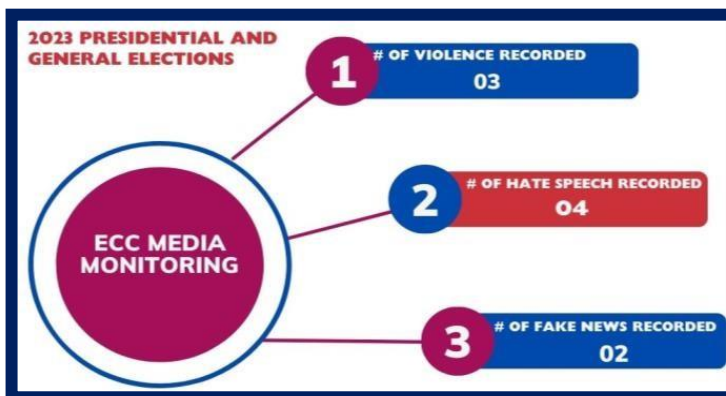




Hate Speech and tension mounts, as 2023 general and presidential elections approaches.

With less than three months until the country's general elections in 2023, there have been numerous media allegations of what appear to be pre-election violence and hate speech exchanged by influential political figures in Liberia. The frequent name-calling of opposing parties



A diagram showing tracking from our media tracking plan

by supporters of some candidates risks inciting unrest and undermining the calm and stability of our electoral process. The Farmington Declaration, urges all political parties to support and adhere to violence free and peaceful elections, was signed by political parties on April 04, 2023. However, the prevalence of hate speech raises questions about whether the tenets of the Declaration will be adhered

to.

There have been reports of hate speech and fake news, some of which target women aspirants, in both online and mainstream media, including the Daily Observer. (<https://shorturl.at/pCJMO>) The number of registered political parties and coalitions in May 2023 agreed to the minimum 30% gender quota, promote peaceful participation and stop all forms of violence against women in the electoral process. The MOU requires political parties to set aside 30% of their available seats at the level of their various parties so that women may run for those seats. Despite this dedication, the ECC's observation of political primaries revealed that only 1% of women who participated as candidates were declared winners in the general elections.

The ownership of private media has made it challenging to combat hate speech. The independence of the media has been compromised in Liberia because politicians control a large number of media entities or have ties to them. Over the past three months, the Liberian media landscape has broadcast several hateful pre-election messages aimed at alleged opposition candidates and political groups. Such hate speech breaches the

political parties' code of conduct, impairs the integrity of the electoral process, and has the potential to sow discord among actors. Major news agencies, online social media, and podcasts continue to cover alarming events of hate speeches that demand close monitoring.

The USAID Media Strengthening Program, run by INTERNEWS, offers a chance to reduce the dissemination of false information and messages that incite violence by educating journalists on how to cover elections sensitively.

The INTERNEWS capacity strengthening program is expected to improve the conduct of journalists and media entities in fair and balanced reporting in addition to documented best journalistic practices such as the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) Code of Conduct. As part of the LIDEO project, the ECC observers and communication team continue to closely monitor the electoral environment and document the spread of hate speeches, fake news and violence against women through a standard monitoring checklist.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

To curtail the spread of hate speeches, ECC recommends the following:

- To ensure peaceful participation, particularly during the campaign, political parties and candidates must abide by the election rules and code of conduct.
- That candidates and political parties stay focused on the issue and refrain from making personal jabs that could scuttle the election.
- In cases of infractions or complaints, political parties and candidates are encouraged to turn to the legal system

ABOUT the LIDEO Activity

With the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the ECC is implementing the Liberia Independent Domestic Election Observation (LIDEO) Activity. LIDEO is a 30-month award with the goal to enhance voter confidence in the 2023 electoral process and mitigate electoral violence and tension, through evidence-based, responsive election observation reporting to the public. LIDEO aims to improve the Liberian trust and confidence in the electoral process through an evidenced based observation approach and reporting of results. This will be achieved through the development of timely and well-informed observation reports on the electoral processes.

ABOUT ECC

The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) is Liberia's largest domestic election observation network with diverse competencies, experiences, and expertise in democracy, elections, and Governance, targeting different sectors of the population such as women, youth, traditional leaders, policymakers, and the media.

DISCLAIMER

This newsletter is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the ECC and do not necessarily reflect the view of the USAID or the United States Government

CONTRACT

OFFICE:
ROSE GARDEN PLAZA

BOARD CHAIRMAN

NATIONAL COORDINATOR

0775186929

COMMUNICATION TEAM

0776799786