



**CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: April 1 to June 30, 2005**

**LIBERIA: SUPPORTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION  
IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

**USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 669-A-00-05-00013-00 under  
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**Project Dates: November 1, 2004 to October 31, 2005**

**I. SUMMARY**

With the completion of voter registration in April and May, Liberians took an important step forward in the election process. Both international and domestic observers praised the efforts of the election commission, while underscoring the challenges that many voters faced in attempting to register. To support citizen participation in the electoral process, NDI is implementing a program to meet 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.
- ◆ 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 financial and technical assistance to Liberian civic groups to conduct voter education programs during the registration period, including: the Center for the Promotion of Democracy in Liberia; Radio Bomi; and Concerned Muslims for National Development.
- ◆ Conducted a training of trainers seminar for civic groups implementing voter education activities.
- ◆ Organized with CEPPS partners the International Republican Institute and IFES, a national stakeholders conference to facilitate discussion on the upcoming elections.
- ◆ Assisted domestic monitoring groups to recruit, train and deploy master trainers and volunteers to monitor the voter registration process.

- ♦ Facilitated a retreat for domestic monitoring groups to assess lessons learned from their voter registration activities and strategize on activities during the campaign period and election day.

As a result of these activities, Liberian civic groups have provided opportunities for hundreds of citizens to be active in the election process. Thousands more may have benefited from educational programs that are broadcast on the radio.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Voter registration took place in Liberia from April 25 to May 21. Even with low turnout during the first week of the voter registration period, more than 1.3 million of an estimated 1.5 million eligible voters registered, with equal representation from both men and women. Significantly, most of the 61,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), who were allowed to register in the camps, intend to vote in their county of origin. In general, observers judged the exercise a success despite numerous challenges. The International Republican Institute (IRI), which fielded a pre-election assessment delegation during the voter registration period found that while the process was technically sound and security was good, a lack of sufficient voter education and difficult transportation logistics hurt turnout.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, the National Committee for Election Monitoring (NACEM), a Liberia election monitoring coalition that receives financial and technical support from NDI, monitored voter registration and released two statements on the process. The first statement, released on May 4, highlighted low turnout, the absence of political party poll-watchers and inconsistent enforcement of voter registration eligibility guidelines, while noting the better-than-expected turnout of women voters. NACEM's second statement, released on May 24, noted that only 50 percent of the polling places they observed had a regular security presence and that there had been violent incidents, such as looting or intimidation at 5 percent of the polls they observed.<sup>2</sup>

In its second statement, NACEM also condemned efforts by some groups to delay the elections. In mid-May, the National Transition Legislative Assembly (NTLA) passed a resolution extending voter registration and delaying election day. The National Election Commission (NEC) responded with a statement reinforcing the importance of respecting the election timeline, as established by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in accordance with the Constitution; the statement also noted that the NEC is the only body legally authorized to adjust the election calendar. Other groups also tried to make similar changes to the calendar. At the end of May, a team of lawyers petitioned the Supreme Court to extend the voter registration period and make other changes to the election calendar. The case was dismissed on the grounds that the lawyers did not represent the people of Liberia as they claimed.

## **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### ***A. Subgrantee Programs***

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<sup>1</sup> The IRI delegation included a representative from NDI.

<sup>2</sup> More information about the NACEM statements is available in the Activities section of this report.

NDI's subgrant partners are conducting the following activities with financial and technical assistance from NDI:

### *1. Center for the Promotion of Democracy in Liberia*

The Center for the Promotion of Democracy (CPD) is implementing a call-in radio talk show entitled *Palaver Hut* to educate citizens of Montserrado county on issues of democracy, governance and human rights. The hour-long programs began in May and are conducted twice each week on UNMIL Radio.

During each broadcast, individuals from diverse political and social backgrounds discuss various electoral topics of concern. The programs target civil society groups, political parties, women's groups, youth, trade unions, religious organizations, law enforcement officers and ex-combatants. Citizens call in and dialogue enthusiastically with program guests on the discussion topics. NDI provides guidance for CPD's program content and message delivery through frequent strategy discussions and interactions with the program director.

### *2. Radio Bomi*

Community-based radio station Radio Bomi is conducting a talk show entitled *Democracy Forum* in Bomi County that discusses the electoral process and the importance of political participation. Currently, the radio program is taped live and broadcast in four dialects three times per week. To broaden the reach of the program, Radio Bomi is considering taping the program for replay later in the evening. At the suggestion of NDI, Radio Bomi developed relationships with local authorities and solicited their participation in the programs.

