



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: January 1 to March 31, 2005

LIBERIA: Supporting Citizen Participation in the Electoral Process USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 669-A-00-05-00013-00 under Leader Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00

Project Dates: November 1, 2004 to October 31, 2005

I. SUMMARY

The National Election Commission (NEC) has officially announced that elections in Liberia will be held on October 11, 2005, and that voter registration will take place from April 25 to May 21. While political parties and candidates prepare for the upcoming campaign, a corruption scandal in the transition assembly dominates the news.

To support Liberia in achieving successful general elections and a peaceful transition to elected government, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is implementing a program to enhance citizen participation in the election process, working specifically toward the following objectives:

- ♦ Partner civic groups educate citizens and strive to hold government officials and political parties accountable to the public during the electoral period; and
- ♦ Partner civic groups support the electoral process through the implementation of a monitoring program that promotes the transparency, integrity and peaceful conduct of all election-related activities during the pre-election period and on election day.

To meet these objectives, NDI implemented the following activities during the last quarter:

- ♦ Provided specialized technical assistance to Liberia civic groups to develop proposals for voter education programs;
- ♦ Held financial management training with potential subgrantees;
- ♦ Facilitated the contribution of 120 civic groups to the NEC's voter education manual;
- ♦ Coordinated organizational development and strategy discussions among domestic election monitoring partners; and
- ♦ Organized bi-monthly roundtable discussion between representatives of civic groups and political parties.

As a result of these activities, Liberian civic groups have developed programs and drafted proposals that reflect best practices of voter education, and have identified partners that can help them to achieve their program objectives. NDI will continue to work with these local partners on their program implementation using a guided practice approach to improve their ability to demonstrate meaningful program results and to make them attractive candidates for future funding.

II. BACKGROUND

The election calendar was published by the National Election Commission (NEC) in February, officially setting election day for October 11, 2005, with voter registration taking place from April 25 to May 21. Although the campaign period is not scheduled to begin until September 1, 54 individuals have already declared their intention to run for office. While the number of aspirants will likely increase as election day draws near, most Liberia watchers feel that this figure will ultimately drop as political parties hold primaries or form coalitions. At the end of March, 20 new parties had begun the processing of registering with the National Election Commission (NEC), which will bring the total number of parties to 38, most of which will be based in Monrovia.

While election preparations are in full-swing, the dominant political issue in Liberia in recent months has been the investigation and suspension of the speaker of the National Transition Legislative Assembly (NTLA) and three other members on charges of corruption and mismanagement of funds. In an attempt to halt the induction of their replacements, the suspended representatives filed a motion with the Supreme Court, which is currently pending. The investigation has raised concern that other financial mismanagement may be taking place in the National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL), prompting the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Executive Secretariat to send international auditors to examine these allegations.

Concerns about the rampant corruption in the NTGL and NTLA highlight the importance of robust citizen participation in the election process. Citizens with limited education and access to information need to be informed about how they can improve Liberia by voting for government representatives that are responsive to their needs. Further, with Liberia's past history of voter intimidation and vote buying prior to elections, non-partisan monitors must be trained and deployed to report on such malfeasances in the pre-election period, as well as on election day.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Voter Education

In January, NDI identified Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, and Montserrado as target counties for its voter education activities. By focusing on a small group of counties, the Institute will be better able to provide groups with sufficient funding to do more extensive activities. These counties were selected because they are relatively easy to travel to and

are where most citizens are currently living due to the massive population displacement during the war.

While NDI intends to provide subgrants and targeted technical assistance to a number of well-established civic groups to conduct voter education in these counties, the Institute also engages with dozens of other civic groups to provide more generalized advice and guidance to help them to participate more effectively in the election process.

A.1. Specialized Program Development Assistance

In February, NDI solicited proposals from civic groups for activities in the target districts and has worked with prospective grantees to hone their program development processes. In late March, NDI submitted a list of potential partners to USAID for concurrence and anticipates disbursing the first of the grants upon authorization in April. The chart below describes the objectives and activities for each of the programs, that NDI anticipates funding in the next quarter.

