

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC)  
2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections**



### **ECC PRELIMINARY STATEMENT – October 12, 2017**

#### **CONTACT:**

Mr. Oscar Bloh  
Chairman, ECC Steering Committee  
Phone: +231(0)886554109  
Secretariat: +231(0)886891850  
Email: eccsecretariate2011@gmail.com  
Website: eccliberia.com

#### **Introduction**

This preliminary statement is based on reports that the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) has received from 496 out of 498 Rapid Response Observers deployed to polling places proportionally nationwide as of 5:00PM on October 11, 2017.

The ECC deployed 2,170 trained and accredited observers including 170 mobile observers and 2,000 polling place observers deployed in all 73 districts. Of the 2,000 observers, 832 are systematically deployed as Rapid Response Observers, 498 of which are deployed based on a proportional distribution by district. This means that the proportion of polling stations observed by Rapid Response Observers in each district and county closely matches the overall percentage of polling stations in each district and county. This proportional deployment enables the ECC to comment on the process nationally, drawing on data points from every district of the country. Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown of the distribution of observed polling stations by county.

On election day, the ECC released a mid-day update on the set-up and opening process. This statement focuses on the voting, closing, and counting processes. Figures reported reflect percentages of polling places observed and do not reflect all polling places across the country but do provide credible and reliable data on the electoral process.

#### **Key Findings**

Based on reports from ECC observers deployed to polling places in all 73 districts, Liberians turned out peacefully in large numbers to choose their next leaders and play their part in deciding the country's future.

ECC observers witnessed Liberians casting their ballots despite challenges. This includes issues with the Final Registration Roll (FRR), long queues, and polling places that closed at 6:00pm with voters still waiting to vote.

While technical and administrative lapses made this process more difficult for voters, Liberians demonstrated their commitment to exercising their right to vote by turning out in large numbers, enduring the long queues, and peacefully engaging in the polls.

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

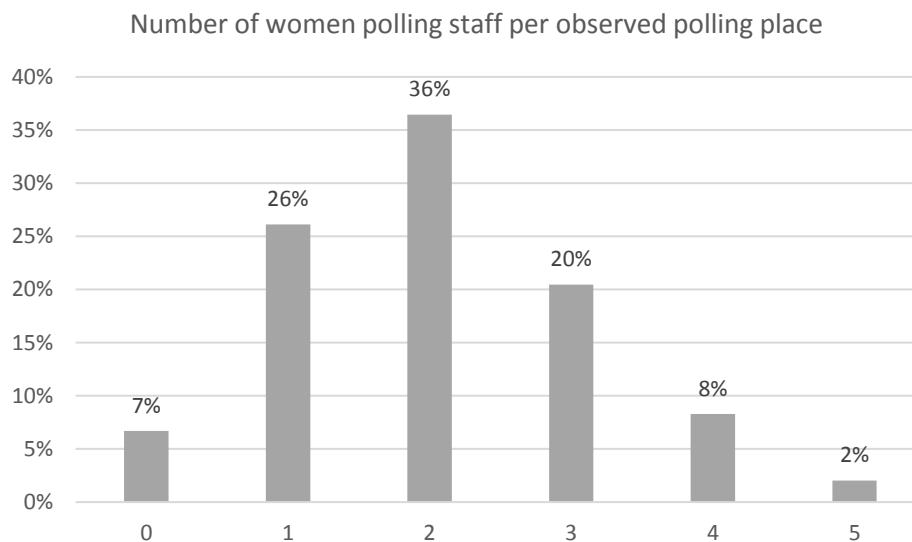
## Voting Process

ECC observers monitored the entire election day process in their assigned polling place starting with the set-up and continuing through the counting process and the announcement of the results. They reported using a unique observation checklist and coded text messages to a central database system at the ECC's National Information Center.

Within their polling place, ECC observers witnessed NEC staff generally following voting procedures.