To assess the impact of *Democracy Forum*, Radio Bomi held a town hall meeting with 40 members of the Beafinie Town to discuss their knowledge and understanding of the election process. NDI facilitated the discussion, which consisted of a series of questions about the election process and how citizens intended to participate. Although elders and men constituted a majority of the respondents, it was evident that the citizens, particularly the women, had learned from the information they heard on *Democracy Forum* about the elections and were prepared to participate in the process.

### *3. Concerned Muslims for National Development*

Concerned Muslims for National Development (CMND) is conducting voter education programs in four districts in Grand Cape Mount: Tombei, Golakamen, Porkpai, and Gowta. In early June, CMND conducted a training of trainers workshop on civic and voter education in Monrovia before deploying to the four districts in Grand Cape Mount. The trained trainers then engaged in small group discussions with citizens in Grand Cape Mount on the voter registration process and the importance of participating in the electoral process. NDI provided guidance to CMND on how to encourage the participation of women and youth.

## ***B. Voter Education Training of Trainers***

From April 18 to 20, NDI, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the IFES, jointly organized a training of trainers workshop for fifty master trainers to be trained in civic/voters education programming skills and techniques. Several of NDI's local partners participated in the workshop including the Human Development Fund (HDF), CMND and the Bassa Concerned Citizens' Movement (BCCM). The workshop, facilitated by representatives from UNDP, NDI, IFES, NEC, and UNMIL, consisted of six sessions followed by discussion and simulation exercises. Participants set objectives for the three-day conference and evaluated their performance based on those objectives. Descriptions of the sessions follow:

*Civic/Voter Education: Concepts and Insights:* Facilitators discussed the purpose of civic and voter education, the design and implementation of programs and the importance of civil society in the electoral process.

*Voters Registration Procedure:* Participants reviewed aspects of the voter registration process and compiled a list of potential concerns that voters might raise while registering, such as, "I am disabled, can I still register?" and "Where do I need to go to register?" The participants also engaged in a role-playing exercise to ask and answer some of these questions.

*Presentation Skills and Techniques:* Facilitators provided a general overview of approaches to adult education, including presentation delivery and organization. Facilitators discussed the learning patterns of adults and gave recommendations for keeping audiences engaged during civic education programs.

*The Role of the Media in Civic/Voters Education:* The goal of this session was to define the role of the media and to educate participants on the use of media as a tool for the dissemination of civic/voter education messages. Participants listed the advantages of each form of media and brainstormed on methods for effective and broad message delivery.

*Electoral Law Reform:* After reviewing the justification for electoral reform outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, workshop participants discussed the reforms to the 1986 New Election Law. Facilitators then discussed the categories of new laws: political party registration, alliances and coalitions, voter registration, observer guidelines and codes of conduct, as well as polling and counting regulations.

*Electoral Systems:* Facilitators drew distinctions between the electoral system in place for the 1997 elections and the current electoral system. Participants discussed the election and run-off processes. Facilitators placed emphasis on the procedures for electing a representative to each office and the lengths of terms in office.

To conclude the workshop, participants developed methodologies for organizing and facilitating a civic/voter education training session that incorporated lessons learned during the training sessions and a list of recommendations created during the working group discussions.

### ***C. National Stakeholders Conference***

From April 12 to April 14, NDI, in collaboration with IFES and IRI, assembled representatives of the National Transition Government (NTGL), the NTLA, political parties, civil society organizations, the NEC, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Commission, the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL), UNMIL, and USAID to discuss the prospect for peaceful and legitimate elections in Liberia.



During the opening ceremony, Barrie Hofmann, NDI's Deputy Director for Central and West Africa, underlined the importance of transparent elections and challenged the participants to clearly define their roles and responsibilities in the electoral process. NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant recommitted the NTGL to the transition timeline established by the CPA and declared support for the NEC throughout the election process. U.S. Ambassador John Blaney encouraged Liberians to take ownership of the election process and reinforcing the international

community's commitment to elections in October.