Groups/Amount	Program Objectives	Activities	County
Center for the Promotion of Democracy in Liberia (CPD) \$11,697	Mobilize, inform and sensitize vast majority of Liberians about their participation in the electoral process. Increase citizen's participation in government by questioning and scrutinizing candidates.	Collect views of Liberians and develop radio discussions on the opinions given by the people, mainly on the electoral process. Conduct live phone-in talk shows on radio featuring various personalities from the civil society and the National Elections Commission of Liberia; as well as registered political parties when necessary, to discuss various subject matters concerning the October elections and the transition to democracy.	National
Development and Educational Initiatives (DEI) Radio Bomi \$5,000	Increase citizen's access to information on the voter registration process and build their knowledge on civic and electoral issues. Assess the impact of the civic and voters education program within the county.	Hold all-in radio discussion: questions and inquiries about the voter registration process and the democratic electoral activities will be developed from the views and opinions of ordinary citizens of Bomi County. Conduct community theatre outreach campaign. Conduct regular feedback survey will be conducted to ascertain the level of information the voters have accessed and how is it impacting on them.	Bomi
Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy (FOHRD) Bassa Concerned Citizens Movement (BCCM) \$12,000	Assist citizens of Grand Bassa acquire training and knowledge in voting and about voter rights. Create awareness to assist increase citizens participation in political activities. Encourage and increase women of Grand Bassa County participation in the political process.	Conduct a TOT workshop for civic educators. Organize 30 focus group discussions, particularly involving women and youth. Organize community sensitization and awareness meetings and voters education campaigns. Conduct bi-monthly civic/voter education radio program. Organize civic/voters education dramas, role-plays and mock electoral process exhibitions.	Grand Bassa
Concerned Muslims for National Development (CMND) \$8,500	Help residents of Grand Cape Mount County understand the election process. Increase the participation of women in political activities.	Conduct a TOT workshop for civic educators. Conduct weekly radio program on civic/voters education. Carry out community face-to-face lecture forum on civic and voters education program.	Grand Cape Mount
Liberian Innovation Foundation for Empowerment (LIFE) Human Development Foundation	Help the electorates in Gbarpolu develop confidence in the electoral process.	Conduct a TOT workshop for civic educators. Carry out community-to-community theatre and drama activities on civic/voters education.	Gbarpolu

(HDF)			
\$8,5000			
Liberian Productivity Agency (LPA)	Educate young Liberians between the ages of 18 – 30 years, mainly youth on the voting process and electoral activities for the 2005 elections.	Conduct a TOT workshop for civic educators.	Montserrat
Liberia Institute for Public Opinion (LIPO)		Organize weekly group discussions at “attayee” tea shops in Monrovia	
\$3,500			

NDI has worked closely with most of these groups as they develop their proposals. Assistance provided to the groups to date is described below.

Center for the Promotion of Democracy in Liberia: Over the course of several work sessions, NDI provided advice and guidance to CPD on the development of its proposal for a series of national radio programs called Pallaver Hut. NDI assisted CPD to develop a clear and professional proposal that included well-defined program objectives, an effective airing schedule for the radio shows and a realistic budget. NDI also helped CPD to understand the importance of developing a workplan to keeping program implementation on track.

Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy /Bassa Concerned Citizens Movement: NDI assisted the FOHRD/BCCM consortium on ways to improve their program design for voter education in Grand Bassa county. Also, NDI staff visited the Bassa Concerned Citizen’s Movement (BCCM) in Buchanan, Grand Bassa. BCCM is planning to partner with FOHRD for voter education. NDI also anticipates that BCCM will be a partner for the series of candidate forums that will take place during the campaign period.