- In 97% of polling places observed, voters were always asked to present their voter registration (VR) card before being allowed to vote.
- ECC observers in 96% of polling places reported that the ballot papers were always stamped before being handed to the voter.
- In 99% of polling places observed, the voting screen was placed in a way that guaranteed the secrecy of the vote.
- ECC observers noted that the finger of every voter was inked after voting in 98% of observed polling places.

At least two NEC staff in 67% of observed polling places were women, however, only 22% of observed polling places had a woman as the presiding officer.



Elections Coordinating Committee, 2017

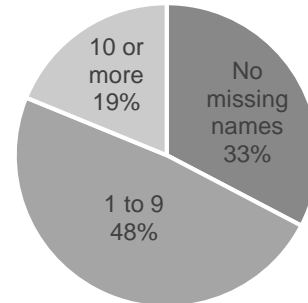
While voting process within the polling place generally ran smoothly, ECC observers reported that NEC staff experienced challenges in managing queues and directing voters to the proper polling places. Particularly in areas with higher numbers of registered voters and in voting precincts located in facilities not adequate to accommodate these numbers, this resulted in long waits and frustration among voters, and caused voting and counting to extend long past the official closing time.

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Final Registration Roll (FRR)

In only 33% of observed polling places, all voters who presented a valid VR card found their details on the Final Registration Roll (FRR). However, 48% of polling places observed by the ECC had 1 to 9 cases where a person appeared to have a valid VR card indicating that they should vote in that polling place, but whose name did not appear on the FRR. In 19% of polling places observed, ten or more such cases were reported. ECC observers noted that this caused delays, confusion, and, in some cases, tensions at polling places during the voting process.

Polling places with missing names on the FRR



ECC observers noted inconsistencies in how NEC staff addressed the issue of voters missing from the FRR. In 75% of observed polling places with missing names, these voters were permitted to vote; however, voters in 25% of these polling places were denied the ability to vote.

## Closing and Counting Process

A significant number of polling places remained open past the designated closing time (6:00pm). ECC observers reported that 41% of observed polling places closed after 6:30pm, with many remaining open late into the evening to allow voters to cast their ballot.

In 88% of observed polling places there were still voters in the queue at 6:00pm. In 93% of these polling places, voters in the queue at 6:00pm were allowed to vote. However, in 7% of these polling places, voters still in the queue were denied the right to vote.

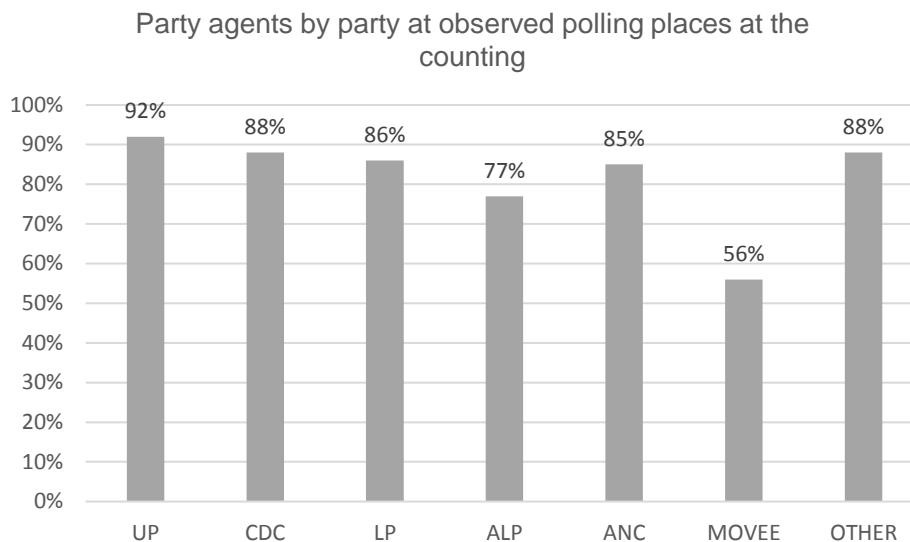
ECC observers also noted that some polling places did not have adequate lights, which causes additional delays in the counting process and increases the potential for human error. Furthermore, ECC observers noted that the Record of the Count Forms were not systematically posted on the wall of the polling place after the completion of the counting process.