ECOWAS Special Representative Ambassador Asumanna Ceesay and Nigerian Ambassador Eneji Onubu both recommended that the elections be held in accordance with the stringent guidelines established by the NEC. The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Steinar Bjornsson, stressed the need for all stakeholders to consult and collaborate throughout the electoral process. He underscored the importance of UNMIL's role in support of the NEC. Chairwoman of the NEC, Frances Johnson Morris, closed the opening ceremonies by outlining the NEC electoral calendar and sharing information on the upcoming voter registration process.

During the panel discussions, government officials and representatives of civil society and political parties gave presentations on specific aspects of the electoral process. Each panel consisted of a moderator and four to five panelists. Following each panel, audience members responded to the presentations by asking questions and raising additional discussion points. Highlights of the panel discussions are listed below:

*Administration of Elections:* The discussion on election administration featured representatives from the UNMIL Electoral Division, European Commission and the NEC. The panelists identified challenges to the administration of elections such as: the release and management of funds, getting Liberian citizens engaged in the electoral process, delimitation of electoral districts, inconsistencies in election procedures and the participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

*Electoral Security:* Representatives from the National Human Rights Center of Liberia (NHRCL), UNMIL, Search for Common Ground and the Liberia National Police discussed the importance of civil society's role in monitoring and protecting the human rights of Liberian citizens. In addition, the panelists placed emphasis on UNMIL and Liberia's security forces to

maintain stability in the country throughout the election period through the continuous monitoring of conflict-prone situations. Panelists remarked that in addition to the need for resources among the security-keeping contingents, the Liberia National Police is still in need of training and support from UNMIL.

*Promoting Electoral Participation:* Members of this panel included representatives from the Coalition of Political Parties' Women (COPPWIL), the UNMIL Gender Office, the NEC, the Press Union of Liberia, and the Association of Disabled Organizations in Liberia. The panelists raised the need for increased participation of women and the physically disabled, civic and voter education, and transparency in the media as critical to the success of the elections in October. They also noted that special efforts are being made to include many of the groups previously disenfranchised during elections.

*Electoral Campaign:* Representatives from NDI, IRI, IFES, the NEC and CODEL gave presentations on campaign finance, vote-buying, party platforms and citizen participation. The panelists outlined the importance of monitoring and establishing guidelines for the electoral process. The failure to abide by stringent regulations creates an uneven playing field for candidates and political parties, and creates opportunities for corruption and vote-buying. In addition, should election regulations be abused, the Election Commission should be empowered to react in a timely manner.

*Electoral Challenges and the Way Forward:* This panel featured representatives of UNMIL and the NEC. Each member of this panel provided analysis of the four previous panels and recommendations for moving forward. Of those recommendations, the following emerged as highlights of the discussion:

- Managing resources and information,
- Promoting civic education,
- Creating strict electoral guidelines and
- Continuing the support of security efforts.

The conference concluded with the signing of a political party code of conduct by all but one of the registered political parties. The code establishes ground rules and standards of acceptable behavior for political parties and their supporters and will serve as a benchmark for domestic monitoring groups to assess the actions of political parties during the upcoming campaign period.

#### ***D. Domestic Monitoring***

The NACEM coalition is composed of three partner organizations: the Coalition for Democracy in Liberia (CODEL), the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The coalition, led by a coordinating committee of representatives from each of the member organizations, receives financial and technical assistance from NDI to implement its election monitoring activities. During the quarter, NACEM focused its activities on preparing for and monitoring the voter registration process. The coalition

also held a leadership retreat to evaluate lessons learned from the voter registration period, and strategize for future campaign period and election day activities.

### *1. Training of Trainers and Monitors*

In early April, NDI assisted NACEM in developing its voter registration recruitment, training, deployment and reporting strategy. From April 8-9, NDI facilitated a training of trainers exercise for the NACEM domestic monitors in preparation for the voter registration exercise. The leadership discussed the strategy for monitoring the registration process, defined roles for district monitors and county coordinators and created a timeline for all activities through the voter exhibition exercise. The leadership agreed to a three-tier reporting structure that included 108 district monitors, 14 county coordinators and the national coordinating committee in Monrovia. As illustrated in the chart below, each of the coalition members is responsible for a region of the country.

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

Following the workshop in Monrovia, each of the NACEM organizations deployed advance teams to their assigned districts to recruit county coordinators and district monitors, identify training venues and make other arrangements for the step-down trainings. Using skills they learned in the Monrovia workshop, master trainers trained monitors on the following topics at six step-down trainings around the country:

- ◆ Overview of election process
- ◆ Overview of monitoring
- ◆ What is voter registration?
- ◆ Who is eligible to vote?
- ◆ Where are the registration centers located?/When are they open?
- ◆ What is the procedure for registering to vote?
- ◆ What is the Prospective Voter's Appeal Process?
- ◆ What is the voter list exhibition period?
- ◆ Why monitor voter registration?
- ◆ How to monitor voter registration?