Concerned Muslims for National Development: During a work session with staff of CMND, NDI reviewed its proposal for voter education program in Grand Cape Mount. NDI helped CMND staff to refine the objectives of the program and focus the activities on achieving those objectives. NDI also assisted CMND staff in developing a more realistic and detailed budget for the program. NDI staff also traveled to Grand Cape Mount to visit several villages and meet with local authorities and community-based groups.



Development and Educational Initiatives/ Radio Bomi: In February, NDI staff visited Tubmanburg, Bomi to meet with the staff of Radio Bomi (station manager pictured at right), a community-based station that will likely partner with DEI for voter education. NDI provided copies of important documents, such as the constitution, election reform law and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and worked with the staff to understand how they guide the electoral process.

A.2. Financial Management Training

In February, in collaboration with NDI's civil society strengthening program, which is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an NDI subgrants manager traveled to Monrovia and met with potential subgrantees to evaluate their internal financial management systems, and train their staffs in NDI's subgrant procedures. The subgrants manager visited the offices of potential partner groups and provided finance and program staff members on how they could improve their financial systems so they would be better able to manage subgranted funds. In addition, the subgrants manager held a two-day workshop with potential grantees (pictured at right) to train them in NDI's process for awarding subgrants, as well as on the accurate and transparent accounting techniques that NDI requires of its subgrantees. The chart below illustrates the issues covered in this training.



Application Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Proposal and budget ◆ Accounting questionnaire ◆ Bank account
Subgrant Monitoring Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Subgrant period ◆ Drawdowns ◆ Reporting ◆ Valid receipts and supporting documentation ◆ Weighted average exchange rate ◆ Amendments and modification
Close-out Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Final report ◆ Return of unspent funds ◆ Return of interest
USG Federal Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OMB Circular A-122 ◆ U.S. Standard Provision for Non-U.S. NGOs ◆ Executive Order 13224 Counter-terrorism measures

A.3. Civil Society Contribution to Voter Education Manual

In February, the NEC released a draft training manual, which it developed as a resource for civic groups conducting voter education programs, and requested comments on the draft. To streamline their responses, a number of civic organizations asked NDI to facilitate a discussion on the draft and guide the feedback process. A few weeks later, NDI met with representatives from about 120 organizations that were interested in contributing comments on the document. These groups agreed to establish a smaller technical committee to work with NDI to develop their response. The committee met several days later with NDI staff to draft the response, which was submitted to the NEC and considered in the final document. A portion of these activities were funded through NDI's NED grant.

B. Domestic Election Monitoring

For several months, NDI has been cultivating relationships with Liberian groups interested in and capable of a strong domestic election monitoring effort, and the Institute officially launched its domestic election monitoring program in early March upon the arrival of the program manager. Each of NDI's three partners for this program brings unique strengths to the effort:

Coalition for Democracy and Elections in Liberia: CODEL was formed in early 2003 by a group of organizations that had monitored the 1997 elections under a coalition called the Liberian Election Observation Network (LEON);

Inter-Religious Council of Liberia: IRCL is a long-standing religious-based organization that seeks to build connections between the Christian and Muslim people in Liberia. The organization is a strong moral authority in Liberia and has been a steadfast supporter of democratic values; and

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding: WANEP/Liberia seeks to promote peace and development in Liberia by working with women and youth on peacebuilding initiatives and by developing an early warning system to prevent conflict.

Throughout the month of March, NDI facilitated a number of meetings with the groups to assist them in developing a coordinated organizational structure to guide the effort. The groups decided to form a coalition called the National Committee for Election Monitoring (NACEM) which is led by a coordinating committee of representatives from each of the member organizations or coalitions. NACEM is governed by a terms of reference that each of the members signed, which identifies the roles and responsibilities of the coordinating committee as follows below.

