration centers that are not on the ground floor	19 of 256 reports	6 of 85 reports

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

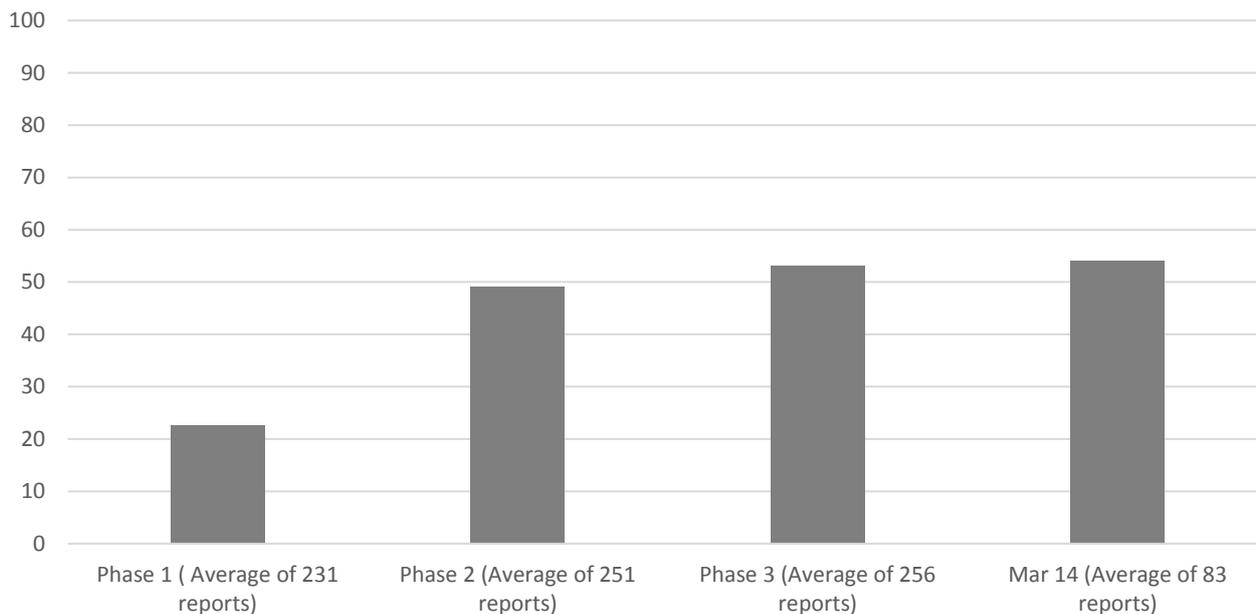


Table 3: Registration Process (Phase 3 – March 03 to 07 and Extension – March 14)

	Phase 3	Extension
1) Registration centers where persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women were allowed to register before other applicants	238 of 257 reports	76 of 84 reports
2) Registration centers where every applicant was asked to show proof of his/her eligibility	119 of 256 reports	39 of 84 reports
3) Registration centers where applicants were asked to provide any evidence that they ordinarily resided in the locality	156 of 256 reports	53 of 83 reports
4) Registration centers where an optical mark recognition (OMR) registration form was completed for every successful applicant	244 of 256 reports	80 of 84 reports
5) Registration centers where the camera did not function throughout the day	14 of 256 reports	3 of 84 reports
6) Registration centers where the quality of photographs were poor (person cannot be easily recognized by his/her photo)	2 of 256 reports	1 of 84 reports
7) Registration centers where every successful applicant had his/her finger marked with indelible ink	248 of 256 reports	80 of 83 reports
8) Registration centers where people were allowed to register on behalf of someone else not present	3 of 256 reports	0 of 84 reports
9) Registration centers where uniformed security personnel interfered in the registration process without a request from the registration officials	3 of 256 reports	1 of 84 reports
10) Registration centers with incidents of intimidation, harassment or violence against, registration officials, applicants, political party representatives or observers	2 of 256 reports	0 of 84 reports
11) Registration centers that closed for more than just one hour for lunch	9 of 256 reports	4 of 84 reports

Table 3: Registration Process (Phase 3 – March 03 to 07 and Extension – March 14)		
	Phase 3	Extension
12) Registration centers that closed before 4:00 pm	8 of 256 reports	6 of 84 reports
13) Registration centers where all of the materials were stored in the voter registration kit (VRK) at the end of the day	255 of 256 reports	84 of 84 reports
14) Registration centers where ECC observers were obstructed or prevented from observing the entire registration process	0 of 256 reports	1 of 84 reports

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Table 4: Registration Figures (Phase 3 – March 03 to 07 and Extension – March 14)		
	Phase 3 (based on 256 reports from ECC observers)	Extension (based on 83 reports from ECC observers)
Successful registrants	Total.....7,935 Average31	Total.....2,253 Average27
Women successful registrants	Total.....3,549 Average14 Percent 45%	Total.....971 Average12 Percent 43%
Spoiled registration forms	Total.....109 Average0.4	Total.....40 Average0.4
Individuals not allowed to register because they were rejected by the registration officials	Total.....140 Average0.5	Total.....68 Average0.7
Individuals not allowed to register even though they had proof of their eligibility	Total.....2 Average0.0	Total.....0 Average0.0
Individuals allowed to register even though they appeared to be ineligible	Total.....34 Average0.1	Total.....13 Average0.2
Number of complaints filed	Total.....4 Average0.0	Total.....5 Average0.1

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Chart 2: Average Number of Successful Registrants per Registration Center by Day