- ◆ What to do if problems occur?
- ◆ Completing the monitoring checklist
- ◆ Qualities of a good monitor
- ◆ NACEM and its structure
- ◆ Roles and responsibilities of District Monitors and County Coordinators
- ◆ Tentative Voter Registration Monitoring Timeline
- ◆ Monitor's Pledge and NEC Accreditation

NDI supported the step down training process by sending a representative with each member organization to participate in the trainings and provide logistical support. In addition, NDI facilitated the participation of a resource official and photographer from the NEC on each training team to answer questions about the registration process and accredit monitors at the end of the trainings.

## 2. *Monitoring the Voter Registration Exercise*

From April 25 to May 21, the NACEM-trained volunteers deployed around the country to gather information on the quality of the voter registration process. At the end of the first week of the voter registration period NACEM released its first statement (attached as Appendix A). The statement highlighted the following issues: low turnout of voters at registration centers; the absence of political party representatives; non-uniform application of criteria for rejection by registrars; and isolated incidents of violence at several of the registration centers.

By the end of the voter registration period, 129 NACEM district monitors and county coordinators had collected information from 1,202 polling centers around the country and submitted 1,341 checklists to the national coordinating committee in Monrovia. NDI assisted the groups in entering the data from the forms into a database and facilitated evaluation sessions with the leadership to analyze data from their respective districts and discuss strengths and weaknesses of the process. NACEM compiled its findings and issued a second statement on voter registration (attached as Appendix B) at a press conference on May 22. The statement commended the election commission on its effective administration of the process, but cited insufficient security at registration sites and low representation of political party poll watchers as concerns.

## 3. *NACEM Leadership Retreat*

In June, following the monitoring of the voter registration process, NDI facilitated a retreat for the leadership of NACEM to discuss strategies for upcoming monitoring activities as well as strengths and weaknesses of the coalition. The partner organizations reviewed the purpose for domestic election monitoring and underscored the role of monitors as watchdogs and advocates for voters' rights. Members of NACEM leadership identified voter rejection, age discrimination and coherent voting procedures as areas of concern for domestic monitors. The coalition intends to continue coordination with the NEC to address these issues. In addition, NACEM intends to formulate policy recommendations to the NEC on pertinent issues such as the demarcation of electoral districts, political party finance during campaigns and abuse of the electoral process by candidates. As a result of the retreat, NACEM leadership plans to reinstitute

the Memorandum of Understanding between the partner organizations, develop a code of conduct for domestic monitoring activities through election day and create a NACEM Secretariat that will serve as a headquarter office for domestic election monitoring.

#### **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:**

- ◆ As a result of CMND's voter education programs, citizens have a better understanding of appropriate candidate campaign conduct. For example, citizens in Grand Cape Mount have turned away several aspirants seeking votes using bags of rice and money.
- ◆ In Montserrado County, the program content of *Palaver Hut* has catalyzed important civic debates and served as a source of information for eligible voters. The program averages 15 callers per edition, with women composing nearly 25 percent of callers per program.
- ◆ As a result of the voter and civic education training of trainers workshop, 50 civic educators received accurate information and strategies for conducting effective civic and voter education programs and developed presentation and delivery skills.
- ◆ Through the stakeholders conference, a wide array of actors were brought together to provide guidance on the forthcoming elections and to make recommendations to the NEC. The discussions helped participants reach consensus on challenges to the electoral process and a strengthened commitment to peaceful and transparent elections.

*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:**

- ◆ NACEM released two statements assessing the quality of the voter registration process and will release a third in July. The coalition presented a formal statement on the registration process at a press conference before 22 journalists and members of the media.
- ◆ As a result of the NACEM leadership retreat, the member organizations have agreed on a common strategy for domestic monitoring activities, analyzed lessons learned from the voter registration process and resolved to create a NACEM Secretariat to serve as the headquarters for future activities.