From the NACEM MOU:

1. Supervision, Monitoring: The committee shall ensure that each partner fulfills its assigned obligations and that groups do not duplicate but rather leverage each others' efforts.
2. Liaison: The committee shall serve as liaison with other stakeholders in the October election such as the Elections Commission and UNMIL Election Division etc.
3. Public Relations and Media: The Committee is the only body authorized to speak to the media at media events on behalf of the partners. Each of the three leading representatives on the JCC shall sign Press statements and any other external communication before release and publication.
4. Publication: On behalf of the partners, the committee shall decide on what materials should be made public. For this purpose the Committee shall work as a "clearing house."
5. Advocacy and Lobbying: The committee shall be the authorized organ to undertake any advocacy/lobbying efforts on behalf of the monitoring groups.

The NACEM members agreed to divide the country into three zones and that each member would be responsible for recruiting, training and collecting information from monitors in that zone, as illustrated in the chart below:

CODEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Grand Bassa ◆ Nimba ◆ Bong
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Margibi ◆ Careysburg, Montserrado
IRCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sinoe ◆ Grand Kru ◆ Reporting ◆ Grand Gedah ◆ Maryland ◆ River Gee ◆ St. Paul, Montserrado
WANEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lofa ◆ Gbarpolu ◆ Grand Cape Mount ◆ Bomi ◆ Todee, Montserrado

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Result 1: Partner civic groups educate citizens and strive to hold government officials and political parties accountable to the public during the electoral period.

Indicators:

- ◆ Civic groups have developed program proposals that employ best practices of voter education, such as: developing tested and targeted messages that are delivered by inspiring individuals; returning frequently to the same communities; and using participatory methods (small group discussions, question answer periods).
- ◆ Several Monrovia-based civic groups have identified rural organizations as partners for their voter education programs. These partnerships will ensure that voter education activities will be appropriate for the communities in which they are being implemented. The partnerships will also allow rural organizations that may not have the appropriate program capacity or financial management systems to manage a subgrant on their own to build such skills under the mentorship of a more established group.
- ◆ Civic groups organized themselves and submitted a coordinated response to the NEC on the voter education manual.

Result 2: Partner civic groups support the electoral process through the implementation of a monitoring program that promotes the transparency, integrity and peaceful conduct of all election-related activities during the pre-election period and on election day.

Indicators:

- ◆ CODEL, IRCL and WANEP, NDI’s domestic election monitoring partners, have come together to form the NACEM coalition to coordinate their planning and implementation of election monitoring activities and to streamline the assessment and reporting of data they collect from monitors.

V. EVALUATION

Since April 2004, NDI has developed relationships with numerous civic groups by providing them with a range of guidance and assistance. During the first quarter of 2005, NDI built on its relationships with several of the most vibrant groups to help them develop full program proposals for funding. Unlike other funders of civil society groups in Liberia, NDI does not provide isolated financial assistance to groups, but rather complements such funding with a specialized package of technical assistance. Thus far for the program, this package has included guidance on program development and proposal writing. Time spent working with groups to craft well-designed programs will help to ensure that their activities are ultimately more effective.

While most of NDI's civic partners recognize the value of this coordinated approach of financial and technical support, some would rather see the Institute simply as a donor and thus resent the advice and guided practice techniques. As elections draw near, the amount of money available to Liberian groups from international donors, much of which has fewer requirements, continues to increase. To explain its approach and set realistic expectations about its program methodology, NDI develops memorandums of understanding with each group. These MOUs elucidate NDI's rigorous approach to financial assistance programs and lay the foundation for a long-term relationship between NDI and the local partner. Over time, NDI anticipates that local partners will see that this consistent approach improves their ability to demonstrate more meaningful program results.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In the second quarter, NDI expects to disburse a number of subgrants to its voter education and domestic election monitoring partners. To assist these groups, NDI will organize trainings of trainers sessions and oversee their step-down trainings. NDI will monitor the activities of its partners and provide on-the-job guidance as they implement their programs.

In April, NDI, in collaboration with IRI and IFES, will sponsor a three-day consultation on the electoral process. The consultation will bring together civic leaders, political party representatives, government officials and members of the international community to address issues and concerns related to the election process, and set benchmarks for genuine and transparent elections. NDI will also collaborate with IRI on two civil society/political party roundtable discussions.