## Party Agents

ECC observers reported the presence of at least one party agent at 99% of observed polling places during the voting and counting processes. This contributed to a level of transparency in the process.

In only 16% of observed polling places, party agents filed a complaint. This demonstrates that the party agents did not challenge the counting process in most polling places.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Elections Coordinating Committee, 2017

During voter registration and exhibition, the ECC noted the low level of participation of political parties. The widespread presence of party agents in polling places on election day is a significant improvement in political parties' role in monitoring the process.

### Recommendations

To the National Election Commission:

- In the event of a second round election:
  - Urgently inform the public and political parties on the procedures for voters whose names are missing from the FRR. Polling staff should also receive timely, clear, and consistent instructions on these procedures.
  - Update logistic plans to ensure a timely delivery of all election materials.
  - Ensure voters are informed about the runoff election.
  - Consider relocating congested polling precincts to other locations that will facilitate the free flow of voters.
  - Ensure that temporary staff receive adequate training particularly relating to crowd control and providing assistance to voters in determining which queue they are to vote.
- Provide timely and up-to-date information to voters during the tally process including providing detailed information to the public on data entry and transmission of results system at both the magistrate offices and the National Tally Center.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- Treat all electoral disputes equally and adjudicate them in a timely and transparent manner.
- Publicly provide polling place level results in a machine-readable format in a timely manner as a measure of transparency.
- Reconsider the allocation of ballot papers per polling place to better fit the actual number of registered voters in that polling place.
- Accredite organizations to observe rather than individuals. This not only reduces the burden on the NEC to produce accreditation badges for individual observers, but also allows observer groups to more effectively recruit, and if needed, replace observers during the election.

To political parties, independent candidates, and their supporters:

- Remain peaceful, abide by the laws and refrain from announcing election results or claiming victory when the certified results are yet to be announced.
- If any political party or independent candidate has grievances on the electoral process and results, follow the laws and procedures as enshrined in the electoral laws and regulations.
- In the event of a runoff elections, the ECC encourages the contesting political parties to deploy trained agents to observe the voting, closing, counting and tallying of results and to properly document their findings and in no time interfere with the process.

To the Supreme Court:

- Expediently adjudicate all electoral related petitions, disputes and grievances.

To the Liberian National Police and other security agencies:

- Continue to demonstrate neutrality and professionalism in dealing with electoral related matters.

To the media:

- Continue demonstrate a high degree of professionalism on how it reports on the results of the elections. Remain conflict sensitive in reporting on all electoral disputes.

To civil society:

- Continue to engage citizens to remain peaceful during the announcement of results and if there is a second round to provide civic education to citizens to participate peacefully to ensure a smooth transition of power.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### 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 an eight 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), Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRC) and the Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL). CDG serves as the chair of ECC.

The ECC works in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) with support from USAID and OSIWA.

#### Appendix A: Distribution of observed polling stations by county.

County	Distribution of Polling Places		Deployment of ECC Rapid Response Observers	
	Polling Places	% of Polling Places	Polling Places	% of Polling Places
Bomi	158	2.93%	14	2.81%
Bong	502	9.31%	46	9.24%
Gbarpolu	133	2.47%	13	2.61%
Grand Bassa	388	7.20%	35	7.03%
Grand Cape Mount	171	3.17%	16	3.21%
Grand Gedeh	167	3.10%	15	3.01%
Grand Kru	99	1.84%	9	1.81%
Lofa	417	7.74%	39	7.83%
Margibi	382	7.09%	35	7.03%
Maryland	156	2.89%	15	3.01%
Montserrado	1790	33.21%	166	33.33%
Nimba	699	12.97%	65	13.05%
River Gee	95	1.76%	9	1.81%
Rivercess	97	1.80%	9	1.81%
Sinoe	136	2.52%	12	2.41%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5390</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>100%</b>