## V. EVALUATION

With funding and technical assistance from NDI, Liberian civic groups are making valuable contributions to the country's election process through their voter education and election monitoring programs. Following years of war and repression, citizens are anxious for information and opportunities to participate in the political process. Increased interest in programs places stress on the groups' financial resources and implementation capacity. In the final months before the presidential and legislative elections, NDI's local partners in Liberia have struggled to meet the growing demands of conducting voter and civic education, particularly in rural districts around the country where information is not easily dispersed to citizens. Often, increased funding and logistical support is required to carry out activities effectively. As a result, the financial and technical assistance NDI provides to local partners creates high expectations; partners tend to request additional financial support and capacity building to support ongoing activities.

To address these challenges, NDI is working with local partners to effectively allocate resources and strategically engage in the process of teaching citizens the importance of good governance and transparent elections. The assistance NDI provides through proposal and report review, assistance with program design and implementation and message development continues to expand the capacity and effectiveness of civil society organizations. NDI will continue to set realistic expectations about the roles and responsibilities of the Institute and its partners and provide support to conduct civic and voter education activities where possible.

## VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

### *Voter Education*

In the coming months, several more civic groups, with assistance from NDI, will launch their voter education programs:

- ◆ Foundation for Human Rights and Dignity/Bassa Concerned Citizens Movement
- ◆ Liberian Innovation Foundation for Empowerment/Human Development Foundation
- ◆ Liberian Productivity Agency/Liberia Institute for Public Opinion

### *Domestic Monitoring*

In July, NDI will assist NACEM in strategizing for their upcoming campaign monitoring and election day monitoring activities. In early August, NDI will work with NACEM to retrain and deploy the district monitors and county coordinators to monitor the campaign period that takes place from August 15 to October 9. In September, NACEM groups will begin to recruit and train monitors for their election day effort.

**NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR ELECTIONS MONITORING (NACEM)  
MONROVIA, LIBERIA**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**May 24, 2005**

**Contact: 06519765, 06514348, 06517879**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Liberian transition has entered its critical stage which amongst other things calls for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections as the surest way to sustainable peace in Liberia.

In fulfillment of this aspect of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the National Committee for Elections Monitoring (NACEM), an independent domestic monitoring civic coalition trained and deployed 129 domestic elections monitors into all fifteen counties to monitor and report on the conduct of the voters' registration exercise. NACEM monitors collected field information by using checklists developed in strict conformity with the National Elections Commission (NEC) guidelines. Three weeks of data collected from the field have been analyzed to form part of our findings.

NACEM is pleased to present through this press statement, these findings representing three weeks of continuous monitoring visits to the voters' registration centers. A full report covering the entire period of the registration will be shared with the public shortly.

Overall, the voter registration process was conducted in an orderly manner. We therefore wish to commend the National Elections Commission for ably conducting the registration of voters despite the difficult and daunting circumstances. We also wish to commend the donor community particularly the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for their support to NACEM to carry out this noble civic effort.

During the period, NACEM monitored 1,202 centers and completed a total checklist of 1,341. Of the total 1,202 centers visited, we recorded 132,169 voters registered at the time of our visits. Of this figure 1,334 persons were turned away for various reasons including: under age, not convincingly identified as Liberians, wrong application of rejection procedure and/ or attempts by registrants to be registered more than once, amongst others. This rejection figure represents 1% of the registered voters during the time of our visits.

Our observation reveals that of the total number of 1,202 centers visited, 555 centers or 50% had regular security presence. It was also observed that violent incidents occurred at 70 centers which represent 5%. Though no death was reported, these violent incidents resulted to the looting of registration centers, brutalization of registrants and election workers, temporary closure of centers, amongst others.

We are also displeased to note from our data that participation of Political Parties, key stakeholders in these elections, has been comparatively low. Our statistics show that out of the 1,202 centers monitored, political party representatives were only occasionally seen at 330 or 27%.

Over the past few days, the voting public has found itself in a deep state of confusion occasioned by the recent resolution passed by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA), which amongst other things, calls for the extension of voters' registration for one month and the postponement of the elections time-table from 11 October 2005 to mid December 2005.

While the NTLA's recent call for the postponement of the elections and the extension of the registration period has solid foundation the representatives may not have duly consulted with all the stakeholders especially the International Community that bears the financial burden of the electoral process. Such procedural error, we observe, may be blamed for creating considerable controversy within the electoral process which has impacted on the registrants. NACEM observes that the NTLA resolution aired on radio just a week to the end of the voters' registration period, generated enormous reluctance amongst the voting public. Monitoring reports further reveal that thousands of Liberians especially in the rural areas did not register due to various reasons among

which were the NTLA resolution, inaccessibility of some voter registration centers, relocation of centers without adequate information to the public, amongst others.

Elections are about people's participation. In line with this assertion, NACEM welcomes the extension of the voters' registration period by two weeks for Liberian refugees who will be returning after the 21 May 2005 registration deadline. NACEM supports the holding of elections on October 11, 2005 as enshrined in the Comprehensive Peace Accord and the Constitution of Liberia.

However, NACEM calls on the NEC and the International Community to accommodate other eligible Liberians who have not yet registered within the two weeks extension provided for returning refugees. We also call on the National Transitional Government of Liberia to provide the necessary financial and logistical support to enable NEC cover the cost for this accommodation.

*NACEM is a coalition of three* major Liberian Civil Society coalitions namely the Coalition for Democracy in Liberia (CODEL), West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP) and the Inter Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Benjamin D. Lartey  
**Chairman**

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Dan T. Saryee, Sr.  
**Vice Chairman**

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S. Tornorlah Varpilah  
**Secretary**

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**NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR ELECTIONS MONITORING  
(NACEM)  
MONROVIA, LIBERIA**

**May 4, 2005**

**Contact: 06519765, 06514348, 06517879**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**On the on-going Voter's Registration Exercise in Liberia  
Issued by: the National Committee for Elections Monitoring  
(NACEM)**

Precisely eight days since the commencement of the voters' registration exercise which marks the beginning of citizens' direct participation in ushering in a credible and democratically elected government, a coalition of civil society organizations, the National Committee for Elections Monitoring (NACEM), committed to ensuring a peaceful, transparent and participatory democratic process, trained and deployed 130 monitors throughout the country to monitor and report on the conduct of the exercise.

Being mindful of the delicate nature of the entire electoral process, NACEM feel obliged and duty bound to report on its preliminary findings. These findings represent visits made to seven counties in the Northwestern and Central regions including Montserrado County as well as reports from our field monitors. Our team took into consideration several key points including security, turn-out, constraints, gender, violence, timing and political party's representation at registration centers.

Our observation revealed a low turn out of Liberians at registration centers. This we believe is attributed to low publicity and the lack of effective civic and voters' education. However, despite the low turn out at the registration centers, We note

with satisfaction the participation of more female registrants than their male counterparts at the various centers.

We are however disappointed by the total absence of Political Parties representatives at all centers visited by our team. Touching on security, NACEM recognizes the general presence of UNMIL and Liberian National Police personnel at the registration centers. However, it was noticed that while some centers had continuous security presence others were served only by UNMIL mobile teams.

Our findings also revealed a flagrant disregard for the application of the rejection procedure at several registration centers. We observed that registrars were not uniformly applying the rules of rejection, a situation which amongst others, compelled registrants who were denied registration to move from one center to another to register. This tendency sometimes led to violent action between NEC officials and registrants.

We further noted a number of isolated incidents of violence at some of the registration centers visited particularly in Bomi, Bong, Nimba, and Montserrado Counties. For example Court House registration center in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, Market Ground Center in Gbarnga, Bong County and the Freeway Baptist Church registration center in Iron Factory, Montserrado County witnessed violent incidents as a result of improper rejection procedure.

We also observed that the voters' registration exercise has been marked by other constraints, including late arrival of registration materials, remoteness of centers from the people, isolated cases of faulty cameras and poor performance of some operators.

In order to move the process, NACEM wishes to recommend the following:

- That efforts be made by NEC, UNMIL, Political Parties and other stakeholders to whip up public awareness to the voter registration exercise
- That efforts be made by the NEC to clarify the rejection procedure through media and other public awareness channels.
- That efforts be made to increase registration centers in the rural areas to allow easy access to majority of Liberians to register and vote.

Meanwhile, a full report on the registration process covering the entire country will be released upon receipt of reports from our monitors around the country.

*NACEM is a coalition of three major civil society organizations, namely: the Coalition for Democracy in Liberia (CODEL), the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) and the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP).*

**SIGNED:**

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*Benjamin D. Lartey*

**CHAIRMAN/NACEM**

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*Dan T. Saryee, Sr.*

**VICE CHAIRMAN/NACEM**

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*S. Tornorlah Varpilah*

**SECRETARY/NACEM**